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FOUND IN

ENVIRONMENTAL THEMES FOR
THE ANTHROPOCENE

ALBERTA

Robert Boschman and Mario Trono, editors

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Radical Albertans? Hunting as the Subversion of Heroic Enlightenment

Nathan Kowalsky

Late in 2011 Brock Lesnar (an ultimate fighting heavyweight champion) pleaded guilty in a Medicine Hat, Alberta, court to charges relating to his televised mule deer hunt in the coulees not far from where I grew up. In the comments on the YouTube video of this hunt, one presumably Albertan hunter defended Lesnar, writing, "Oh my what a bunch of fukin' babies all 'ya are. It's a sport. There's thousands of deer in Alberta alone. What do u guys do for fun play with remote control cars!! Fags!!!" (LoverAnimal2000, 2012). In the Edmonton, Alberta, trial of Jeffery Burdett Foiles (an American TV hunting celebrity), the court heard that Foiles "bangs the beak of a [living] duck with a live shotgun shell, roughly manipulates the duck's head and then places his fingers over the nostrils of the duck and holds its beak closed. He then asks the duck: 'Is this how you want to die?'" (Blais 2011). When such charges and comments arise, it can be hard to imagine Albertan hunters as subversive figures.

Cases like these are a reminder of why hunting is anathema to what Peter Singer (1997) calls "the expanding circle," the growth of refined ethical consciousness outwards from exclusive concern for oneself, towards one's family, other people, and eventually non-human animals. This progressive and liberationist view of what Steven Best (n.d.) calls "Western cultural evolution" is based in the seventeenth-century notion of human movement away from the so-called State of Nature, that supposed state

wherein the first human beings “bash[ed] other human beings in the skull” (Pluhar 1991, 124) and celebrated “physical aggressiveness and sexual dominance” (Everett 2001, 59). Civilization and moral progress are supposed to have proceeded from there. This assumed and presumed trajectory of the expanding circle is what (often subconsciously) underlies the use of words like “progress,” “civilized,” “enlightened,” and even “liberal” in common parlance and various official discourses, without necessarily referring to the European period of “Enlightenment” or classical liberalism. We *already know* what it means to be civilized or progressive, and moreover we already know that hunting is *neither*. Hunting may have been acceptable in earlier modern societies, but that time is past; the pressure of the arc of Western cultural development is to label hunting morally out of date. Thoreau hoped that by hunting, one would eventually develop respect for the prey and so stop hunting. Lisa Kretz (2010) recommends skipping hunting entirely and proceeding directly to empathy: “Put simply, killing is not generally the best form of learning about others and manifesting respect for them” (37). This is why Brian Luke (1997) argues that hunters have conflicted consciences, where the “obvious resolution of this conflict [is] nonlethal stalking practices [such] as wildlife photography” (35). Distance is the solution to the puzzle of our relation to nature, for as the champion of the city, Edward Glaser (2011), says, “We humans are a destructive species... If you love nature, stay away from it” (201).

The trouble with the progressive dismissal of hunting is that it neither sufficiently takes into account hunting as it is regulated in contemporary North America nor considers the philosophical implications of hunting practice (to say nothing of the cultural implications of generating the class- and even race-based prejudices that underlie much of the aforementioned stereotype). The cultural and moral significance of hunting is poorly understood, by hunters themselves no less than by their opponents. This chapter examines Alberta hunting regulations as a particular instantiation of North American outdoor culture that subverts the grand story of Progress away from the State of Nature. That story will be outlined in terms of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Frankfurt School critical theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1972 [1944]), who argue that being human is the project of striving for an ultimately non-dominating distance from nature. Adorno and Horkheimer call this “Enlightened rationality,” and it stands in contrast to four major aspects of the 2010 Alberta hunting regulations: land access, game conservation, technological handicapping, and weapon lethality. While at this general level, Alberta’s hunting regulations are not unique, their particularities provide an illustrative level of detail as well as comprising a noteworthy part of the Albertan legal land-

scape. In each of the four cases, hunting may be seen as neither irrational nor barbaric, even though it must be conceptualized as both in order to be made sense of within the narrative of enlightened rationality. Because hunting stands outside this trajectory without automatically succumbing to savagery, its very existence constitutes a threat to our culture’s broader story—taken to be both real and ideal—about the relationship between non-human nature and human culture. Regulated hunting in Alberta thus frees up a theoretical space for understanding being human as dwelling immanently within nature, participating in those aspects of ecology that appear unsavoury from the romanticizing and insulated perspective of the enlightened observer. This is in spite of the fact that few hunters likely conceive of their activity as subverting a part of the mainstream social order.

Nature and Enlightenment

Western cultural evolution’s understanding of itself starts with a basic anthropological assumption that Adorno and Horkheimer make explicit, namely, that human beings are *Homo faber*.¹ Even though biologists define our species in terms of wisdom (*Homo sapiens sapiens*), we operate on the assumption that wisdom means our ability to make or fabricate secure environments. On this view, human nature is less an essence than it is a project, a program of differentiation from antithetical nature. The process starts with the idea that humans are evolutionary weaklings except for their brains. We are viewed as animals with no special abilities for defence, literally and metaphorically naked, and desperately vulnerable to the forces of nature. Therefore, our earliest ancestors had no choice but to immediately use their reasoning capacities to manipulate and master nature before it manipulated and mastered them. Subordinating wisdom to the smith, Enlightenment is nothing other than the ever-expanding improvement of the primordial use of reason to distance and remove us from nature (both non-human nature and our own animal nature) and thus be in a position to control it. “Civilization” is simply what we call cultures that have been exemplary in attaining high levels of such “humanization.” This is why Adorno and Horkheimer do not view Enlightenment as a relatively recent epoch in European history, but rather a foundational form of instrumental rationality that makes humans human (Bollen 2007, 481). In this respect, the story differs little from the well-known postulation of the State of Nature: after a period of irrational, anarchic, and inhuman savagery, humans formed social contracts that allowed them to develop genuine culture that would save them from a nasty, brutish, and short life in the wilderness. In sum, human culture and the self are defined in opposition to a nature understood as a dire threat to both.

But as much as Adorno and Horkheimer accepted this general story of Enlightenment rationality, they were critical of how civilization supposedly evolved, especially into the twentieth century. As émigrés from Nazi Germany, they were acutely aware that the civilizing Enlightenment project culminated in industrialized mass murder. The problem as they saw it was that Enlightenment is deeply paradoxical. Even though it has always been an attempt to escape domination by the natural Other, it does so by dominating the natural Other. The basic function of Enlightenment is to escape the fear of mastery by mastering the fearful. Human transcendence of nature is supposed to result in the transformation of natural alterity into malleable material immanence. Early versions of this rational distancing and mastery were, however, mimetic. So-called primitives tried to align themselves with the terrible powers of the spirit world and therefore appease them. The stereotypical view of magic is that, via incantations and imitative behaviours (like using bat wings to make a flying potion), it manipulates the fearful Other into tolerating if not serving us. But Adorno and Horkheimer argue that magic is not enough to satisfy the civilizing impulse. They point out that mimicry of the natural Other involves surrendering ourselves to its rule. The magician is only the master so long as the spiritual being is respected and appeased, which means human identity is still implicated in the Other that threatens it. Mimesis is insufficiently enlightened because it threatens the self's rational differentiation from nature (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972, 3–32). "Primitives" are considered less human and less "rational" than truly heroic forms of culture.

Therefore, "civilization" is explicitly distinguished from "primitive" attempts at mastering nature in the next turn in the dialectic of Enlightenment. Because mimicry of nature is as much the enemy of human rationality as nature itself is, civilized attempts at Enlightenment reject harmony with nature, and the hero who conquers fate is celebrated. However, civilization cannot ignore the fact that nature still appeals to the enlightened self. Human beings are, after all, comprised of an "animal" substrate complete with instincts that, while embarrassingly natural (i.e., ribald and often disgusting), cannot be ignored let alone eliminated. As Plato was well aware, the nature that true humanity must distance itself from includes our own unruly human nature (*Phaedrus* 246a–254e), but "the body" demands some kind of satisfaction. However, because nature threatens selfhood with oblivion (the examples here are Homer's lotus eaters), enlightened heroic culture cannot accept regressive immersion back into natural instinct. Rather than surrendering to our fleshly desires, we must exert *self-control* over the release of primal urges. In this respect, Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) do not deviate from Freud's notion of sublimation.

Thence their example of Odysseus who, as the hero, is clever enough to have himself tied to the mast so as to hear the sirens' song without actually crashing into the rocks (32–8, 57–60).

This heroic control (not obliteration) of internal or human nature mirrors enlightened civility's approach to external or non-human nature: rather than obliterating it (which would be foolish, given our species' ecological dependence), wild nature is *tamed* by cunning "reason." When Odysseus and his crew arrive on Circe's island, they are surprised to find docile versions of wild predators, obvious examples (in their untamed form) of the kind of raw nature that poses a threat to humans (or at least, to "live-stock" domesticated by humans). They later discover that these used to be human beings who fully succumbed to Circe's seductions; her magic transformed them into peaceful counterparts of otherwise savage beasts. The lesson is that if nature ever looks romantically peaceful or pleasant to us, that is because it has already been domesticated by reason. The process of domestication, meanwhile, is exemplified by Odysseus forcing Circe to marry him at the point of his sword. Rather than surrendering to her unfettered sexual powers and becoming an animal, the hero makes the whore into a wife by imposing on her a domestic contract. The hero retains his selfhood in the face of external and natural necessary evils by controlling but not obliterating them with tools and the threat of violence (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972, 69–75).

Salvation by Non-contact

This is the point where Enlightenment civilization would rest on its laurels. External threats to autonomy (like Circe) are conquered but not eliminated by rational mastery (the contract and the sword), whereas internal threats to autonomy (like the desire to hear siren songs) are conquered but not eliminated by rational self-mastery (being tied to the mast). But here Adorno and Horkheimer move from a descriptive to a critical mode, as might we, in an age where interests in wilderness recreation, environmental sustainability, or sympathy with animals seem to clash with the harsh tone of domination in Odysseus' conquests. The route to understanding the environmental turn of Enlightenment is found, as intimated earlier, through Nazism.² Adorno and Horkheimer point out that the Homeric hero is unaware of how the dominating management of nature goes on to fail, but this failure is precisely why civilization falls back into barbarism (e.g., the Holocaust). On the one hand, because external nature *is* wild and recalcitrant to domestication, any attempt at "returning to nature" is bound to be inhuman. Lotus eating is an illusion; Social Darwinism or *Blut und Boden* are what happens if culture tries to harmonize with, rather than dominate, nature.

On the other hand, because reason sees itself as defined by opposition to the natural Other, it must postulate a natural Other for it to suppress. Enlightenment *needs* its dialectical counterpart to maintain its own identity, but this inability to escape irrational nature infuriates the heroic self. As Noam Chomsky (2011) points out, Americans might not see the irony in naming their military hardware or sports teams after defeated Amerindians, but there is no way that Nazism would have blissfully attested to its dialectical connection to Jews, Gypsies, etc. But the dependence relation between the enlightened masters and their “natural” counterparts is more than dialectical irony. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that women and especially Jews constantly *reflect* back those very traits that civilized heroism thinks it has conquered, and thus are reminders of what the hero has lost and has yet not fully expunged from himself. Even when the hero mocks their putative subhuman irrationality, he discovers that his own mocking is quite literally mimesis. This leads to abusive rage and a further entanglement: the torturer’s grimaces of cruel pleasure are mirrored in the grimaces of pain of the tortured.

In every way, civilization finds itself inescapably embroiled in the very “nature” it seeks to escape. Fundamentally, civilization is itself mimesis: its domination of nature completely mimics nature’s own threatening domination of the self. It creates itself as a magical copy of what it wants to avoid. Obviously, Adorno and Horkheimer hope that Enlightenment can be released from this self-defeating conundrum and be salvaged. Otherwise, savagery will inevitably characterize advanced civilizations. Their solution is an ideal form of rational distancing that does not entail dominating the Other, a not-yet-realized form of technical control that will be truly liberating.³ The hope is that Enlightenment reason can distance the human self from nature while not dominating nature at the same time. We should be able to attain civilization without oppression, domestication without domination. Contact with nature’s rawness is still eschewed as reprehensible, but the natural Other itself is nevertheless viewed as valuable, even holy—so long as we do not touch it. Technological rationality should allow us to be separate from nature and yet, by providing this separation, keep nature—and ourselves—clean and insulated from mutual contamination. In this final respect, Adorno and Horkheimer cannot abandon the presupposition that “there is an ontological alienation from nature that cannot be overcome” (Bollen 2007, 479).

Contemporary environmental Enlightenment, then, is formed against the backdrop of the rejection of failed harmonies with nature, failures that derive from the basic assumption of *homo faber*: nature is, after all, a threat to what it means to be genuinely human. It is tempting in urban cultures

to conceive of nature as resting at an idyllic remove we ought to somehow, one day, rejoin. But we all know that such romanticism and nostalgia are false. The only way to heroically approach nature without losing our hard-won humanity is through technologically proficient recreation (the ethos of self-propelled wilderness adventure) that keeps us spectators (an ethos that hopes to leave no trace). Our enlightened environmental preservation ethic of non-contamination and separation requires human impacts to be invisible while human visitors themselves are clearly juxtaposed against the background (camouflage fabrics apparently send the wrong message). *Using* nature is almost entirely precluded: one must pack in (often freeze-dried) food, (usually nylon) shelter, and (almost always fossil) fuel, while packing out even biodegradable wastes. After such excursions, these humans return home to densely populated urban centres where, suitably refreshed and exculpated, the status quo continues more or less unabated. According to this ideal of liberation, we will keep wild nature “pure” of our interference while seeing the rural environment as non-dominating and the urban environment as especially green. Nature romanticism, unrestrained ecological degradation, and urban environmentalism are all stages in Adorno and Horkheimer’s account of enlightened civilization, and they are all too familiar.

Hunting as Engagement

Hunting stands in stark contrast to this story of our culture. The fact that hunters and environmentalists each view the other as threats to their own interests only highlights the irony of the situation. On the one hand, hunting lies at the heart of the North American conservation movement, while on the other, for nearly thirty years, the field of environmental ethics has systematically excluded animal welfare and rights ethics (Center for Environmental Philosophy 2011) without the public (let alone hunters) noticing. The civilized urban mind seems to lack the categories necessary for understanding this way of encountering nature. Rather than cutting edge and highly technical, hunting conscientiously limits technological power and depends on tradition for the transmission of expertise. Rather than romanticizing nature from the insulated perspective of an observer while vilifying it as inhuman when faced with its wildness, hunting plunges the human being into an immanent relationship with nature as a participant in unsettling yet profoundly meaningful environmental realities. In a word, hunting symbolizes a return to the so-called State of Nature, only to find that this estate is neither non-cultural nor barbaric, but rather eminently human and poignant.

I will not argue that hunters themselves are cognizant of these points, but hunters do have a felt sense of these meanings.⁴ They are a threat to the

urban ideal of cultural propriety, in some ways similar to pre-colonial societies who, not long ago, felt the wrath of civil righteousness and suffered accordingly. Hunters represent a “natural” Other to liberal Enlightenment which has yet to be afforded the hands-off treatment of respect. My contention is that hunting constitutes a non-dominating encounter with the non-human Other, an engagement that is fully human and neither romanticist nor antagonistic. Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) situate hunting in the primitive or “religious” stage of their dialectic as an instance of irrational mythological mimesis (52). To the contrary, I will argue that hunting is not a subhuman activity even though it subverts the metanarrative of liberal progressive culture; while it is outside civilization, hunting is not barbaric.

The Regulation of Land Access

On the surface, however, the history of hunting in Alberta seems to follow the pattern of Enlightenment rationality. With the advent of European horses, firearms, and trade incentives, the Blackfoot Confederacy reduced bison herds at unsustainable rates, though the final straw came with European market hunters, whiskey traders, homesteaders, and the railway. The resulting decline in game led to the passage of An Ordinance for the Protection of the Buffalo by the government of the North-West Territories in 1877 (the same year as Treaty 7 in southern Alberta), though it was repealed the following year. By the time the killing of bison was prohibited, in 1887, the species was virtually extinct (Ondrack 1985, 5–12). As the dialectic of Enlightenment would lead us to expect, “civilized” humans created conditions under which the Aboriginal inhabitants of the plains, both human and non-human, were dominated and decimated. The (putatively) “natural” Other, which is seen as a threat to the (putatively) “enlightened” Self, is mastered by “reason.” However, the appeal of the natural is still recognized, and some of it must be “saved” by heroic self-limitation—thence First Nations reservations, national parks, and conservationist hunting regulations. In the case of the latter two, scenic nature and game animals are preserved so that they can continue to be enjoyed by those who call themselves civilized.

From this perspective, the regulation of hunting looks like a constitutive part of the mainstream, not a subversive element; limiting our hunting so that we can continue to hunt looks like self-restraint for the purpose of retaining non-contaminating access to the mastered thing. However, the hidden implications of these practices and regulations go against the trajectory of liberal progressive culture in spite of the fact that hunting has been implicated within that trajectory. The clearest effect of heroic Enlightenment thinking is not hunting conservation but the Canadian national parks, of which Banff National Park in Alberta was the first. First

Nations and Métis peoples were removed from the parks (Struzik 2011; cf. Spence 1999) and hunting was banned as early as 1907 (Ondrack 1985, 17). Thus is a wilderness “park” established, “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain” (Wilderness Act 1964, s. 2c). Though the legal language is American, the theoretical justification crosses the border—human beings, be they “primitive” or “civilized,” do not belong in “pure” nature, and *any* human contact with it—other than the objective distance of the uninvolved spectator—will result in contamination. Therefore, the relics of undominated nature must be kept separate from culture, and human participation in the ecosystem must be limited to the technical participation necessary for maintaining the spectacle. Hunting, in extreme circumstances, could perform this last role, as suggested by the rationale for what are called “ecological reserves” in Alberta:

The management intent of the reserves is to allow natural processes to occur. The Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act prohibits hunting within ecological reserves, *unless it is required for management purposes to simulate natural events*. . . Alberta’s Ecological Reserves Program is part of a larger international program to preserve natural ecosystems. Ecological reserves protect representative areas in each of the natural regions of Alberta for the conservation of genetic resources, to allow for the appreciation of nature, to preserve our natural heritage, and to establish ecological benchmarks and control areas for research and education. (Government of Alberta 2010, 35; emphasis added)

Here, hunting by humans is viewed as an unnatural process distinct from “the appreciation of nature,” and natural processes are thought to exclude—in principle, if not in practice—any and all human participation therein.

Obviously, hunting is not merely spectatorship on the part of visitors but is a hands-on activity of agents profoundly at home in wild lands. A wilderness landscape is a huntable landscape par excellence, whereas an urban landscape is obviously less so (cf. Edmonston 2010; Cermele 2010; Walker 2008). True, in contemporary Alberta, human hunters rarely *reside* in wild landscapes, but this is a historically contingent *fait accompli*. The reason why hunting so closely fits wildness is that, by definition, hunting is the chase of freely ranging wild animals. As Jack Ondrack (1985) points out, “when finding animals is assured, we have agriculture, not hunting” (323). Of course wild game animals frequently coexist with agricultural landscapes, but unlike domesticated animals, they pay no heed to the boundaries etched into the landscape by sedentary subsistence practices. They

roam free, and so must the hunter who pursues them. Moreover, hunting is a basic wilderness survival skill precisely because it does not require domestication. Unlike agriculture, which has to literally reorganize the local ecology to produce introduced food (Kover 2009, 236), hunting mimics pre-existing ecosystemic functions. No wilderness will spontaneously produce a garden plot, whereas the pursuit of animals by other animals is a daily occurrence. Rather than assuming humans to be a necessarily dominating presence in otherwise untouched landscapes, hunting structurally situates human beings in contexts that retain their wildness.

The idea that we can fit ourselves into a landscape without dewilding it—the idea that we are not necessarily strangers or visitors to the undomesticated world—flies in the face of Enlightenment rationality, which believes that the only way humans worthy of the name can encounter nature is by mastering it. This counter-potential of hunting is recognized somewhat in the designation of Alberta’s “natural areas,” which are

special parcels of public land that are formally set aside by the Alberta Government to protect sensitive and scenic land from disturbance. Natural areas fall in the middle of the range of conservation lands in Alberta, between strictly protected lands—such as ecological reserves and provincial parks—and lands intensively developed for recreation. The main objective of natural areas management is to maintain the natural features and characteristics of the site. Development of any facilities is kept to a minimum. Generally, hunting is permitted in most natural areas. However, there are some sites with special management or safety considerations that restrict hunting and access. (Government of Alberta 2010, 34)

Hunting is permitted in “heritage rangelands” as well, but “recreational vehicle use is discouraged in all of these sites” (Government of Alberta 2010, 35). These regulations therefore assume that hunting is generally consistent with “the natural features and characteristics” of the land, whereas (so-called) “development” and “recreational vehicles” are not. This is also inconsistent with Enlightenment rationality, because (once the environment has been dominated by reason) the only acceptable technologies are those that leave no trace. The idea that hunting technologies might leave acceptable traces simply does not fit into enlightened categories.

Alberta’s regulations also require hunters to gain permission before hunting on private land. What’s noteworthy about this is not the obvious prohibition of trespassing, but rather the pre-emptive reminder to ask for permission: hunting *presupposes* free and regular access to wild and rural lands that the hunter does not own. The hunter is assumed to *not* be the

economic master of the landscape, and yet must be granted access to a wide range of landscapes if hunting is to happen at all. It has an implicit vision of free-ranging humans. In fact, under very specific circumstances, hunters in Alberta may hunt on private property without permission so long as they do not fall under the definition of “occupied lands” (Government of Alberta 2010, 32). Moreover, Alberta’s regulations expressly prohibit landowners from charging any kind of fee for hunting access to their land: “it is unlawful to directly or indirectly buy or sell, trade or barter, or offer to buy or sell access to any land for the purpose of hunting any big game, furbearing animals or game birds” (*ibid.*). Hunting access in Alberta is explicitly removed from the economic sphere. Thus, not only does hunting situate the hunter in a comparatively “at-home” relation to wilderness, it carries with it a view of the human being as ideally able to range free throughout and within the land as a basic right. Far from being a form of rationality that holds the hunter back from the self-destructive desire to be fully natural, these regulations imply the opposite: human beings can be at home as non-dominating participants in even wild nature, in spite of the “facts” of private and agriculturally dominated property. The not unreasonable notion of free-range human beings undermines both the nature-culture dualism at the heart of progressive *homo faber* anthropology and the idea of wilderness preservation as sanitized distance, both of which are essential components of the dialectic of Enlightenment. Hunting thus stands outside the logic of civilization, divesting the latter of its conceptual necessity.

The Regulation of Use

Alberta regulations also preclude hunting in “wildlife sanctuaries,” but not for reasons of human alienation from nature: “Sanctuaries are intended to provide secure habitat for wildlife and thus allow populations to either increase or remain at desired levels. They include areas of high quality habitat, often where populations of some wildlife species have been significantly lowered or dispersed because of disturbance at some time in the past. Sanctuary status allows these areas to realize their potential to support wildlife and to act as core areas of production for animals that will disperse to surrounding areas. It also increases the opportunities for Albertans to view wildlife” (Government of Alberta 2010, 33). The primary rationale here is the ongoing sustenance of wildlife populations, some of which will be game animals (but not all). Within the historically contingent context of high human population densities and the attendant habitat loss, hunting must be regulated lest game species (and other species dependent on them) be extirpated or made extinct. As noted above, this at least superficially

resembles heroic self-limitation for the purpose of future enjoyment by the self of the natural Other. Indeed, hunters are enjoined to subject themselves to a conservation ethic that constrains the form and extent of their use of natural provisions and cycles. Hunting has been restricted to certain seasons in Alberta since the aforementioned 1877 ordinance,⁵ and to certain hours of the day since 1907 (Ondrack 1985, 17). Limits to the number of prey animals the hunter may lawfully bag date back to 1892 (12), and prohibitions against wasting a felled animal again date back to 1877. So how do these restrictions end up subverting the larger story of maintaining the pleasurable spectacle of nature through heroic self-limitation?

First, prohibitions against waste contrast with environmental Enlightenment because they implicitly require hands-on contact with mortality: "It shall be unlawful at any season, to hunt or kill buffalo from the mere motive of amusement, or wanton destruction, or solely to secure their tongues, choice cuts or peltries [undressed skins/pelts]; and the proof in any case, that less than one-half of the flesh of a buffalo has been used or removed shall be sufficient evidence of the violation of this section" (An Ordinance for the Protection of the Buffalo, quoted in Ondrack 1985, 8). Civilized heroes aren't supposed to be mucking about with corpses but rather enjoying cowed nature from a safe distance. Indeed, to contemporary urban sensibilities, the very mention of carcasses, raw skins, or spoiled meat is repugnant and certainly not a topic of polite conversation. To be reminded of death when eating and enjoying life seems like bad taste, but hunting makes this kind of visceral contact with freshly dead bodies unavoidable. Progress is supposed to insulate us from that kind of reminder.

Second, while each of the other forms of behavioural limitation above can be construed as instrumentally motivated towards the perpetuation of huntable game populations, the requirement to use a killed animal is explicitly justified in terms of the hunter's motivations.⁶ Prohibiting "mere... amusement" or "wanton destruction" cannot be accounted for exclusively in terms of self-interest. To the contrary, this regulation requires the hunter to *respect* the prey and its carcass. Moreover, this respect is understood to *require use* rather than preclude use, which is precisely the opposite of the leave no trace ethic. Generally speaking, preservationist non-use of nature supposedly equates to non-anthropocentrically motivated respect for the intrinsic value of nature, whereas the hunter's conservation is typically assumed to be born of nothing more than an anthropocentrically construed resourceism. But while enlightened civility attempts to avoid domination of nature by minimizing contact with it and ensure the rational distancing of the objective spectator, hunting—as regulated in Alberta—embodies an understanding of respect for the natural

Other that is inextricably connected with use, and a particularly bloody, visceral form of use to boot. Although limited hunting seasons, shooting hours, and bag limits have virtually the same empirical justification as not using nature at all (preventing irreparable harm to natural systems by not decimating prey species), the prohibition against waste introduces an element profoundly foreign to dominant cultural attitudes—namely, the idea that intrinsic and instrumental valuing can not only coincide, but that the avoidance of use may actually entail disrespect in certain cases. Even Kant (1990 [1785]), the veritable inventor of the term "Enlightenment" and who exclusively attributed intrinsic value to so-called rational beings, recognized that respecting someone does not preclude using them *also* as means (429). In this respect, regulated hunting might be more "enlightened" than environmentalist non-contact.

Third, the requirement to use game animals is limited by prohibitions against sale. Consonant with the removal of land access from economic consideration mentioned above, "market hunting" has been increasingly constrained since 1887 (Ondrack 1985, 12). Current Alberta regulations state that the "selling, buying, bartering, soliciting or trading in wildlife or wildlife parts, or offering to do so, is regulated under the Wildlife Act and Regulations. Many transactions are strictly prohibited, while others are regulated" (Government of Alberta 2010, 31). This removes an incentive for poaching and thus furthers conservation goals, but in so doing sustainable hunting is revealed to be inconsistent with contemporary economic rationality. Additionally, in areas where certain game species are not robust enough to sustain heavy hunting pressure, licences are distributed randomly to hunters through a lottery or draw system rather than purchased by those who can afford the rarity. Ondrack (1985) remarks that in "this regard Alberta is more socialist than the countries of communist Europe," who sold their best hunting opportunities to wealthy foreigners (325).

Simply put, the regulations on the use of prey animals in Alberta do not fit within the framework of Enlightenment civilization. On the one hand, hunting allows for the possibility of respectful contact with nature, whereas preservationist distance seems to view contact with nature as necessarily degrading. Hunting embodies the perfectly reasonable idea that non-extinction can be both instrumentally and intrinsically valuable, and the more shocking idea that using wild animals can be respectful as well. On the other hand, regulated hunting is so "democratic" that the use of prey animals simply cannot be a part of capitalist economics. Neither of these aspects reflect the cultural mainstream, and yet they are eminently reasonable undertakings.

Regulation of Technology

Reason, however, is what is supposed to distinguish Enlightenment over and against its alternatives. Prior stages in the dialectic must be subrational, or at least no longer rational in comparison with the current progress of reason in our day. This monolithic and exclusive conception of reason, moreover, defines itself in terms of mastering distance over and against raw nature. This is why it is epitomized by unending advances in technology, which are supposed to be inherently liberating. While of course it ought not to be misused, nothing about technological rationality ought to require in-principle limitation. More control over matter is always better, because it allows humans to enjoy nature without being mastered by it. There really is only one way to think (lest one descend into lotus-eating), and anyone who disagrees with this analysis is irrational.

Therefore, the clearest example of outright conflict between the enlightened approach to nature and Alberta hunting regulations is seen in the technological limitations placed on hunters. There are a number of different sorts of limitations to the forms of technology that hunters may legally use to pursue game: (1) limitations on motorized vehicle use, (2) prohibitions against hunting animals when they are indisposed, (3) prohibitions against indisposing animals, (4) weapon handicaps, and (5) minimum requirements for weapon lethality. In the first instance, hunting from motorized vehicles is generally illegal:

It is unlawful to... 2. harass, injure or kill any wildlife with a vehicle, aircraft or boat, 7. hunt any wildlife with or from an aircraft, or communicate, for the purpose of hunting, the signs or whereabouts of wildlife seen during a flight on an aircraft, ... 7. have a loaded firearm (live ammunition in breech, chamber or magazine) in or on, or discharge a weapon from a boat unless the boat is propelled by muscular power or is at anchor and the person is hunting, or any kind of aircraft or vehicle whether it is moving or stationary. It is unlawful to... 13. hunt big game within 6 hours of having disembarked from an aircraft, except for a jet or turbo-propelled aircraft, ... 15. be within 50 yards of a vehicle when discharging a weapon at an antelope. (Government of Alberta 2010, 18, 19; emphasis added)

Aside from exceptions for mobility impaired persons, Alberta hunting regulations require human beings to pursue their prey (or at least shoot at it) on foot—here, hunting is explicitly encouraged to be self-propelled. Of course, it is strictly legal to drive a vehicle into relatively close proximity of a prey animal (if you can find one that way), but the spirit of these laws contrasts with that of a safari, where vehicles allow close proximity to

animals while maintaining a safe distance. A safari uses advanced technology to ensure transcendent non-contact with nature (mediated through windows and camera lenses) whereas hunting, using the same vehicular technologies, limits them for the purpose of embodied and immanent contact with nature.

Moreover, hunting largely on foot levels the playing field somewhat between the prey and the hunter (the latter cannot fly or run particularly quickly). This levelling also seems to be an intention behind the second class of technological limitations, which constrain the hunter when the prey is particularly disadvantaged: “It is unlawful to... 2. discharge a weapon at a big game animal while it is swimming, ... [or to] 10. hunt a black bear under the age of one year, a female black bear accompanied by a cub under the age of one year, a female cougar accompanied by a kitten with spotted fur, or a cougar kitten with spotted fur” (Government of Alberta 2010, 19). While swimming, a big game animal is largely incapable of exercising its otherwise considerable abilities of evasion, and the law prohibits Alberta hunters from taking advantage of this temporary weakness.⁸ Juvenile carnivores are also similarly disadvantaged, and presumably their mothers are at a disadvantage because protective maternal instincts override instincts for self-preservation. While the prohibition against hunting mothers and children is also likely motivated by reducing waste and maintaining robust population levels, it is noteworthy that human technological prowess is limited here also for the purpose of giving the animal a fighting chance.

Third, Alberta regulations also prohibit putting animals in a position where their evasive capacities are compromised:

It is unlawful to... 5. set out, use or employ any of the following items for the purpose of hunting any wildlife: ... a light, ... a device designed to deaden the sound of the report of a firearm, ... recorded wildlife calls or sounds, or an electronically operated calling device ..., live wildlife, ... a poisonous substance or an immobilizing drug. It is unlawful to 1. set out, use or employ any of the following items for the purpose of hunting big game: bait, except as permitted for the hunting of black bears... [or a] trap... 4. be accompanied by a dog while hunting big game or allow a dog to pursue big game except when hunting cougar under the authority of a Cougar Licence... It is unlawful to... 4. hunt any game bird using... a trap, or bait. (Government of Alberta 2010, 18–19)

Infuriating bears with dogs or running down deer presumably capitalize unfairly on either the bear's aversion to dogs or the dog as a kind of deer-

seeking missile.⁹ Using a light compromises the animal's use of the cover of darkness (presumably thermal imaging during the day would be illegal as well), as well as creating hopelessly vulnerable "deer in the headlights." Bait (live or inert), traps, and chemicals virtually eliminate the need for "chase," although they are permitted in some cases (e.g., black bears in remote or problem areas, fur trapping, and agricultural pest control, respectively). A silencer reduces the reciprocity between using a firearm (an advantage, to be sure), and being able to hear a firearm that missed you (also an advantage!). Using recorded sounds or calls not only deskill the hunter, but apparently remove the opportunity for the prey animals to see through the ruse. Overall, these technologies approach (if not reach) the point where the animal is left comparatively powerless in the face of overwhelming and invasive techniques. Regulated hunting in Alberta attempts to provide prey the opportunity to exercise their evasive capabilities in response to the hunter's own self-limited technological capacities.

Fourth, hunters are not permitted to use any weapon they please in the pursuit of game animals: "It is unlawful to... 5. set out, use or employ any of the following items for the purpose of hunting any wildlife: an arrow equipped with an explosive head, a firearm that is capable of firing more than one bullet during one pressure of the trigger or a firearm that can be altered to operate as such,... a shotgun of a gauge greater than 10,... an auto-loading firearm that has the capacity to hold more than 5 cartridges in the magazine" (Government of Alberta 2010, 18). Further, "It is unlawful to... 3. hunt a migratory game bird using... a firearm loaded with a single bullet,... 4. hunt any game bird using... a shotgun in which the magazine and chamber combined will hold more than three rounds of ammunition, 5. have more than one shotgun, for personal use, at any time while hunting migratory game birds unless each shotgun, in excess of one, is unloaded and disassembled or unloaded and cased" (19). There are at least two rationales for these limitations. Prohibitions on explosive-tipped arrows, shotguns over 10 gauge, and hunting birds with single-bullet firearms are likely aimed at preventing wastage, but the rest of them intentionally handicap the hunter. Prohibiting automatic weapons, magazines that hold more than five rifle cartridges or three shot shells, and having more than one shotgun on hand at a time considerably restricts the rate of fire a hunter could direct at an animal. In essence, the law is telling the hunter to give up if he or she cannot successfully down the prey after three to five attempts. By itself, this form of limitation has no bearing on the regulation of species depletion (that is what bag limits are for). Rather, its only purpose can be to ensure a sort of balance between the animal's ability to flee and the hunter's marksmanship.¹⁰

The primary intent of all these intentional handicaps is to ensure that the hunter encounters the prey in a particular manner. The human brain and hand have come together to create all manner of technological marvels, but these can sometimes eliminate the ability of the animal to exercise its own particular excellences at avoiding capture. Alberta's hunting regulations curtail this power to dominate. One might wish to describe this encounter in terms of authenticity, because of the respect embodied in attempting non-transcendent contact between human and non-human animals. In the words of José Ortega y Gasset (1995 [1972]), "reason will try to preserve the distance that existed between [the hunter and the hunted] at the beginning of history and, where possible, to improve it in favour of the animal" (116). This careful maintenance of species difference is not at all what the progressive conception of reason imagines itself doing. The hunter seeks to *meet* the animal on its own terms, and to do this, the hunter's employment of human ingenuity immerses the human in the animal realm in a manner sufficient for *matching* the prey. Within these bounds, the hunter utilizes tools and skills to attempt to take the animal for use.

In this respect, the hunter's self-limitation is not heroic Enlightenment. Rather than allowing the (putatively) rational and (genuinely) distanced self to enjoy mostly visually the dirty pleasures of nature without being sullied by actually touching it oneself, the hunter's self-imposed limits allow the natural Other to remain a presence within its own habitat. The hunter employs reason, to be sure, but does so in order to intentionally prevent our technological power from overwhelming nature's own powers. Hunting is by no means technophobic, but it does hold technology up to the standard of matching rather than overcoming nature. Hunting does *not* enhance technological power as a better way to manipulate recalcitrant matter and allow humans to watch what remains of nature at a sanitized, ecologically friendly distance. Indeed, its curtailment of technological rationality is quite the opposite of the model of distanced and dominating Enlightenment reason, and yet it does not entail the blinkered subrationality of a lotus eater. Rather, hunting is the employment of reason for the limiting of power and the achievement of a kind of equivalence with the natural other.

The Encounter with Mortality

The final sort of technological limitation in the Alberta hunting regulations sets minimum requirements for the lethality of the hunter's weapon. In the case of archery, "Persons hunting big game must use an authorized bow and an authorized arrow. An authorized bow is one that is held, drawn and released by muscular power and has a draw weight of not less than 18 kg (40 lb.)... An authorized arrow is one that is not less than 61 cm (24 in.)

in length that has a tip that bears a head that is not intentionally designed to resist being withdrawn after it has penetrated an object. Furthermore, it must either have a solid, sharp cutting head of at least 7/8 inch in width, or a head that, when the arrow impacts, opens to present sharp cutting edges at least 7/8 inch in width" (Government of Alberta 2010, 40). The main intent here is to ensure that *if* the hunter's spotting, tracking, and marksmanship overcomes the animal's ability to evade,¹¹ the weapon will be lethal enough to ensure a swift kill. In the case of firearms, prohibitions against using "a pistol or revolver, . . . ammunition of less than .23 calibre, ammunition that contains non-expanding bullets, . . . a shotgun having a gauge of .410 or less . . . [or] a muzzle-loading firearm of less than .44 calibre" (18) have the same intent of ensuring mortal wounds. The government has no need to legislate an awareness that hunting is bound up with killing, of course, but these regulations are a reminder anyhow that death is most certainly in the cards. This is not what enlightened transcendence wants to hear. The contrast between bloodless spectatorship and hunting's encounter with mortality can be seen in a tongue-in-cheek advertisement for a hunting parka that reads, "Hunters are a lot like birdwatchers. Only after watching for awhile, we start shooting" (Columbia Sportswear 2004). Death is indeed the great sticking point.

The technical limitations mentioned above force the hunter to mimic the level (though not the means) of the prey's powers to navigate the natural world, and by so doing, *not* dominate the animal even though it will hopefully end up dead. This is repugnant nonsense to civilized ears for a variety of reasons. First, Enlightenment defines humanity and rationality in terms of rising above the level of the animal. Second, Enlightenment sees mimesis only as a form of domination, and an inadequately distanced form at that. Third, the reason for this view of mimesis is that death is understood only as domination, and so contact with death must be avoided while paradoxically mastering the "natural substrate" through rational distance. With these assumptions in play, hunting's intimate involvement with pain and death can do nothing but entail savagery and domination to the enlightened spectator, all the more so when it is practised recreationally instead of by necessity. Surely, the spectator would argue, there's no value in authentically encountering wild nature when that mimesis involves killing. Enlightenment logic positively values an animal if it is domestically benign or a cowed threat at the point of a sword, but undominated animals constitute an unwelcome *memento mori* (and a *memento bestia*) if not a mortal threat to civilized selfhood. The aesthetic appreciation of even wild nature is transcendently separated from the ecological systematics of mortality by the invisible "fourth wall," and nature red in tooth and claw

is rarely featured in nature appreciation anyway. The hero cannot come to terms with the mortality within nature—it is, for him, something to overpower and/or ignore.

But hunting undermines the notion that mimesis involves entry into existential horror. While no honest hunter will deny the felt melancholy following a kill, to hunt electively is to implicitly affirm this tragic aspect of the world. Even though a hunter needn't cognitively access this fact, the practice itself tacitly recognizes it. The truth is that hunters greatly enjoy hunting (which is why they do it, in spite of the opprobrium they suffer as a result), rather than undertaking the practice with inarticulate resignation or distaste. To intentionally meet an animal on its own terms and take its life for respectful use is bodily affirmed as a complex and profound good, miles away from a necessary evil. Thus when Holmes Rolston, III (1988) claims that "in ways that mere watchers of nature can never know, hunters know their ecology" (92), they also know (even if they can't articulate it) that the wild ecology in which they participate is not enemy but kin. Nature will not take away your rationality, humanity, or selfhood; indeed, it may actually deepen it. Hunters seek out immanent relations with the ecosystemic processes of heterotrophism without romanticism or repudiation. Because they are placed into direct physical contact with mortality without idealizing, infantilizing, sentimentalizing, or domesticating, hunting forces one to face the unavoidable fact that, eventually, all individual organisms die, including yourself. As Paul Shepard (1998) once quipped, "No hunter on record has bragged that he is master of his fate and captain of his soul" (59). The hunter must be humble like no enlightened hero could ever be.

Conclusion

Hunting as regulated in Alberta (and elsewhere) stands outside the opposition of humanity and mortality, outside the dichotomy of "reason" and "nature." It attempts to keep the human animal on par with non-human animals, and it ritually re-enacts predatory ecosystemic functions from which polite company must stay at arm's length. To hunt is to affirm bodily in one's own action the human's inevitable participation in the natural law of predation. Such hunting is mimetic without requiring mastery. It does not mimic the State of Nature, because to hunt is to know that there is no such thing. It is to know that a kill is not necessarily a murder, but rather to know that the mortal life is good. This Other to Enlightenment is not an absence of culture, reason, or humanity, not nasty and short brutality, but rather a picture of human being as *de jure* embedded within wildness, a place where use-contact can be consistent with respect, an authentic

response to other forms of animal excellence via limiting our power, and a tragicomic embracing of life as mortal flesh. Mimicking nature in this way is by no means irrational or subrational. It is to possess practical knowledge that wildness is not chaos, but rather the transcendent order that spun forth reason in the first place. Hunting's mimesis is an attempt to fit humanity into a more-than-human order that transcends but does not dominate, and as such does not require our dominance of it.

Notes

- 1 I am indebted to Ullrich Melle for bringing this point to my attention.
- 2 For the sake of brevity, I do not touch on Adorno and Horkheimer's treatment of Kant, Sade, or the culture industry.
- 3 This move recalls Marcuse's (1964) hope that technological advancement can and will provide the liberation it always promised, requiring only that we revolt against the entrenched social interests that serve to benefit from perpetuating post-industrial drudgery (1–18).
- 4 I do suspect that consumerism, ignorance, or other social factors can detract from the subversive characteristics, but I do not have the space to explore those intricacies here.
- 5 "The period between the fifteenth day of November and the fourteenth day of the following August, inclusive, shall be a closed season for female buffalo" (quoted in Ondrack 1985, 8).
- 6 While the prohibition against waste remains in force to this day, the current Alberta regulations do not mention the motives by which a hunter might decide to waste the game animal: "It is unlawful to . . . abandon, destroy or allow the edible meat of any game bird or big game animal (except cougar or bear), to become unfit for human consumption . . . [or to] allow the skin of any bear or cougar to be wasted, destroyed, spoiled or abandoned . . . [or to] fail to make every effort possible to immediately retrieve a migratory game bird that a person has killed or wounded. A hunter must have adequate means to retrieve any migratory bird that he or she may kill, cripple or injure" (Government of Alberta 2010, 18, 19).
- 7 Interestingly, this implies that *roadkill* is illegal, although I know of no manner by which this law is enforced in Canada. This brings to mind Lawrence Cahoone's (2009) point that "hunting is one of the few activities in modern society in which killing of un-endangered species is regulated. Nobody is fined or jailed for killing wild animals by backhoe, combine or sedan" (85).
- 8 Surprisingly, published Alberta regulations do not prohibit "shooting sitting ducks" (or other waterfowl), although this is generally precluded by the larger ethic of "fair chase."
- 9 While bullets and shot are quicker than dogs by several orders of magnitude, they are inert ballistic projectiles that presumably do not place big game at the same level of disadvantage. As to using dogs in bird hunting, the

ability to fly must be thought to adequately counterbalance the dog's ability to seek out the birds.

- 10 It can be somewhat bewildering to imagine how, if ever, these regulations are enforced or policed. But the point I am making concerns not the implementation of regulations, but rather the principles at work within them. This distinction is akin to that between what is ethical and what is legal, and reminiscent of the idea that ethics is doing the right thing even when no one else is watching (sometimes attributed to Aldo Leopold, himself a hunter). This may be of little comfort, but the fact remains that no law can fully compensate for a lack of character integrity in the citizen.
- 11 This is by no means guaranteed. A 2009 government study shows that while the "observation success rate" of mule deer in two southwestern Alberta wildlife management units was 83%, the "harvest success rate" was only 22%. The observation-to-harvest ration for Whitetail deer came in at 80% to 14%, moose at 33% to 0%, elk at 12% to 6%, and black bear at 0% to 0%. Birds were considerably better at rates of 94% to 63% for waterfowl and 67% to 43% for upland game birds, but even there, hunters had barely a 50/50 chance of successfully downing their prey (Sustainable Resource Development 2010, 4).

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