

The hunting motif in the literature of the United States:

1782-1992

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Abstract

The thesis analyses a representative but by no means complete selection of American hunting texts from 1782 to 1992. The first chapter gives an overview of the history of hunting and important contemporary and related literature. It looks at characters such as Daniel Boone and David Crockett, assesses the changes hunting underwent and mentions the recent developments, such as the rise of the horror thriller. The following twelve chapters analyse novels and short stories by twelve different authors. The main research results are:

- 1) The establishment of a tripartite structure. Hunting texts can be divided into political, pro-hunting and anti-hunting texts. Pro-hunting texts tend to have a self-confident first-person narrator. Anti-hunting texts tend to have a less confident third-person narrator.
- 2) The use of either an anthropocentric or a biocentric perspective.
- 3) The animal described in hunting stories is of exceptional size, danger, or beauty. One effect of this is an increased polarisation between hunter and hunted.
- 4) Several writers employ binary oppositions as a stylistic device, such as life versus death, bravery versus fear, or man versus animal.
- 5) The hunter is usually described as a lonely, 'wifeless' man, either without any relationship at all, or incapable of entering into a relationship. He has also an unusually high potential of aggression, an urge to kill.

The diversity and versatility of the hunting motif as well as the large group of texts discovered, and listed in an appendix, demonstrates that hunting stories are an important part of American literature and culture.

The feeling of happiness derived from the satisfaction of a wild instinctual impulse untamed by the ego is incomparably more intense than that derived from satiating an instinct that has been tamed. The irresistibility of perverse instincts, and perhaps the attraction in general of forbidden things finds an economic explanation here.

Sigmund Freud

Civilization and its Discontents

And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.'

Genesis 1:26

Here the aim of the hunter is to take only the doomed surplus. If this can be done, breeding numbers will not be reduced, and hunting at the same level can continue indefinitely. Obviously, such hunting should take place early in the year, soon after breeding, when the population is at its highest. As the season progresses, and more natural mortality has occurred, the crop that can be taken declines. If the hunting is carried out after the main period of natural mortality, not only would there be fewer birds available, but the breeding population might also be reduced, and hence the number that can be hunted the following year.

New Generation Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe (1987)

Statement of Originality

The undersigned hereby acknowledges that this thesis is solely an original work and any references henceforth used have been appropriately acknowledged.

Justin Bender

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Stirling, June 1995

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1. HUNTING IN NORTH AMERICA: A HISTORY

When the first European settlers reached Chesapeake Bay on May 6, 1607, they were surrounded by nothing but wilderness and dense woodland, with an hitherto unknown abundance of game and fish. The vast forests were seen as dark, hostile, dangerous, threatening and impenetrable, a feeling partly due to the lack of vision and the subsequent lack of control felt while being in the woods. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century descriptions of the American forest as a nearly unsurmountable wilderness with many hitherto unaccounted dangers all create a climate of hostility. Roderick Nash in his extensive analysis *Wilderness and the American Mind* argues that

Good vision was early man's competitive edge in the struggle for existence. Coupled with his brain it enabled him to anticipate, plan ahead, and survive....With his eyes early man bought time and the chance to think. Sight (and openness) meant security. It followed that early man preferred an open environment, where he could employ his vision and his brain, to the shadowy wilderness. In the forest or jungle keen sight counted for little. There the race usually went to the smellers, the hearers, and the physically powerful, and man did not rank high in these categories.¹

What Nash states for early man is equally valid for the first Europeans hunting in North America. Hunting conditions were completely different from anything the immigrants had experienced in Europe. There were no vast clear areas, and neither "vision" nor "security". Compared to the European collective a different and individual way of hunting full of risks and dangers had to be developed in order to adapt quickly to the huge wilderness. This is a point of vital importance for a proper understanding of the relation between hunting and wilderness in North America until the middle of the nineteenth century, a relation which is characterized by struggling and fighting for survival.

The importance of vision in hunting is stressed by the Spanish twentieth-century philosopher and hunter José Ortega y Gasset in his passionate defence of the chase *Meditations On Hunting*, written in 1942:

He [the hunter] does not believe that he knows where the critical moment is going to occur. He does not look tranquilly in one determined direction, sure beforehand that the game will pass in front of him. The hunter knows that he does not know what is going to happen, and this is one of the greatest attractions of his occupation. Thus he needs to prepare an attention of a different and superior style - an attention which does not consist in riveting itself on the presumed but consists precisely in not presuming anything and in avoiding inattentiveness. It is a "universal" attention, which does not inscribe itself on any point and tries to be on all points. There is a magnificent term for this, one that still conserves all its zest of vivacity and imminence: alertness. The hunter is the alert man. ²

According to Ortega y Gasset the necessity and ability to have the whole horizon or a large area under control is what distinguishes the true hunter. Whereas Nash tries to describe the wilderness conditions in general, Ortega y Gasset converts the problem of vision into a positive and challenging point, thus trying to improve the image of the hunter. The hunter is a man who does not shy from difficulties such as the uncertainty of when and where dangerous game is going to (suddenly) appear, instead this very problem is a challenge and "one of the greatest attractions" of the hunt. In order to deal with it successfully, the hunter needs a "different and superior" approach; however, Ortega y Gasset does not reveal any details of this approach other than a particular psychological awareness. ³

It is because of the difficulty in controlling the area in which hunting takes place that hunting stories are always texts in which "vision" or the sudden loss of sight is of great importance. Often either the hunter loses sight of his prey, such as a bear withdrawing into the woods or a whale or a marlin diving deep into the sea, or human victims are suddenly attacked "out of the blue", they cannot see the shark coming up from underneath, or the snake lying on the path in the darkness of the night. Loss of vision

subsequently creates fear, confusion and insecurity because it weakens the hunter's (or the victim's) power and superiority; it is a sudden and decisive change in the fight between hunter and animal, and it is one of the few means for the animal to gain an advantage over the hunter. Two prominent examples of the loss of vision and direction in the woods are William Faulkner's "The Bear" (1942) and Norman Mailer's *Why are we in Vietnam?* (1967), both of which will be analysed in this study. Apart from vision the sense of hearing plays a minor role in hunting texts, and the other senses such as smell or touch are of little importance.

The pioneer and the settler were the only white people to intrude repeatedly into the dark wilderness, and the only ones whose eyes were trained specially to penetrate this area. They were struggling to clear the woods either for a path or for a settlement, and killing animals either to secure food and clothing or simply in order to defend themselves. Hence hunting meant danger and risks which were difficult to assess. One of the consequences of this was, as Nash points out, the pioneers' obsession

to clear the land, to remove the vision-obscuring trees and vines, to bring light into darkness. Certainly there was an economic motive for this attitude. Religion also figured in it, since wilderness was construed by most frontiersmen to be in league with devils, demons, and the evil forces of darkness that civilisation must overcome. But, I increasingly feel, the heart of the bias against wilderness was the ancient association between security and sight. The American pioneer re-experienced the situation and the anxieties of early man. Neither felt at home in the wilderness.⁴

Nash describes here the demonisation of the forest, a vital part of the politics of colonisation which finds a reflection in the hunting literature with descriptions of animals as "wild" or "savage." Deforestation as one reply to this threat characterizes North American history until the middle of the nineteenth century when the conservation

movement came into being. Until then trees were treated like animals, as an infinite resource.

The image of the forest as a hostile area is mentioned by the American conservationist Madison Grant in his essay "Saving the Redwoods", included in the 1925 edition of *The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club*, where he states that "Settlers regarded the trees as enemies. The woods or heavy undergrowth gave shelter to their enemies, the Indians, and to the wild beasts that preyed upon their cattle." ⁵ These observations prove that the hunter in North America had to face several simultaneous difficulties. He had to overcome unknown and nearly impenetrable terrain, he had to fight the Indians who were well accustomed to this terrain, and he had to fight dangerous beasts, many of species he had never encountered before. Nash observes that "Wild animals added to the danger of the American wilderness, and here too the element of the unknown intensified feelings." ⁶ The majority of these animals were described in contemporary records as either "wild" or "savage beasts", and this characterizes the relationship between hunter and animal in the first two centuries of colonization.

This feeling of unease, even fear, while being in the woods might also have been responsible for the creation of the huge potential of aggression, for the ready inclination to kill, which is so characteristic of the history of American hunting. Killing emerges here as the hunter's only means of protection; the better he shoots the more likely he is to survive, and to return to his society. But killing was also a means to release pressure, a point mentioned by Crèvecoeur (see Ch. 2) and also put forward by Nash when he analyses the temptations of the wilderness:

Immigrants to the New World certainly sought release from oppressive European laws and traditions, yet the complete license of the wilderness was an overdose. Morality and social order seemed to stop at the edge of the clearing. Given the absence of restraint, might not the pioneer succumb to ... "wilderness-temptations"? ⁷

If we consider the fate of animals such as the passenger pigeon or the bison, the American hunter definitely did succumb to these temptations, and, as is shown in this study, literature noticed and reflected it. The area of hunting reflects a fear valid for society as a whole: the danger of the "wilderness-temptations" resulting in "the absence of restraint".

For the hunter the wilderness stood for savagery, danger and barbarism, it was infested with dangerous Indians, and it had to be brutally conquered. As P. O'Neill argues in his analysis *The Frontiersmen*:

The rifle, the ax and arrogant self-confidence were the weapons that tamed America's first frontier...The backwoodsmen were a law unto themselves. A man had no use for Eastern society or any of its restrictions when he could hack out a clearing, stack up a log shelter and settle in, cocksure that his rifle would supply him with food and clothes. ⁸

This rifle, usually called "The Long Rifle", was the most important and indispensable tool of the pioneer. The overwhelming majority of contemporary drawings or paintings depict the pioneer always with his long rifle, a custom which finds its counterpart in the many photographs of nineteenth- and twentieth-century hunters kneeling in front or behind their game, rifle in hand.

Due to its long barrel and spiral grooves the long rifle was much more precise than the musket, and it gave the hunter a much longer range of up to two hundred yards. The consequences of this invention, introduced and perfected by German and Swiss gunsmiths as early as 1720, were widespread and described by O'Neill as follows:

This deadly and ingenious arm became a paramount tool - with the ax - of frontier existence and helped shape both the character and the aims of the first Westerner. It provided much of his food and clothing. It gave a hunter enormous mobility; a man with a few pounds of salt, some cornmeal, a long rifle, a scalping knife and an awl for stitching moccasins could sustain himself for month in the

wilderness. The rifle was his primary insurance against tribal raiding and - as he gradually learned the bitter lessons of Indian warfare - a weapon that made him vastly superior to regular troops in woodland skirmishes....More marvelous yet was the rapidity with which scores of thousands of Old World immigrants and their children adapted themselves to the sort of life in which the need for such a weapon was commonplace and the finality with which they abandoned the habits, even the memories, of the lives they had left behind.⁹

A long rifle equalled independence, freedom and superiority, and due to its efficiency it was quickly adopted all over the country. It secured the hunter's powerful and important position in society as well as in the wilderness; with it a hunter could go into the wilderness for month and could, due to the longer range of the rifle, control a wider area. Further it turned the hunter into a person to be reckoned with in military terms. The backwoods marksman was a deadly danger, hence, as O'Neill argues, "the world's armies were forced to emulate him in the end."¹⁰ This development of hunting is in line with that of whalers, used for naval wars, or fox hunters in Britain, used for the cavalry.

O'Neill's analysis supports further several points which reappear in contemporary hunting stories:

Indians were not the forest's only dangerous inhabitants. Buffalo, deer and squirrels existed in it in great numbers, but so did bear, wildcats, panthers, venomous snakes and wolves so bold that they ignored gunfire. The forest could swallow the unwary. Its broadest paths or traces (the word trail had not yet evolved) had been trampled out by buffalo, but these were often capricious as to direction, and the routes of Indian travel were dim to the untrained eye. The hunter and explorer moved through the woodland by guess and by God, fording and refording rivers, and blazing trees as points of reference to be used in extricating themselves from its depths. The forest presented backwoodsmen with endless difficulty and exasperation when they pressed beyond its established clearings with their wives, children, cattle and swine, and surrounded them with constant menace once they had settled on virgin land. Indians could slide from it and vanish into it like ghosts, but the frontiersman's cabin was easily distinguishable and immovable in its midst....The invasion of the West was triggered in the Old World - by the poverty of Germans in the Rhinish Palatinate and by bad harvests and rebellion at high rents (as well as at the suppression of Presbyterianism) among Lowland Scots and Englishmen.¹¹

This quotation shows first the abundance of wildlife, so often described by, for example, Crèvecoeur and Cooper, with some of the animals being very dangerous and "so bold that they ignored gunfire". But it presents also the contemporary picture of the huge dark forest, filled with all kinds of voracious monsters, a forest which could "swallow" a hunter

unless he was very experienced and had the blessing of God. This wilderness was a sinister labyrinth, an actively threatening forest dragging everybody deeper and deeper into it, and only by creating "points of reference" could the hunter get out of it. The hunter is virtually fighting the wilderness. The description also supports Nash's point about the importance of vision and the subsequent danger of loss of direction as one great threat of the woods for the hunter. Finally it advances, as does Crèvecoeur's Letter IV (see Ch. 2), suppression and excessive restrictions as reasons for the massive immigration of Europeans to the American West.

The importance of hunting in the eighteenth century is further underlined by the economic power of hunting products such as hides or meat:

Hunting knives, hoes, iron skillets or cooking pots, awls, metal needles, salt, firearms, powder, lead and bullet molds were beyond their powers of manufacture. These items were mostly obtained with the backwoodsman's rifle: money was practically non-existent and such treasures were largely acquired by barter in deer hides. From this practice evolved the term "a buck", since a buckskin brought a dollar's worth of goods for many years.¹²

The fact that everybody could pay his taxes with hides is another proof of the importance of hunting. This process was still common as late as 1785, when the legislature of North Carolina was set up.

The legislature took pains to devise a rudimentary scale of monetary exchange adapted to the barter system, the common means of paying debts. As the British monetary system was still in use, taxes were made payable with bacon valued at sixpence per pound; rye whiskey at two shillings, sixpence per gallon; sugar at one shilling per pound; and otter, beaver and deer skins at six shillings apiece.¹³

Hunting products were not only the first but also a strong currency, accepted even by the government in payment of taxes, as well as any other financial obligation.

From the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards the bear played a particular role in North American hunting. O'Neill states that

Of all the beasts in the teeming frontier forests, the most formidable by far was the great black bear. Panthers, wolves and poisonous reptiles were accorded proper respect by the Indians and settlers. But a full-grown black bear, standing six-feet tall and weighing up to 500 pounds, was a fearsome creature to contend with. The Indians staged elaborate hunts in which a line of warriors, sometimes as many as 500, beat through the forest to drive bears to open ground where other hunters would launch a storm of spears and arrows. White hunters had an advantage with their long rifles and steel traps, and killed large numbers of bears for meat and fur. Davy Crockett built a legend in Tennessee by tallying 47 bears in the course of a single month. But it was a risky business. Wounded animals were known to run hunters down and mangle them hideously. And woe, as well, to the unfortunate soul who found himself in close proximity to a she-bear guarding her cubs.¹⁴

The sheer size of the bear combined with its ferociousness was what turned it into such a feared monster. I would suggest a link between this early establishment of the bear as a monster and the fact that enormous size and ferociousness are the most important criteria for animal descriptions in the many later American hunting stories.

Despite this danger hunters were driven either by chance to prove their bravery or by the profit motive to hunt the bear, for its meat and fur were precious trading goods. Further, Davy Crockett's legend of killing "47 bears in the course of a single month" shows the roots of the later competitive mass killing, described by, for instance Cooper, and so characteristic of Hemingway. The quotation indicates how exceptional the risks of bear hunting were, in particular if it was a she-bear or if the bear was not killed immediately. This helped to establish the image of the hunter as a fearless and brave hero and defender of his family, willing to take on every challenge of the wilderness.

The popularity of the bear as an animal to hunt finds an immediate reflection in fiction, beginning with Thomas Bangs Thorpe's *The Big Bear of Arkansas* (1841), which later served as a blueprint for Faulkner's "The Bear" (1942), Charles Major's *The Bears of Blue River* (1901), the story of Johnny Bear in Ernest Seton Thompson's *Lives of the Hunted* (1901), James Curwood's *The Grizzly King* (1916, filmed by Jean-Jacques Annaud in 1988), Norman Mailer's 1967 grizzly hunt *Why are we in Vietnam?*, and the 1977

horror film *Grizzly*.¹⁵ This large group of 'bear in the forest' stories was not matched by an equal amount of stories about bison hunting on the plains. With the exception of texts linked to Buffalo Bill Cody, the bison does not occupy a similarly important position in American hunting literature.

Another development was the early and longlasting link between hunting and the exploration of new areas, hitherto unknown to the settlers and colonizers. The hunter emerges as a pathfinder who returned not only with furs, but also with precious geographical knowledge. Henry N. Smith in his *Virgin Land* (1950) argues that "the Western hunter and guide was praiseworthy not because of his intrinsic wildness or half-savage glamor, but because he blazed trails that hard-working farmers could follow".¹⁶ Analysed later in this chapter is the impact of the hunter, trapper and pioneer Daniel Boone, who in 1769 found the first way into Kentucky. He is the most famous example of the hunter acting as a pathfinder.

The fur trade was America's first real industry and led to further opening and settlement of states such as Kentucky and Oregon. For instance, fur was the only interest France and Louis XV had in Louisiana. Writers reacted to these developments with books such as Washington Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835), or *Astoria: Or Anecdotes of an Enterprise beyond the Rocky Mountains* (1836), in which Irving describes the establishment of a fur-trading post by John Jacob Astor in 1811. Irving gives as one of the reasons for fur-hunting the "vast quantities of the sea-otter to be found along the coast, and the immense prices to be obtained for its fur in China." He mentions further that as early as 1792, "there were twenty-one vessels under different flags, plying along the west

coast and trading with the natives".¹⁷ This is a clear example of the huge impact, and the subsequent economic importance, of hunting by the end of the eighteenth century.

One of the most complex analyses of fur-hunting in and around the Rocky Mountains is LeRoy R. Hafen's *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, published in 1965. He stresses the significance of the fur hunter for the development of the whole country. The hunter's pelt-gathering was "an agency for geographical exploration, for claims to territory, and ultimately for national dominion". In addition, fur hunting was "an integral part of the international struggle for possession of the continent".¹⁸ Henry Chatillon (1816-1875), who guided the historian Francis Parkman on his tour of the prairies in 1846, is a famous example of the hunter as an explorer. This function of the hunter as explorer is frequently mentioned and reminds us of Melville's description of the whaling vessel as "the pioneer in ferreting out the remotest and least known parts of the earth."¹⁹

Hafen's extremely detailed analysis shows that the person of the hunter or trapper and the process of killing are nowhere analysed in detail. One reason, also supported by Lewis Saum in his analysis *The Fur Trader and the Indian* (1965), is the lack of personal records. The hunter was considered by historians such as Hafen to be illiterate or not involved with keeping diaries or any notes. The few details Hafen mentions reveal nevertheless a picture of an annual cycle of events. This cycle started as soon as the weather permitted with the spring hunt, where usually small groups of hunters and packhorses went out on hunting expeditions for a period of up to several months. Around July or August a big meeting was held, called the "rendezvous". In the autumn the hunters gathered in or around forts or trading-posts to prepare for the winter.

Hafen's only description of the hunter as such is given in his introduction. There he considers the hunter to be a unique individual who

had succumbed to the lure of the mountain wilderness. And once wedded to the wilds and having had the thin veneer of civilisation rubbed off, he was loath to return to the restrictions of town life. Instead, he continued year after year in the untamed country, facing the rigors of the elements, wild animals, and the frequently hostile Indians. He dressed in what is perhaps the only original American costume - the fringed buckskin suit. With powder horn, shot pouch, and muzzle-loading rifle he was self-supporting and independent. For money he had little need; barter supplied his simple wants. A lodge made of buffalo skins furnished him winter shelter; and a buffalo robe spread beneath the stars made a bed for summer nights. With a horse to ride, one to carry his trappings, and others for his squaw and children - if he had been long in the wilderness - he could journey wherever the trails led, or did not lead. The typical early trapper was a young man - strong, hardy, adventure loving. He had little book learning, but books gave no instructions for trapping beaver or shooting grizzlies. Most of them were men educated for the life they led. They could read the tracks of moccasins, the sign of beaver, and the trace of travois. They could mold their bullets from bars of lead, and strike a fire with flint and steel. Some were fugitives from law and civilisation; others were specimens of the best in rugged manhood. Some were heroic, some brutal; most were adventurous, many picturesque. With them a man was rated by his strength and skill, his courage and his integrity. They gloried in the name of Mountain Man.²⁰

This summary is in line with all the main points made either above or below in the analysis of Daniel Boone. The hunter's education and upbringing consisted mainly of "learning by doing", and not much else. Although the hunter features prominently in American literature, reading was not one of the favourite occupations of the hunter. The hunter was a freedom loving individual, with "little book learning", and "simple wants" which could be satisfied by bartering his furs, which were a common currency, as described above by Paul O'Neill, or by Theodore Roosevelt in his hunting books (see Ch. 6). In short, he was a competitive self-made man, eager for adventures and challenges. However, this way of life, despite the freedom of the woods, must have resulted in considerable pressure upon the hunter, a pressure which he could only release once a year, in the big summer rendezvous. These meetings started in 1825 and lasted for sixteen years, until the decline of the fur trade. Held only once a year at various places, these meetings were a unique indicator of social customs and behaviour. Hafen writes that

Here was opportunity for barter and for recreation. Races and contests of all kinds were arranged; gambling and drinking were indulged in. Beaver skins were money, and with these hairy banknotes all primitive wants could be satisfied. White trappers with Indian wives bedecked their spouses with bright cloth and gewgaws. Most of these Mountain Men were of the openhanded sort who in a few days of prodigal living squandered the earnings of a year.²¹

These rendezvous were the only opportunity for the hunters to exchange goods and to get either amusements or some form of social life. Having "squandered the earnings of a year" they then returned again into the woods for another year of hunting. Many of them did not see bigger settlements or cities for decades. Washington Irving in his *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A.* (1837) describes one of these gatherings on Green River in the Mid-West.

The problem of drinking during these rendezvous was widespread and characteristic of hunting, and it continued to overshadow hunting for many years. Certainly the hunters went wild; Hafen, for instance, quotes a source describing these men losing control:

[the hunters] outvied each other in all manner of mad pranks. In the beginning of their spree many feats of horsemanship and personal strength were exhibited... But the horse-racing, fine riding, wrestling, and all the manlier sports, soon degenerated into the baser exhibition of the "crazy drunk" condition.²²

The detrimental effects of alcohol at this time were not only restricted to the hunters, for, as Hafen argues, "The traffic in liquor had become an important factor in the Indian trade on the river and on the mountains". Hafen sees the reasons for this in the hunters' desire to "indemnify themselves for the sufferings and privations of a year spent in the wilderness".

²³ The hunting rendezvous were certainly dominated, if not sometimes destroyed, by alcohol, and as such they foreshadow, for example, Faulkner's later hunting camps in the woods as well as Hemingway's lifelong alcohol problems.

When the hunter became old, usually in his thirties, he either became a fur trader, using his relations with fellow traders and hunters to gather peltries and to secure their often difficult transport to the big cities, or he turned to agriculture and farming.

The decline of the fur trade came around 1841, and for two reasons. First, Hafen argues that "The introduction of the silk hat in the style centers of the world, in the early 1830s, soon reduced the demand for beaver pelts used in production of the high-topped beaver headgear".²⁴ The effect of this is similar to the introduction of petroleum and the subsequent lack of demand for whale-oil. Secondly, as is usual for American hunting, the hunting grounds were hunted to exhaustion. The

depletion of animals from over-trapping had made the procuring of skins more difficult. The net result was a decline in the take of beaver. As this occurred and the rendezvous was abandoned, the forts came to cater more to buffalo skins and robes. Whereas the great reliance for beaver (especially in the central Rockies) had been upon the catch by white trappers, the procuring of buffalo robes was done by Indians. In general, the beaver pelts came principally from the mountain streams, the buffalo skins mainly from the high plains east of the Rocky Mountains.²⁵

However, hunting did not stop, the hunters simply moved on to complete the destruction of the next available animal, the bison. Given the combined attempts of Indian and white hunters the bison had no chance of survival.

An important contemporary source of hunting is John Filson's *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke* (1784), a collection of stories and events of the first settlers in Kentucky which also includes several reports about the pioneer, hunter and pathfinder Col. Daniel Boone (1734-1820). Daniel Boone occupies an outstanding position in the history of hunting in North America. The most recent biography of Boone is Lawrence Elliott's *The Long Hunter A New Life of Daniel Boone* (1976), which gives a detailed picture of hunting conditions around 1800. Elliott describes how, from his early

childhood, Boone grew up in the woods and soon developed excellent hunting skills. Like Ernest Hemingway he got a rifle as a present on his twelfth birthday. At the age of sixteen he led his family on a trail to Virginia. Boone was a commercial hunter and trapper. Frequently and heavily indebted or even bankrupt throughout his life, he often went on lengthy hunting expeditions to pay off his debts, another example of hunting goods used as currency. Some of these expeditions were as long as a year, and hence he was called a "long" hunter. The hunting products included peltry such as bear and buckskin, bear bacon, buffalo tongues and meat, venison hams and tallow. Elliott mentions further that "Deer was the most important game, not only for its hide but for the venison that could be cured with saltpeter or cut into "jerk", small strips of meat smoked over a low fire for preservation". Elliott then describes the complexity of hunting skills necessary to survive in the wilderness:

a good hunter was not merely a tracker of game - he was a naturalist, an explorer, a gunsmith. He had to know what the sunset foretold and the smell of the wind. He took his directions from the sun and the stars, and if they were clouded over he could find north by feeling for the mossy side of a tree. He had to know where medicinal plants grew, how to repair his rifle and use a tomahawk and skinning knife. He had to learn the ways of the animals and birds, and especially to distinguish between their true call and the clever imitation of an Indian lying in wait.²⁶

Here a picture emerges of a hunter as a completely independent unit, able to survive for month on his own. He made his own powder, moulded his own bullets, was able to repair his rifle, had an outstanding sense of direction and knew the woods like no one else. However, with the advance of civilisation different hunting methods or ethics arrived, methods which were detested by men like Boone:

A lesser breed of men seemed to be coming to dominance...Men whose notion of tracking game was the fire hunt. Dozens of them, firebrand in one hand, rifle in the other, would form a circle a mile across, then close in, driving every living thing deeper into a trap from which no animal, no matter how small, was allowed to escape. It was an effective though cruel way to get meat, but to Boone, who

believed that the sanctity of wild things required a man to pit his woodland skills against them, it was contemptible.²⁷

Here, nothing is left of what could be called fair hunting, it is just an "effective" method "to get meat", and nothing else. It is also important to note that fire destroyed not only every living creature, regardless of whether it was edible or not, but it also destroyed the natural habitat of animals, a common side effect of the settlement of the American West.²⁸ Further it is just one example of the early form of mass-killing, surprisingly similar to the seine fishing described in Cooper's *The Pioneers* (see Chap. 3), an example for the contradiction or dichotomy of fair and unfair hunting, so typical of hunting in North America. Paul O'Neill gives us another such description:

Indians were outraged again and again, because of this sense of symmetry in nature, by the slaughter of forest animals that inevitably followed heavy white settlement on the advancing frontier. This seems to have been true even of those who aped the white man and harvested beaver pelts and deer hides to satisfy their newborn lust for trade goods. None forgot that when they were left to their own devices they killed only what game they needed. All felt spiritually akin and grateful to the animals they felled. And because they had always lived in enormous, empty forest space before the white invasion, they conceived of ecological balance as the natural, even sacred way of things on earth. The Pennsylvania tribes were provoked to bitter retaliatory ambushes after a rare backwoods lout named Black Jack Schwartz, "the wild hunter of the Juniata," staged a grand animal drive at West Mahantango Creek in about 1760. The "wild hunter" and a group of kindred spirits who called themselves the Panther boys killed 109 wolves, 112 foxes, 41 panthers, 114 mountain cats, 17 black bears, 1 white bear, 198 deer, 111 buffalo and more than 500 smaller animals, and then - after laboriously piling timber over this mountain of flesh - set the whole vast heap afire to celebrate their prowess. Schwartz was an unusual sort of maniac, even for the frontier, and local whites were almost as enraged as the Indians - though only because the smouldering pyre stank so horribly for so long thereafter. But he reflected the white view of game - it existed to be killed - and, by implication, the European concept of personal property, which separated the races in such irreconcilable fashion as the frontier moved ever westward.²⁹

This development, around 1760, already anticipates later competitive mass-killing, such as exercised by Hemingway or described by Cooper and Mailer. Game suffered the same plight as the bison, the whales or the passenger pigeons. It simply existed "to be killed", completely contrary to the position of the Indians or of woodsmen such as Daniel Boone, Natty Bumppo, Sam Fathers, Isaac McCaslin, or of the biologists in the horror thrillers of the 1970s (see Chs. 9 and 12). Eighteenth-century European immigrants and settlers

simply tried to transfer their standards and understanding of treating wildlife as "personal property" to North America, and, as the history shows, they treated their property very badly. Setting "the whole vast heap" of hunted game alight is the ultimate arrogance and shows how little these killers cared for wildlife. It is worth noting that O'Neill calls Black Jack Schwartz a "maniac", an expression frequently used in primary and secondary hunting literature to describe the mental state of hunters.

Peter Verney in his gruesome 1979 account *Homo Tyrannicus A History of Man's War against Animals* gives another similar description of the American mass-slaughtering of animals, this time about the fate of the passenger pigeons (around 1850):

At the roosting sites would be men armed with guns, clubs, long poles and pots of sulphur to blind and confuse the birds. As the pigeons came in their wings made a roar like thunder. The noise was terrific and terrified the horses while overhead, swinging in lazy circles, were hawks, buzzards and eagles awaiting their pick. At nightfall the gunners would move about the woods firing in volleys at the massed birds above them. Sometimes 50 or more would fall at a time and be collected, while countless more were wounded and crept away into the undergrowth to perish. It was not uncommon for a party of three guns to end with a bag of over 5,000 birds, as evidence of a single night's work.³⁰

This emotionless and indiscriminate bird slaughtering by people whom Verney interestingly characterizes as "gunners" reminds us of the expression "sportsmen" used by Cooper in *The Pioneers*. Both the above quoted passages show also the complete absence of any environmental considerations; the sheer abundance of game or pigeons lead to the naive belief that the resources would be infinite. Boone's response to similar killings he experienced resulted in him demanding the protection of wildlife when the colony of Boonesborough was set up in 1775. As Elliott argues:

The most significant piece of legislation was Daniel Boone's bill to conserve game. After little more than a month "in the eye of the rich land", the men had gone hungry because trigger-mad hunters had driven off the deer, buffalo and bears; without some regulation, they would stay hungry. Boone's bill set limits for each hunter and forbade the waste of meat. All his life he had opposed the wanton slaughter of game, and at Boonesborough he did something about it.³¹

Elliott describes this rapid deterioration of wildlife in 1779 when Boone returned to Boonesborough after a long absence: "In little more than a year, the settlement he had founded had changed beyond toleration....there was no game worth shooting within twenty miles, and the fort itself sometimes seemed more crowded than Salisbury on Saturday night." ³² It is worth noting that as early as 1779 the problem of "trigger-mad hunters" had not only arisen but had also been noted and discussed, for it was so serious that it endangered the food supply of Boonesborough.

With problems like these places like Boonesborough or Salisbury are very similar to Cooper's Templeton in *The Pioneers* (1823). Templeton as well as Boonesborough are central points in the life of the hunters, places to which they regularly have to return, either to get provisions or to barter their skins and furs. In a certain way these fixed and immobile settlements, with their surrounding often gameless area, influence and sometimes determine the life of the hunters even deep in the woods. Boone's reaction to this sudden increase in population is revealing and typical of a hunter seeking solitude and tranquility: he simply took his family and moved away.

The whole character of Boone and his life story were something with which Americans were eager to identify themselves. Writers reacted quickly to it, the first being John Filson who included in his 1784 account of the settlement of Kentucky a short appendix, entitled "The Adventures of Col. Daniel Boone". Elliott describes the book's overwhelming success:

It was a sensation. Though only 33 of its 118 pages are devoted to the Boone narrative, written in what Filson pretended were the frontiersman's own words, the account of his exploits was so immensely popular that the entire work soon came to be known as "Filson's Boone." And despite the stilted language, despite the inaccuracies and the passages that came straight from an eastern pedagogue's imagination, the essential appeal of one man against the wilderness thrilled readers throughout

America and Europe. Here was the natural man as hero, living the life others only dreamed about. Filson's Boone strode the frontier with unconquerable spirit, the very model of the daring trailblazer, little read but with a native wisdom that fitted him for everything he needed to do, brave, upright, God-fearing - and an absolute dead shot.³³

Here is the clear blueprint for much of future American literature: "**one man against the wilderness**", "living the life others [in civilised life] only dreamed about". The polarisation of one man with "unconquerable spirit", which is reminiscent of Hemingway's dogma "a man can be destroyed but never defeated", against the forces of nature, remains one of the dominant themes in American literature. Daniel Boone shares the same fighting spirit as Captain Ahab, the fisherman Santiago, the bullfighter Manuel Retana or the would-be shark-killer Quint.

Two social observations might end this analysis of Daniel Boone. First his inability to cope with civilisation, for as Elliott argues:

Boone's initial enthusiasm was typical of his innocence; a blind eye to pitfalls and sharp practices and sometimes reality. In the wilderness, he moved with the absolute confidence of a man who knows all the hazards and has taken all the precautions. In the towns and settlements he remained forever a greenhorn, victimized, scorned, bypassed, and consequently doomed to spend nearly all his life poor and in debt.³⁴

As such Boone is clearly the blueprint for Cooper's Natty Bumppo or Faulkner's Boon Hogganbeck who suffer the same fate. But men like Boone reflect also the incapacity of society to react to woodsmen in any other way except to cheat or ridicule them. There was no place at all for the old hunter's honesty, reliability or comradeship in the rapidly growing towns and settlements of the Thirteen Colonies. Secondly, Boone was a man constantly on the move, always going back to the wilderness and staying there for long hunting periods. His *wanderlust* as well as his desire for tranquility and solitude is what constituted his character. In contrast to many farmers for whom, as Elliott argues, "hunting was their sport and livelihood", Boone "was willing to be gone from civilisation

and family for years at a time". It was "the seeking that mattered".³⁵ This "seeking" surfaces again in many of the later U.S. hunters. Together with hunting as an escape from domestic problems it constitutes one of the two main reasons for repeated lifelong hunting. Finally Hugh Brogan in *The Penguin History Of The United States Of America* summarizes these points rather romantically:

For him [Boone], the lure of the dark woods was paramount: he was forever prowling off along the trails after bear and buckskin,... Now came the pathfinder. Boone, though he did not know it, was for the first time in his life (not the last) pioneering a trail along which, eventually, enormous numbers of settlers would pour. They would call it Boone's Trace, or the Wilderness Road...He [Boone] passed through the forest noting only the beauty of its fruits, leaves and flowers, and the abundance of its game, especially the wild turkeys; coming to the bluegrass, he was amazed by the vast droves of buffalo feeding in the meadows; and a trained frontiersman's eye told him how good the soil was.³⁶

Most of the above quoted descriptions show a man with a lot of experience and different skills, well prepared to survive **alone** in the wilderness by hunting and exploring hitherto unknown areas. The hunter was thus the provider of food and the searcher for new good soil, as well as a man fighting dangerous animals. The value of his work was even higher as hunting and agriculture were the only sources of food in eighteenth-century America. Men like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett were clearly the first to lay the foundations of the myth of the Western Frontier, much of which can be found throughout the whole of American literature. Brogan describes the circumstances of this life as "the free-and-easy conditions of the frontier, where it was usually each man for himself..."³⁷

Summing up, it can be said that the eighteenth-century pioneer cannot be separated from nature, his permanent environment. There was a rich abundance of all sorts of wildlife, in particular buffalos; a fact which finds an extensive and clear reflection in literature with examples such as Crèvecoeur's (1782) and Cooper's (1823) descriptions of wildlife. The greatness of the wilderness lead to a feeling of independance and freedom,

large areas were unpopulated and unexplored and the pioneer was constantly confronted with new encounters and challenges. To be able to endure under these circumstances needed strength, confidence and willpower, and absolute determination to survive. The hunter had to have all-round skills to be able to live in this often hostile environment. Thus he was preparing the ground for other settlers who were encouraged by the heroic example of the pioneer to settle remote areas themselves. The pioneer showed that the dangers of nature were surmountable, that even a single man could survive, however far from civilisation. One important difference establishes itself right from the beginning of the United States: hunting is a democratic activity, open to all white men everywhere in the colonies. This is in stark contrast to, for instance, Britain where game rights were jealously guarded and preserved for rich landowners, and poachers treated and punished with great cruelty. Hunting in Europe became a recreation for the rich and powerful, hunting in the United States became a common activity, open to all parts of society.

Many of these aspects of colonial life are reflected in the novels of James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851), in particular in *The Pioneers* (1823), analysed in Chapter 3 of this study. Set in 1793, this novel introduces a new and important theme. The rules, habits and powers of the first settlers destroy the innocence of the wilderness and the hunters or trappers have to go further and further to the west to explore hitherto unsettled areas. The so-called civilisation (symbolized by Judge Marmaduke Temple who sets up the settlement on the shores of Lake Otsego) is in stark contrast to the valleys and mountains of the West into which Natty Bumppo moves after being pardoned for killing a deer during the close season. Whereas Cooper's first novels were set within the boundaries of New York State,

his later novels take place several hundred miles to the west around the Appalachian Mountains and reflect as such the pushing to the west of the frontier.

This clash between wilderness and civilisation is one of the major themes of American hunting literature and it can be argued that until the first half of the nineteenth century the hunting motif has no other hidden or secondary meaning except describing this conflict in relation to the Western Movement as well as life in the first days of settlements in remote western areas of the United States. It is not until Herman Melville that the hunting motif undergoes a significant and complex change. Again hunting literature is closely linked to actual history and developments on land are mirrored by developments on and in the sea.

The history of American whaling begins very early, with first reports going back as far as 1614 (Captain John Smith) and 1635 (Reverend Richard Mather). The first settlers started whaling only because of the great abundance of whales close to the shore. Kenneth Giggall summarizes the development of American whaling as follows:

When Captain John Smith sailed to America in 1614 he carried with him a royal charter to 'fish' for whales, and this prerogative was actively exercised from the colony's earlier days. At first, they probably employed the native Indian's method of putting out in small boats to take blackfish, a small catacea about 25 feet in length, sighted from watchtowers and towed ashore after killing for flensing and 'trying-out' on the beach. However, the hardy and adventurous colonist rapidly evolved his own way of hunting, and had created by the middle of the 17th century the foundations of a great national industry. Other nations competed sporadically over the next 200 years, but in spite of several often-serious setbacks, America's dominance of the trade continued throughout the days of sail.³⁸

As with hunting, whaling establishes itself right from the very beginning of the colonies, and it is, and remains, open to every seaman. Whereas the first killings were for human consumption only, within a century whaling was well organized, efficient and

by 1730 there was regular trade in whale oil and whalebone to England and to British ports in the West Indies, and whaling was the main industry of New England. One chronicler of Provincetown

complained in 1737 that 'so many men are going on these voyages that not more than twelve or fourteen men will be left at home'.³⁹

The Letters IV-VIII of Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) and Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) are the two most important responses to the phenomenon of American whaling. Melville's text in particular marks a turning point in hunting literature. D.H.Lawrence's apothegm "A hunt. The last great hunt. For what?", in his *Studies in Classic American Literature*, explains precisely what had changed. Suddenly one animal was singled out and loaded with a vast amount of connotations and interpretations. For the first time a hunt had turned into a metaphor, only for **what** still remains to be decided. The whalers behaved in exactly the same way as did the hunters on land, whale stocks were simply hunted to exhaustion and then whales were either pursued further and further or different species were hunted instead. Reckless commercial exploitation was the fate of the woods and the sea, a problem discussed by Melville in Chapter 105 of *Moby-Dick*, "Does The Whale's Magnitude Diminish?-Will He Perish?"

Another important contemporary source of hunting on land is the account of Alexander Ross *Fur Hunters of the Far West A Narrative of Adventures in the Oregon and Rocky Mountains*, published in 1855, and Benedict Revoil's *The Hunter and the Trapper in North America* (before 1875). Revoil's report has no less than twenty-one chapters on the hunting of twenty-one different species, another proof of the diversity and abundance of North American wildlife. It will be analysed in Chapter 5 of this study.

The middle of the nineteenth century sees a radical change in the public opinion about nature and wilderness, a sudden awareness that something had to be done to preserve the United States' unique landscape and its wildlife. As early as 1844 the **NEW YORK ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF GAME** was founded, and similar

organisations soon followed. The rise of the conservationist movement finds its first climax with the creation of the Yellowstone National Park in 1872, with famous writers and publishers such as Henry D. Thoreau, Ralph W. Emerson, John Muir and Francis Parkman in the forefront. These writers changed a whole nation's attitude towards landscape, nature, beauty and wildlife. Wilderness was no longer perceived to be a hostile and dangerous jungle, instead it was an area into which one could escape for recreational reasons. Hunting texts participated in this change. One of the first examples defending hunting and outdoor life as a healthy way of life, having even medicinal healing powers, was William H.H. Murray's 1869 book *Adventures In The Wilderness*. This text offered a complete manual describing everything needed for hunting, fishing, or any long stay in the wilderness. Murray described his stays in the Adirondack mountains north of New York, and with it triggered off a huge wave of hunters and fishermen who immediately flooded the area.⁴⁰ Ernest Seton Thompson was another popular and influential nature writer who from 1881 onwards published more than fourteen animal books and various articles. Describing life in the woods from the animal's perspective he tried to raise awareness for the hunted species. Books like *Lives Of The Hunted* (1901) were dedicated to the preservation of wild creatures.

Further organisations with the aim of protecting wildlife came into existence, among them the **SIERRA CLUB**, founded in 1892, and the famous **BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB**. It was founded in 1888, with the later U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt as its first president from 1888 until 1894. From 1893 onwards this club started to publish regularly the *Book Of The Boone And Crockett Club* which skilfully mixed adventurous hunting stories and reports with sometimes extensive and well researched

scientific articles about conservation problems and subsequent measures, usually initiated and supported by the club.

Theodore Roosevelt was one of the most productive and prolific hunting writers around the turn of the century. Among his books were *The Wilderness Hunter*, *Hunting Trips Of A Ranchman*, *Ranch Life And The Hunting Trail*, as well as several prefaces and introductions to other hunting books. *The Wilderness Hunter*, published in 1893, is very similar to B.Révoil's *The Hunter and the Trapper in North America*. Both books have twenty-one chapters, most of which describe the hunt for one particular species. Both describe hunting as a joyful, entertaining and challenging activity. Roosevelt used hunting to defend, to propagate, and to develop what he called "fundamental frontier values."⁴¹ He wrote further that

no nation facing the unhealthy softening and relaxation of fibre that tends to accompany civilisation can afford to neglect anything that will develop hardihood, resolution, and the scorn of discomfort and danger.⁴²

Hunting is here favoured as one of the most effective means of education and training, as a way to prevent "softening" at a time when, according to Roosevelt, "hardihood, resolution, and the scorn of discomfort and danger" were bitterly needed because, due to the disappearance of the frontier, Americans had to look for new challenges as well as methods to maintain the skills produced by the frontier. Like the famous historian Frederick J. Turner in his 1893 address on the significance of the frontier Roosevelt feared that the loss of the frontier could have debilitating consequences for man. Hence Roosevelt's hunting texts are very positive and enthusiastic, always stressing the excitement and challenge of the hunt.

But the writer, hunter and influential politician Roosevelt stands at the beginning of a rather ambiguous and equivocal development: the gradual mixing or intertwining of passionate hunting stories with scientific conservationist articles. For example, the 1925 edition of *The Book Of The Boone And Crockett Club*, entitled *Hunting And Conservation*, contains four short hunting stories, but no less than ten long articles dealing with such issues as mammal conservation, the habits of the American Fur-Seal, game protection, and saving the redwood trees. These articles skilfully developed a man-centered view of wildlife and divided animals into two categories: those which could exist in close proximity of man, and those which could not because they were too dangerous. John C. Phillips in an article entitled "Mammal and Bird Conservation" coldly declares that

There is very little use in bemoaning the fate of the grizzly bear, for such huge animals simply cannot get along in close proximity to man...Much as it goes against the grain of the real lovers of beasts and birds to see the larger predatory mammals exterminated, they must perforce bow their heads to the inevitable. Perhaps a few wolves and mountain lions could be spared in our large parks ...The jaguar ...is a fierce, and at times dangerous, animal, very destructive to cattle. It is easily killed by poison, so that it never can, and never should, exist in the neighborhood of man.⁴³

This arrogant view is driven solely by economic considerations, and it allows for some species to become extinct simply because they could be dangerous to man. Although Phillips and other authors in this volume acknowledge the beauty and fascination of animals this does not lead to any radical consequences. Everything remains rather as it is or ends up with a situation in which significant numbers of animals still have to, or can be hunted, for whatever reason.

But publications like *The Book Of The Boone And Crockett Club* show that increasingly hunters and their many organisations had to adjust to an increasing public awareness of hunting as a mass activity which threatened endangered species. One

consequence was the rapid development of the image of the hunter as a game keeper. The hunter, by paying often high fees for hunting licenses, thus supported game conservation measures to protect and increase the livestock, a point still used today in the passionate argument between hunters and anti-hunting activists.

In the twentieth century the overwhelming consequences of civilisation, rapid deforestation and the decrease of wildlife, leave their impact on hunting fiction. James Curwood's *The Grizzly King* (1916, republished as *The Bear* in 1992) and William Faulkner's account of the McCaslin family are examples of this. From the turn of the century onwards hunting stories emerge as a literary tool to warn of ecological disaster, rarely as praise of hunting. Another side effect of civilisation was the lack of challenges and thrill in everyday life, and the subsequent new interest in hunting as just a provider of the very thrill or excitement which you could not get while living in a city. Hemingway's hunting fiction is a typical example and gives us not only men eager to kill, eager to prove their bravery, it also contrasts hunting versus weakness; killing equals success, failure to kill equals failure to be manly. Only a(n animal) killer is a real man, and only he can enjoy life to the full.

The terrible consequences of this attitude were graphically pointed out by a young Hungarian writer, Felix Salten, who in 1924 wrote a story about a young buck entitled *Bambi*. This text was translated into English and published in the United States in 1928. In 1942 it was turned by Walt Disney into an extremely successful cartoon. Its impact on public opinion about hunting was huge and has been analysed extensively in the chapter "The Bambi-Syndrom" in Matthew Cartmill's 1993 study *A View to a Death in the*

Morning. Hunting and Nature through History. For the assessment of the hunting motif it is important to look at how hunting and the hunter are described in this text.

Bambi describes four kinds of forbidden and unskilful hunting: the killing of a doe (Bambi's mother), the hunting of deer with hounds, deer hunting in the spring (close season), and the use of forest fire to drive the deer into the open field. Further the hunter is described as dangerous whenever he comes into the forest. The text describes the hunt, similar to Hemingway's "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" and Curwood's *The Bear*, from an animal perspective, and the hunting scenes in *Bambi* are extreme examples of how the atmosphere of happiness and innocence is suddenly and recklessly destroyed by "MAN" or the hunter who is here not a game keeper but a brutal killing intruder which all animals of the forest fear. For them "MAN" always means death. The hunter is never seen, he remains an anonymous person, but his active threat changes the life of all animals. The image of the hunter consists of his gun, his tents and campfires, and the barking hounds. *Bambi* is a clear confrontation between the forest and its animals, with whom the reader strongly sympathizes, and the hunter, between good and evil, between passive and retreating animals and aggressive intruding hunters. The killing of Bambi's mother, a terrible and upsetting hunting offence, is a cruel shock which leaves the innocent fawn on its own, with little chance of survival. This extremely negative and onesided picture of the hunter caused a huge uproar among U.S. hunters. The description of Bambi as an innocent and beautiful fawn created the "Bambi-Syndrom", it continued the association of certain animals with positive/negative qualities.⁴⁴

The next part of this section looks at the post-war treatment of hunting stories. Examples of two modern American writers using hunting in their fiction are Norman

Mailer who uses the hunting motif in a political sense in his 1967 novel *Why Are We In Vietnam?* to explain reasons for America's involvement in the Vietnam War, and Raymond Carver (1939-1988) who describes deer hunting and duck shooting in some of his short stories.

The most recent development in the history of the hunting motif is the rise of the animal horror thriller, triggered off by the 1974 shark thriller *Jaws*. Although Alfred Hitchcock had used animals in his film *The Birds*, Benchley's text was the first to be built solely on an active threat of a single animal which is an extreme within its species: the great white shark. Extremely successful *Jaws*, immediately turned into a film, then caused a flood of animal related horror books and films: Sharon Lewis *Orca the killer whale* (also filmed in 1977), John Godey's *The Snake* (1978), Peter Benchley's *The Beast* (1992), using a giant octopus as a threat, several remakes of *Jaws* (at least four), the film *Grizzly* (filmed in 1975 by William Girdler), several other horrorfilms using piranhas, spiders and dogs; as well as scientific literature related to one specific animal such as Cousteau's *Book of the Great White Shark*, D. Baldrige's *Shark Attack*, subtitled "Jaws is all fiction, this is all fact!", J. Stafford-Deitsch's *Shark A Photographer's Story*, and X.Maniguet's *The Jaws of Death* to name but a few. It is worth noting here that none of the other animal horror thrillers triggered off a similar amount of scientific analyses, only the white shark attracted such an amount of scientific interest.

Two very recent publications are Norman Maclean's 1976 novel *A River Runs Through It*, a text mystifying the art of fly-fishing in Montana, filmed in 1992; and the 1993 film *Free Willy*, which deals with the captivity of a killer whale in a sea-life centre, and about which a novel was produced immediately **after** the success of the film. Two contemporary

texts about whaling are Tom Lowenstein's *Ancient Land-Sacred Whale* (1993), which describes the old method of whale hunting of Alaskan eskimos, and Lloyd Abbey's novel *The Last Whales* (1990), which describes the life of the blue whales, threatened not only by fishing nets but also by mercury poisoning.

Finally, I would like to give some data which are useful to assess the huge economic importance of hunting in the United States. The size of the fur-seal trade is described by Wilfried H. Osgood in his article "Life and Habits of the American Fur-Seal" (1925):

Since the discovery of the Pribilof Islands by the Russians in 1786, something over 5,000,000 fur-seals have been killed on the islands for their skins and of these about 2,700,000 have been taken since the purchase of Alaska by the United States in 1867. From these the government has received a revenue of over \$ 10,000,000 in addition to the very large profits obtained by the private companies to whom for forty years the government leased the sealing privilege. Further large sums have been involved in marketing the raw and dressed furs and altogether the fur-seal has been a factor of no small importance in the world's commerce.⁴⁵

This and other sources show that when assessing U.S. hunting one has to figure in millions not only of dollars but of animals as well. This reveals a huge conflict between the economy and the ecology of the United States. Gun and hunting gear manufacturers are a major U.S. industry, and the millions of well equipped hunters have, as conservationists like Lewis Regenstein in *The Politics of Extinction* and Cleveland Amory in *Man Kind? Our Incredible War on Wildlife* have shown, a major impact on wildlife populations. It also shows that the government had to think twice before taking any steps to protect wildlife, for it could simply lose huge sums of tax revenue. John Mitchell in *The Hunt* (1980) quotes a survey undertaken twice a decade by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It found out that in the 1970s

there were 20.6 million hunters; that the ratio of hunters, by sex, to total population was 21 out of 100 men and 2 out of 100 women; that the hunter's average household income was \$ 14,700; that 56% reside in urban areas; that deer hunting accounted for the greatest number of days of participation in a single year (103 million), followed by rabbit hunting (88 million days), squirrel hunting (69 million days), and quail hunting (47 million days); and that hunters in the year of the survey and in the course of hunting spent \$ 1.2 billion on food and drink, \$ 1.8 billion on equipment, and \$ 2.1 billion on transport.⁴⁶

With numbers like these modern U.S. hunting takes on a completely new dimension and importance. Hunting is definitely a major influence upon the development and survival of livestock, and it is a key to the state of mind of a considerable part of the U.S. population.

Margaret L. Knox in her 1990 article "In the Heat of the Hunt" quotes the most recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's survey of 1985:

Hunting and fishing, as of 1985 - when the federal government last counted - was a \$ 41.5-billion-a-year business. To find out that hunters kill about 200 million animals a year, I had to turn to the Fund for Animals, which was glad to provide a complete casualty list: In the 1988-89 season 25 million rabbits, 4 million white-tailed deer, and 50 million mourning doves - among tens of millions of other birds and animals - were killed for sport.⁴⁷

Both quotations document the gigantic dimension of this outdoor sport. At the present time killing animals for sport is still immensely popular in the United States, and this despite the activities of so many anti-hunting groups and their publications and activities.

Notes

- 1) Nash, Roderick *Wilderness and the American Mind*, pp. ix,x. An excellent analysis of vision and nature can also be found in Chapter 1, "The Eye" of P. Shepard's *Man in the landscape*.
- 2) Ortega y Gasset, p. 130
- 3) Ortega y Gasset's text is in line with several other texts from authors such as Xenophon or Montaigne to modern defences of, for example, fox hunting, all of which try to emphasize the many and extraordinary skills necessary for hunting, in order to improve the image of the hunter in society.
- 4) Nash., p.x
- 5) Grant, Madison "Saving the Redwoods", in Grinnell, G.B.(ed.) *Hunting and Conservation*, p. 183
- 6) Nash, p.28
- 7) *ibid.*, p. 29
- 8) O'Neill, Paul *The Frontiersmen*, p. 6
- 9) *ibid.*, p. 24
- 10) *ibid.*, p.24
- 11) *ibid.*, p. 23. For accounts of 16th and 17th century descriptions of the superabundance of wildlife, see Grinnell (ed) *Hunting and Conservation*, pp. 202-205, and Nash *Wilderness and the American Mind*, pp. 28-29
- 12) *ibid.*, p. 25
- 13) *ibid.*, p.158
- 14) *ibid.*, p. 31
- 15) An excellent account of bear mythology as well as an analysis of the bear in American and Indian history is given in Utley, F.L., Bloom, L.Z., and Kinney, A.F. (eds) *Bear, Man & God, Seven Approaches to William Faulkner's The Bear*, Random House, New York, 1964. There is also a vast amount of books describing exclusively bear hunting. See, for example, Erickson, A.W. *The Black Bear in Michigan*, (1964); Flowers, R. *The Education Of A Bear Hunter*, (1975); Russell, A. *Grizzly Country*, (1968); Wright, W.H. *The Black Bear*, (1910); Wright, W.H. *The Grizzly Bear*, (1909)
- 16) Nash Smith, Henry *Virgin Land*, p. 53
- 17) as quoted in Merton Babcock, C. *The American Frontier*, p. 65. This observation is also confirmed by L.Hafen in his *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*. There he writes that Captain James Cook, when arriving in Vancouver Island in 1778, found "Indians eager to barter the skins of sea otter and other animals for knives, tin, glass, beads, etc. Upon going to China the Englishmen found a ready market for their sea-otter pelts. 'Skins which did not cost the purchaser sixpence sterling, sold for one hundred dollars', one of the men reported." (p.31)
- 18) Hafen, LeRoy R. *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, p. 30
- 19) Melville, Herman *Moby-Dick*, Chapter XXIV
- 20) Hafen, p. 13
- 21) *ibid.*, p. 81
- 22) *ibid.*, p. 123
- 23) *ibid.*, p.123
- 24) *ibid.*, p.175
- 25) *ibid.*, p. 175
- 26) Elliott, Lawrence *The Long Hunter A New Life of Daniel Boone*, p.45
- 27) *ibid.*, p.46
- 28) B. Révoil in his *The Hunter And The Trapper* describes such a fire hunt, or *chasse au feu*, which took place despite a "law forbidding the entrapping of the deer during the night by means of fire". (pp. 199 - 206)
- 29) O'Neill, p.83
- 30) Verney, Peter *Homo Tyrannicus A History of Man's War against Animals*, p. 104. John G. Mitchell in his 1980 analysis *The Hunt* writes about another killing frenzy when, as late as 1860, "the men of one Texas town vied with those of another to see who could kill the most game in a single day. Squirrels and rabbits counted for one point each, turkeys for five, and deer for ten. In one astonishing day's shoot-out, the total points scored by two competing hamlets was 3,470." Mitchell then adds the ominous statement that "I would be glad to say so much for the ancient history, except that the

ancient history keeps hanging around" (p.98) The American's desire to set records seems also to be valid for the category of slaughtering animals.

- 31) Elliott, pp. 94, 95
- 32) *ibid.*, p. 98
- 33) *ibid.*, p. 176
- 34) *ibid.*, p. 48
- 35) *ibid.*, p.202
- 36) Broghan, Hugh *The Penguin History Of The United States Of America*, pp. 228, 229
- 37) *ibid.*, p.240
- 38) Giggall, Kenneth *Classic Sailing Ships*, p.80
- 39) Cherfas, Jeremy *The Hunting Of The Whale*, p. 75
- 40) For an extensive analysis of the healing function of outdoor life, see Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, pp. 141 - 160. See also Ekirch, Arthur *Man and Nature in America*, pp. 81-99.
- 41) as quoted in Nash, p.150
- 42) *ibid.*, p.151
- 43) Phillips, John C. "Mammal and Bird Conservation", in Grinnell, pp. 45-47.
- 44) For an analysis of the "Bambi-Syndrom", see Nietschmann, B. "The Bambi-Factor" in *Natural History*, August/September 1977, pp. 84-87
- 45) Osgood, Wilfred H. "Life and Habits Of The American Fur Seal", in Grinnell, G.B. *Hunting and Conservation*, p. 124.
- 46) Mitchell, John G. *The Hunt*, p.20
- 47) Knox, M.L. "In the Heat of the Hunt", in *Sierra*, November/December 1990, p.55

2. THE FIRST DOUBTS: H. ST. JOHN DE CRÈVECOEUR

Intended for a European audience, Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* was first published in London in 1782. The text is not a hunting story, but rather an assessment of nature, and of marine and wildlife, embedded in an extensive description of American society in the second half of the eighteenth century. This description does, however, contain a number of astute observations about hunting behaviour and its consequences which foreshadow the mental problems of hunters described in later American hunting fiction.

Letters from an American Farmer stands at the beginning not only of American literature, but also at the beginning of literature describing, and hence moulding, a notion of nature, wildlife and hunting. It is this early appearance of the text, written only about 170 years after the first settlements began, which underlines the significance of its observations. Crèvecoeur clearly felt that hunting was not an activity as innocent as ploughing or sowing. It was something which was detrimental for the human mind, and about which something had to be done urgently. In order to influence the reader Crèvecoeur has a clear and simple strategy which he pursues throughout his *Letters from an American Farmer* and in his second work *Sketches Of Eighteenth-Century America*. He constantly praises his agricultural ideal of ploughing and farming, attacks hunting, and celebrates the freedom from church and monarchy to be enjoyed in the colonies.

In his first letter he describes the colonies as a country in which “we have had no war to desolate our fields; our religion does not oppress the cultivators; we are strangers to those feudal institutions which have enslaved so many.” Here we have the first hints

that severe pressure from church or government was, and as this study attempts to show, remains, one of America's main problems. Crèvecoeur mentions several times these oppressive conditions from which European immigrants had to suffer.

It is revealing that Crèvecoeur in his second letter, entitled "On The Situation, Feelings, And Pleasures Of An American Farmer", focuses extensively on the wildlife which surrounds his idyllic farm, vividly describing an ornithological and agricultural paradise. As with so many later hunting stories the author uses the method of introducing as many different species as possible to show the diversity and abundance of wildlife, a device also used, for example, by Cooper in *The Pioneers*. The many descriptions of animals throughout the text show him as an astute observer and lover of wildlife who is careful to praise his country's difference from and superiority of wildlife and nature to Europe. His description of the pigeons anticipates what is to result five decades later in Cooper's killing frenzies (see. Ch.3):

We have twice a year the pleasure of catching pigeons, whose numbers are sometimes so astonishing as to obscure the sun in their flight. ...We catch them with a net extended on the ground, to which they are allured by what we call tame wild pigeons, made blind and fastened to a long string; his short flights and his repeated calls never fail to bring them down. The greatest number I ever caught was fourteen dozen, though much larger quantities have often been trapped. ...from the extreme cheapness you must not conclude that they are but an ordinary food; on the contrary I think they are excellent. (Letter II)

This quotation confirms first of all the usual facts, such as the huge size of the pigeon population, "they obscure the sun in their flight", and how easy it was to catch and kill them. It also contains technical details of hunting pigeons, details which show how far pigeon hunting had already developed. The use of a net and a tamed pigeon as a bait show hunting as a sophisticated and highly developed activity, an activity which was so effective that it soon led to the extinction of the passenger pigeon in the United States. It also

confirms the fact that the pigeon's tasty and delicious meat made it a delicacy much in demand. But it reveals further a contradiction which occurs frequently in Crèvecoeur's text. He disapproves of hunting, killing and eating meat, but he himself hunts, kills and eats various birds and other animals.

Crèvecoeur then continues with descriptions of "the warblings of the birds", the fight between the wren and the swallow, his "curious republic of industrious hornets", and he finishes with the "great variety of wasps". All this adds up to a picture of him living in harmony with nature, a paradise which Thomas Philbrick in his study *St. John De Crèvecoeur* characterizes as "a bucolic idyll". Being America's first writing conservationist Crèvecoeur prefers keeping to killing. He respects animals and, most of all, wants his paradise to continue undisturbed, and his way of life to be imitated by as many farmers as possible.

Combined with Crèvecoeur's love of wildlife is his continuing praise of agriculture and its beneficial effect on humans. He writes humbly about himself that his "education fitted me for nothing more than the most simple occupations of life; I am but a feller of trees, a cultivator of lands" (Letter XII), a gross understatement taking into account the astuteness and complexity of his letters. For him "men are like plants; the goodness and flavour of the fruit proceeds from the peculiar soil and exposition in which they grow", and as a consequence "the simple cultivation of the earth purifies them". The later conflict of *civilisation* versus *innocent wilderness* is already on its way.

The purifying function of agriculture is then sharply contrasted with hunting, the most destructive and counterproductive activity Crèvecoeur can imagine. It is necessary to quote extensively this passionate attack on hunting:

By living in or near the woods, their actions are regulated by the wildness of the neighbourhood. The deer often come to eat their grain, the wolves to destroy their sheep, the bears to kill their hogs, the foxes to catch their poultry. This surrounding hostility immediately puts the gun into their hands: they watch these animals, they kill some; and thus by defending their property, they soon become professed hunters; this is the progress; once hunters, farewell to the plough. The chase renders them ferocious, gloomy, and unsocial; a hunter wants no neighbour, he rather hates them because he dreads the competition. In a little time, their success in the woods makes them neglect their tillage. They trust to the natural fecundity of the earth and therefore do little; carelessness in fencing often exposes what little they sow to destruction; they are not at home to watch; in order, therefore, to make up the deficiency, they go oftener to the woods.... Consider one of the last settlements in its first view: of what is it composed? Europeans who have not that sufficient share of knowledge they ought to have in order to prosper; people who have suddenly passed from oppression, dread of government, and fear of laws into the unlimited freedom of the woods. This sudden change must have a very great effect on most men, and on that class particularly. Eating of wild meat, whatever you may think, tends to alter their temper, though all the proof I can adduce is that I have seen it, and having no place of worship to resort to, what little society this might afford is denied them.... Thus our bad people are those who are half cultivators and half hunters; and the worst of them are those who have degenerated altogether into the hunting state. As old ploughmen and new men of the woods, as Europeans and new-made Indians, they contract the vices of both; they adopt the moroseness and ferocity of a native, without his mildness or even his industry at home. If manners are not refined, at least they are rendered simple and inoffensive by tilling the earth. All our wants are supplied by it; our time is divided between labour and rest, and leaves none for the commission of great misdeeds. As hunters, it is divided between the toil of the chase, the idleness of repose, or the indulgence of inebriation. Hunting is but a licentious idle life, and it does not always pervert good dispositions, yet, when it is united with bad luck, it leads to want: want stimulates that propensity to rapacity and injustice, too natural to needy men, which is the fatal gradation. (Letter III)

This is one of the most complex and carefully thought out criticisms of hunting in early American literature. It shows Crèvecoeur again as a sharp observer and an acute analyst of social conditions. In the centre of his vision of society are farmers, and it is the greatest sin to "neglect their tillage". The activity of hunting as such and the "Eating of wild meat" have terrible and debilitating consequences for everybody who takes up hunting. In addition he describes the escape from the narrow restrictions of Europe as a "sudden change [which] must have a very great effect on most men", and part of this effect was the inclination of the new settlers to go hunting instead of farming, a point which he refers to again in Letter IV when he writes that "Their [the families of Nantucket] sedentary life has led them to this degree of civilisation much more effectually than if they had still remained

hunters". Here, as well as in the quotation above, the inevitable conclusion is that civilisation and hunting are incompatible.

Crèvecoeur sees hunting as "a licentious idle life", an activity which lures the farmer gradually into passivity and idleness, and makes him more and more unwilling to undergo hard farmwork; but another and equally if not more important reason for Crèvecoeur's condemnation of hunting is also that he fears hunting as a threat, as something which in the past has, and still can, destroy the harmony of his bucolic paradise. It is important to note here that Crèvecoeur sees the trail of destruction, inflicted by deer, bear, wolves and foxes upon the farmer's harvest or livestock, as the main reason which "immediately puts the gun into their hands."¹ However, he does not propose an alternative remedy for this problem. Exactly 160 years later we find again the trail of destruction as a justification for hunting and killing in William Faulkner's "The Bear". Crèvecoeur sees no coexistence between hunting and tilling, instead he formulates the simple equation "once hunters, farewell to the plough". With this he implies that killing is addictive. Once the former farmer got used to killing frequently, he cannot do without it. This addiction also incapacitates any hunter for future farmwork. Further proof of this addiction can be found in later hunting texts by, for example, Benedict Révoil and Theodore Roosevelt.

Crèvecoeur sees the "unlimited freedom of the woods" not as an ideal condition for the European settlers, many of whom he considers to be inexperienced and insufficiently prepared for the woods, but as dangerous and detrimental to their future. This freedom is a temptation which the new settlers cannot handle responsibly, instead they indulge in killing and "licentious idle life". Crèvecoeur clearly favours discipline and restricted or well controlled agricultural communities.

In addition Crèvecoeur mentions the psychological and social consequences of hunting, for "The chase renders them ferocious, gloomy, and unsocial". His attack becomes even sharper when he states that hunting "leads to want", and this want "stimulates that propensity to rapacity and injustice". Crèvecoeur must have observed a considerable amount of cases in which picking up hunting instead of farming had had such devastating behavioural consequences, otherwise he would not have drawn any such specific conclusions. What I want to point out here is that Crèvecoeur believes that hunting affects the mind, it is degenerating, a step backwards not forwards in human evolution. Hunting makes the hunter's mind inaccessible to rational arguments, and it turns the hunter into an addict. This addiction, the urge to kill time and again once one has got into the habit, as well as all the other criticized patterns of behaviour, such as the rapacity or ferociousness or the lonely hunter, occur time and again in the later hunting fiction of the United States. The impact of Crèvecoeur's criticism is increased by the fact that most other people and things in his letters are described very positively; only the hunters and their activity are ostracized and condemned. The complexity of Crèvecoeur's in-depth analysis of hunting is even more remarkable bearing in mind the early date of the text, 1782.

Crèvecoeur continues his condemnation of hunting in his final letter in which he develops his ideas about education. He still favours the agricultural ideal, for "As long as we keep ourselves busy in tilling the earth, there is no fear of us becoming wild; it is the chase and the food it procures that have this strange effect." His children "shall hunt and fish merely to show [their] new companions that [they] are not inferior to them in point of sagacity and dexterity", but hunting itself is not considered to be of real educational value.

He sees "labour as the most essential qualification, hunting as the second", and for his children he decides that "Whatever success they may meet with in hunting or fishing shall be only considered as recreation and pastime; I shall thereby prevent them from estimating their skill in the chase as an important and necessary accomplishment." However, the intensity and persistence with which Crèvecoeur attacks hunting make it easy to draw just this very conclusion, that hunting was of the utmost importance for British North America, a vital and "necessary accomplishment" that would continue for a long time.

But his condemnation of hunting must also be seen in a wider context. R. Ruland and M. Bradbury in their history of American Literature, entitled *From Puritanism to Postmodernism*, summarize Crèvecoeur's text as "a powerful demonstration of how a new nature and a new social order might generate a new kind of man."² This new kind of man was definitely **not** supposed to be a hunter. Another backing for Crèvecoeur's bucolic vision came from Thomas Jefferson who, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, wrote that "Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God", one of the greatest compliments the American President could pay farmers.³ Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* hence has its place in the change of the young nation towards a more agriculturally dominated society.

Five letters, IV-VIII, describe historical and technical details of whaling, as well as the habits and customs of the two most important American whaling ports, Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. The simple fact that Crèvecoeur dedicates the bulk of his text, five letters, to the description of whaling reflects the fact that whaling was by far New England's biggest and most important industry.

Letter IV opens with a precise description of the motivations for Europeans to emigrate to America, reasons which are very similar to the ones discussed in the context of Cooper's killing frenzies (see Ch. 3):

...the great number of European emigrants yearly coming over here informs us that the severity of taxes, the injustice of laws, the tyranny of the rich, and the oppressive avarice of the church are as intolerable as ever. (Letter IV)

Concerning hunting the "tyranny of the rich" in Europe meant tightly preserved game rights with hunting being a pastime for the aristocracy. Now, in contrast, the emigrants are faced with freedom, infinite wilderness and abundant wildlife. Crèvecoeur continues this argument when he later asks,

is it not better to be possessed of a single whale-boat or a few sheep pastures, to live free and independent under the mildest government, in a healthy climate, in a land of charity and benevolence, than to be wretched as so many are in Europe, possessing nothing but their industry; tossed from one rough wave to another; engaged either in the most servile labours for the smallest pittance or fettered with the links of the most irksome dependence, even without the hopes of rising? (Letter VI)

Even the whaling communities are analysed from an agricultural point of view. There might be only "a few sheep pastures" on the island, but still you can see that "some cultivate their farm with the utmost diligence". As before Crèvecoeur repeats the beneficial social consequences of this diligence when he concludes that it "is but seldom that vice grows on a barren sand like this, which produces nothing without extreme labour". Gradually Crèvecoeur develops a certain picture of a society, of people suddenly released from long and severe pressure, a process which he continues in his analysis of whaling.

Like Melville in *Moby-Dick*, written only seventy years later, Crèvecoeur backs his glorification of whaling with a lot of detailed economic data, stressing the size, turnover, and wealth of the industry. He then starts his extended praise of whaling itself, putting particular emphasis on the bravery of the whalers who "go to hunt and catch that huge fish

which by its strength and velocity one would imagine ought to be beyond the reach of man." Fearlessness and persistence are their major characteristics.

In Letter V Crèvecoeur narrates the success story of American whaling, from the first whalers who "began their career of industry with a single-whale boat" , who did not give up and who, "After many trials and several miscarriages" finally succeeded in building up a huge and prospering industry. Philbrick puts this achievement in a transatlantic context when he argues that the

astonishing success of American whalers, operating with little capital and without government subsidy, was a matter of acute interest in the latter half of the eighteenth century to European powers, which saw in the fishery not only a source of profit but an important nursery for the seamen needed to man their expanding navies. In the Parliament of England and in the ministries of the French government, the efficiency and enterprise of the Yankee whalers were held up as models for emulation.⁴

Besides the political connotation of whaling as an ideal opportunity to train seamen for war,⁵ whaling emerges here as the first successful economic enterprise to strengthen America's position and to turn it into a major economic power. Melville's chapter "The Advocate" in *Moby-Dick* continues the story of the economic success of the brave and fearless self-made whalers

Linked to Crèvecoeur's praise of bravery is a revealing observation concerning the behaviour of the whale population:

It may appear strange to you, that so slender a vessel as an American whale-boat, containing six diminutive beings, should dare to pursue and attack, in its native element, the largest and strongest fish that Nature has created. Yet by the exertions of an admirable dexterity, improved by a long practice, in which these people are become superior to any other whalers, by knowing the temper of the whale after her first movement, and by many other useful observations, they seldom failed to harpoon it and to bring the huge leviathan on the shores. Thus they went on until the profits they made enabled them to purchase larger vessels, and to pursue them farther when the whales quitted their coasts. (Letter V)

These whalers, in "so slender a vessel", have been so successful that they have driven the whales away from the coast. The whalers used their enormous profits to buy larger vessels. Instead of husbanding the whale population sensibly, they pursued them further and further. The doctrine of economic growth at any price had established itself firmly and quickly. Crèvecoeur skilfully uses what he later calls the "immense disproportion between the object assailed and the assailants", the "diminutive size and weakness of their frail vehicle", and the "treachery of the element on which this scene is transacted", to raise sympathy and understanding for the extraordinary challenge of whaling. Already here, after roughly 170 years of settlement, one of the main principles of American hunting has been established: the hunting grounds are hunted to exhaustion and then the hunters have to move on. The plight of the whale parallels that of the bison and of the passenger pigeon.

Letter VI has several clear parallels to the biological and technical facts of whaling given in *Moby-Dick*. Crèvecoeur describes meticulously and at length the hunt, the harpooning, the killing, and the processing of the blubber of a female whale. Then, similar to Melville's chapter "Cetology", he lists eleven different species of whales, including the dangerous sperm whale. Finally he finishes with another, rather sentimental, comparison between whaling and agriculture:

The sea therefore becomes to them a kind of patrimony; they go to whaling with as much pleasure and tranquil indifference, with as strong an expectation of success, as a landman undertakes to clear a piece of swamp. The first is obliged to advance his time and labour to procure oil on the surface of the sea; the second advances the same to procure himself grass from grounds that produced nothing before but hassocks and bogs. (Letter VI)

It can hence be said that Crèvecoeur uses hunting and whaling to define two different, and opposing, kinds of society. The whalers have managed to build and maintain

a community of harmony and cooperation, and their economic and social success reflects positively on American society as a whole, further proof that "the mildest government" has allowed the whalers to hunt and to prosper, to use their individual talents and ideas for their own benefit. Throughout the text whaling is juxtaposed with agriculture; farming land equals hunting whales in that it is an honourable and socially rewarding activity. Hunting animals is the complete opposite, an activity which leads to loneliness, isolation, no competition, and which turns the hunter into a ferocious and rapacious killer, unable to farm anymore.

To a considerable degree Crèvecoeur develops a very simple picture of society in British North America, of good farmers and whalers versus evil hunters. He warns of the dangers for the human soul, a soul which seems to have a considerable potential for evil and perversion, a soul which can be easily distracted from the benefits of tilling the land:

...men, like the elements, are always at war; the weakest yield to the most potent; force, subtlety, and malice always triumph over unguarded honesty and simplicity. Benignity, moderation, and justice are virtues adapted only to the humble paths of life; we love to talk of virtue and to admire its beauty while in the shade of solitude and retirement, but when we step forth into active life, if it happen to be in competition with any passion or desire, do we observe it to prevail?...Such is the perverseness of human nature; who can describe it in all its latitude? (Letter IX)

The incarnation of all these evils is the hunter, the man with the gun. The potential for aggression of these men, not only in the above quotation, but also in the rest of Crèvecoeur's text, is surprising. The hunters "are always at war", ready to kill, without any benignity or moderation.

Yet in one of the essays included in the *Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America* Crèvecoeur totally contradicts himself by describing cheerfully a big, highly organized squirrel hunt. By writing that the meat of "these squirrels is an excellent food", and by

describing this hunt as a pleasant social event, he proves himself guilty of double standards:

Different districts of woods are assigned them; the rendezvous is agreed on. They march, and that company which kills the most is treated by the rest; thus the day is spent. (Chapter IV, part II)

Here the bonhomie of hunting is easily palpable, but the reader feels also unpleasantly reminded of mass-killings or the killing frenzies so typical of later U.S. hunting. It must, however, be noted that Crèvecoeur's ambiguity towards hunting is frequently palpable in both texts. In Letter XII of *Letters from an American Farmer* he writes that "the art of hunting we must acquire", in Chapter III of his *Sketches Of Eighteenth-Century America* he writes that "He [the settler] will in a short time become master of that *necessary dexterity* [hunting] which his solitary life inspires", and in Chapter XII he writes about one settler that "From his youth he loved and delighted in hunting, and the skill he acquired confirmed his taste for that *manly diversion.*" (my italics) What seems to be clear is that Crèvecoeur could only partly criticize hunting, some of which he simply had to accept, perhaps because it was already too deeply integrated and too vital a part of American life. In particular at the beginning of new settlements hunting was the main source of food, only to be gradually supplemented by agriculture. A similar ambiguity towards hunting can be found in the "Higher Laws" chapter in *Walden* (1854) where Thoreau writes:

...I caught a glimpse of a woodchuck stealing across my path, and felt a strange thrill of savage delight, and was strongly tempted to seize and devour him raw...I found in myself, and still find, an instinct toward a higher, or, as it is named, spiritual life, as do most men, and another toward a primitive rank and savage one, and I reverence them both....

No humane being, past the thoughtless age of boyhood, will wantonly murder any creature, which holds its life by the same tenure that he does.⁶

Thoreau's ambiguity - which at the same time reveals the mental complexity of hunting - has been discussed extensively in the article "Chaplain to the hunters": Henry David

Thoreau's Ambivalence Toward Hunting."⁷ It can be linked to, for example, the paradox of a hunter like Theodore Roosevelt who on the one hand praised the beauty of wildlife and on the other hand spends most of his time killing the previously praised creatures (see Ch. 6).

Notes

- 1) Crèvecoeur mentions the "trail of destruction" again in Chapter IV of his *Sketches Of Eighteenth-Century America*.
- 2) Ruland, R. and Bradbury, M. *From Puritanism to Postmodernism*, p. 37
- 3) as quoted in Ruland and Bradbury, p. 58
- 4) Philbrick, T. *St. John De Crèvecoeur*, p.50
- 5) A similar example of hunting used to prepare men for war can be found in British fox hunting, which was also politically supported because it was seen as an opportunity to train horseriders during peacetime for possible use in later wars. See, for example, Raymond Carr's *English Fox Hunting*.
- 6) Thoreau, H.D. *Walden*, pp. 140, 141
- 7) Altherr, T.L. "'Chaplain to the Hunters': Henry David Thoreau's Ambivalence Toward Hunting", in *American Literature*, October 1984, Vol. 56, Nr.3, pp. 345-361.

3. GOING WILD: COOPER'S *THE PIONEERS*

James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers* was published in 1823 and is the first U.S. novel in which hunting has a pivotal function. Although *The Pioneers* was written only two hundred years after colonization began, it already foreshadows most of the problems and conflicts of later hunting stories, such as the clash between wilderness and civilisation, irresponsible hunting behaviour, and idiosyncrasies of the hunter. Taking into account this relatively short period of two centuries the actual impact of civilisation and settlements on the wilderness and wildlife must have been devastating. Cooper mentions this impact in a footnote in the 1832 introduction to *The Pioneers*:

Though forests still crown the mountains of Otsego, the bear, the wolf and the panther are nearly strangers to them. Even the innocent deer is rarely seen bounding beneath their arches, for the rifle and the activity of the settlers have driven them to their haunts. To this change, which in some particulars is melancholy to one who knew the country in its infancy, it may be added that the Otsego is beginning to be a niggard of its treasures.¹

Descriptions like these occur frequently in most of the texts analysed in this study and one of the main points of *The Pioneers* is to present this reality of the dying wilderness. The combination of two forces, of "the rifle and the activity of the settlers", resulted in the game being driven out of its natural habitat, indeed a "melancholy" change. "The rifle" stands here for the reckless mass-killing described in Chapters XXII and XXIII of *The Pioneers*; the "activity of the settlers", such as deforestation, is described in the work of the wood-chopper Billy Kirby in Chapter XX. The speed of this development, the actual size of the slaughter, and the total absence of any environmental consciousness due to the vastness of the resources of the newly settled land characterize not only the society of Templeton but also Melville's whaling factory, Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, and the

plight of the porpoises alluded to in Peter Benchley's *Jaws*. In the context of this study my reading of *The Pioneers* is centered on three points: the analysis of the killing frenzies, the character of Natty Bumppo, and the understanding of this novel as a text full of angry contention.

The Pioneers contains two chapters which describe senseless and unnecessary mass-killing at its worst. Chapter XXII is a report of systematic and random pigeons shooting, which is contrasted by Cooper at the beginning of the chapter with a biocentric perspective, in which he presents a list of the country's many birds such as "wild geese", "eagles", "flocks of migrating birds", "martins", "gulls" and "pigeons", all of which represent the richness and diversity of wildlife. But the reaction of the settlers is not one of delight or fascination; instead the superabundance of birds, summed up by Sheriff Grant with the words "the heavens are alive with pigeons", arouses their killer instincts. Cooper brutally contrasts the beauty and richness of the birdlife with the ultimate hunting perversity of using a military swivel gun, the aim of which is to kill as many birds as possible, no matter whether there is a real need for this or not. Unlimited random killing, accompanied by a naive, rather childish pleasure, is one of the many characteristics of U.S. hunting, and comes to light here for the first time, with later parallels being the plight of the American prairie chicken, the passenger pigeon, buffalos, whales, and dolphins.² The justification for the mass-killing is two-fold. First, there is the sheer superabundance of the natural resources; abundance justifies unlimited killing and implies that the resources are infinite. Second, it seems that the settlers have to protect their harvest against the birds, for Richard fears that "these rascals [the birds] will overrun our wheat-fields, when they come back in the fall". Whether or not this is a valid point cannot be properly assessed

within this study, but it remains certainly doubtful for the many migrating birds, which stay only briefly in one area. However, the protection of humans, lifestocks or harvests is a justification for killing which we find again in William Faulkner's "The Bear" and Peter Benchley's *Jaws*. The argument is picked up again by the woodchopper Billy Kirby who, after a serious and admonishing speech by Bumppo, quickly replies "What! old Leatherstocking...grumbling at the loss of a few pigeons! If you had to sow your wheat twice, and three times, as I have done, you wouldn't be so massyfully feeling'd to'ards the devils". Taking into account quotations like these as well as those quoted in other parts of this chapter we find a line of argument which continues throughout the novel.

Cooper himself makes clear how much he holds the hunting practices of the settlers in abomination when he describes with subtle irony the person who comes forward with the swivel gun, Mr Jones, as a man who "disdained the humble and ordinary means of destruction used by his companions", and who instead is "making arrangements for an assault of a more than ordinary fatal character". The choice of words - and arms - reminds us more about a serious military battle than about killing innocuous pigeons.

Emotionless mass-killing is the shocking consequence of the use of this military instrument, which is "hurling death at his nimble enemies". This impression is further amplified by the fact that nobody "pretended to collect the game, which lay scattered over the fields in such profusion, as to cover the very ground with the fluttering victims", behaviour very similar to the fishermen who are equally reluctant to pick up all the fish caught in their nets (Ch. XXIII). With this behaviour the slaughterers disqualify themselves immediately as cruel and sadistic and reveal their genuine motivation, an insatiable desire to kill. Throughout these chapters, as in Chapter I, Cooper continues to

call these men "sportsmen", in contrast to Bumpo, whom he describes as "the indignant old hunter".

The effect of the swivel gun is ambiguous, exciting men like Richard, but disturbing and shocking Judge Temple, who, after hearing Richard's battlecries, orders the whole slaughter to come to an end:

'Victory!' shouted Richard, 'victory! we have driven the enemy from the field.' 'Not so, Dickon,' said Marmaduke; 'the field is covered with them; and, like the Leather-stocking, I see nothing but eyes, in every direction, as the innocent sufferers turn their heads in terror. Full one half of those that have fallen are yet alive: and I think it is time to end the sport; if sport it be.' 'Sport!' cried the Sheriff; 'it is princely sport. There are some thousands of the blue-coated boys on the ground, so that every old woman in the village may have a pot-pie for the asking.' 'Well, we have happily frightened the birds from this side of the valley,' said Marmaduke, 'and the carnage must of necessity end, for the present...Judge Temple retired towards his dwelling with that kind of feeling, that many a man has experienced before him, who discovers, after the excitement of the moment has passed, that he has purchased pleasure at the price of misery to others. (Ch. XXII)

Marmaduke is upset and offended by the unskillful killing which causes unnecessary suffering and torture to the birds and is hence a violation of the hunting-code. He is haunted by "nothing but eyes, in every direction, as the innocent sufferers turn their heads in terror". Marmaduke cannot stand these eyes as he is not as merciless and brutal as, for example, Richard. Killing and suffering causes him so much pain and trouble that he flees immediately; as Cooper ironically writes, "he retired towards his dwelling" with a feeling of heavy guilt. The judge withdraws because he knows that he had no choice but to turn a blind eye towards an action which is morally repulsive and the view of which he cannot bear to watch.

As with Hemingway's Francis Macomber or Mailer's Rusty (see Chs. 7, 9), the settlers do not care for the plight of the animals, they do not want to relieve every bird from its pain as soon as possible. Instead, Richard uses a very cunning defense of the the whole slaughtering, "every old woman may have a pot-pie for the asking". This argument,

although totally unrelated to the reluctance of the settlers to kill the birds quickly, becomes a valid point because earlier the judge conceded that

'I had hundreds [of settlers] , at that dreadful time, daily looking up to me for bread. The sufferings of their families, and the gloomy prospect before them, had paralysed the enterprise and efforts of my settlers; hunger drove them to the woods for food, but despair sent them, at night, enfeebled and wan, to a sleepless pillow'. (Ch. XXI)

"Hunger" is even stronger than the judge's moral authority, a point which does not fail to make its impact on Judge Temple, and the later insight that "he has purchased pleasure at the price of misery to others" becomes equivocal, for if he gets his will and the slaughtering is stopped, his hungry settlers might be deprived of food.

Cooper transfers his argument again, this time with the description of fishing for bass at night in Chapter XXIII. As in the chapter before Cooper begins by mentioning several different birds and describes their natural activity: "the whip-poor-will was heard whistling", "the gay and fluttering blue bird, the social robin", "the industrious little wren", "the soaring fish-hawk", "the ponds and meadows were sending forth the music of their thousand tenants". Into this innocent paradise the hunters suddenly intrude with their preparations for bass-fishing. Hunting methods have to be efficient, providing quick success and satisfaction, for "certain adventures with hook and line were ill-suited to the profusion and impatience of the settlers. More destructive means were resorted to..." One senses here again an underlying irony, the immediate satisfaction of impatient settlers seems to be the most important matter, no one thinks or talks about the fate of the bass; "destructive" is the word chosen by Cooper to characterize the mood of the settlers.

Cooper again describes an improper and unfair way of hunting with the fishermen using seine-fishing instead of hook-and-line fishing, the method always used by Natty

Bumppo. The confrontation in the previous chapter between the judge and the trigger-friendly settlers continues when Sheriff Grant explains his understanding of fishing:

'I will show you what I call fishing - not nibble, nibble, nibble, as 'duke does, when he goes after the salmon trout. There he will sit, for hours, in a broiling sun, or, perhaps, over a hole in the ice, in the coldest days in winter, under the lee of a few bushes, and not a fish will he catch, after all this mortification of the flesh. No, no, give me a good seine, that's fifty or sixty fathoms in length, with a jolly parcel of boatmen to crack their jokes, the while, with Benjamin to steer, and let us haul them in by thousands; I call that fishing.'

The judge immediately retorts:

'thou knowest but little of the pleasure there is in playing with the hook and the line, or thou wouldst be more saving of the game. I have known thee to leave fragments enough behind thee, when thou hast headed a night-party on the lake, to feed a dozen famishing families.' (Ch. XXIII)

The Sheriff refuses to defend himself against the accusation of having wasted fish; instead he goes on to prepare his fishing gear. Cooper continues to describe the two opposing positions when the Sheriff boastfully declares that "a haul of one thousand Otsego bass, without counting pike, pickerel, perch, bull-pouts, salmon-trouts, and suckers, is no bad fishing..." The Sheriff mentions no less than seven different kinds of fish in his sentence, again a clear sign for the diversity and richness of wildlife and fishstocks, but instead of admiring the beauty of nature the Sheriff is only concerned to secure the biggest haul possible, the bigger the better, no matter whether there is any demand for it or not.

Excitement and the thrill of the chase are the dominating moods of the fishermen when they bring in their catch, and Cooper continues by describing the suffering of the fish which are not killed immediately:

Fishes of various sorts were now to be seen, entangled in the meshes of the net, as it was passed through the hands of the labourers, and the water, at a little distance from the shore, was alive with the movements of the alarmed victims. Hundreds of white sides were glancing up to the surface of the water, and glistening in the fire-light, when, frightened at the uproar and the change, the fish would again dart to the bottom, in fruitless efforts for freedom... Great care was observed in bringing the net to land, and, after much toil, the whole shoal of victims was safely deposited in a hollow of the bank,

where they were left to flutter away their brief existence, in the new and fatal element. Even Elizabeth and Louisa were greatly excited and highly gratified, by seeing two thousand captives thus drawn from the bosom of the lake, and laid as prisoners at their feet. But...Marmaduke..., in melancholy musing,...observed - "This is a fearful expenditure of the choicest gifts of Providence. These fish, Bess, which thou seest lying in such piles before thee, and which, by to-morrow evening, will be rejected food on the meanest table in Templeton, are of a quality and flavour that, in other countries, would make them esteemed a luxury on the tables of princes or epicures". (Ch. XXIII)

As with the pigeons the hunting code is again ignored; instead the bass "were left to flutter away their brief existence", no one caring to relieve them from their suffering. "Fearful expenditure" is what Marmaduke thinks about this slaughter, a carnage which even excites Elizabeth and Louisa, who are otherwise rather opposed to killing. Marmaduke's mood of "melancholy" then turns into resignation, when he agrees with what Bumpo had explained already in the first chapter:

[Marmaduke] 'But, like all the other treasures of the wilderness, they [the bass] already begin to disappear, before the wasteful extravagance of man.' 'Disappear, 'duke! disappear!' exclaimed the Sheriff; 'if you don't call this appearing, I know not what you will. Here are a good thousand of the shiners, some hundreds of suckers, and a powerful quantity of other fry. But this is always the way with you, Marmaduke; first it's the trees, then it's the deer, after that it's the maple sugar, and so on to the end of the chapter. (Ch. XXIII)

The judge is on both occasions in a constant opposition, in particular to the Sheriff, who always challenges Marmaduke's admonishing remarks. The polarisation is very clear and continues throughout the whole text. Marmaduke's fears about the decline of the livestock are always directly countered with retorts about the sheer size of either the prey or the animal population. None of the settlers can understand Marmaduke's worries for they consider the resources of nature to be inexhaustible; for them quantity is more important than quality.

With the wood-chopper and sugar-boiler Billy Kirby, Cooper gives us another example of reckless exploitation of valuable natural resources. In a direct confrontation

with Judge Temple concerning the trees around Lake Othsego, Kirby reveals an indomitable desire to destroy:

...Marmaduke had been wandering about the grove, making observations on his favourite trees, and the wasteful manner in which the wood-chopper conducted his manufacture. 'It grieves me to witness the extravagance that pervades this country,' said the Judge, 'where the settlers trifle with the blessings they might enjoy, with the prodigality of successful adventures. You are not exempt from the censure yourself, Kirby, for you make dreadful wounds in these trees, where a small incision would effect the same object. I earnestly beg you will remember, that they are the growth of centuries, and when once gone, none living will see their loss remedied.' 'Why, I don't know, Judge,' returned the man he addressed: 'It seems to me, if there's a plenty of any thing in this mountaynous country, it's the trees. If there's any sin in chopping them I've a pretty heavy account to settle; for I've chopped over the best half of a thousand acres, with my own hands...Chopping comes quite nateral to me, and I wish no other employment...I'm sure the country is in a thriving way; and, though I know you kalkilate greatly on the trees, setting as much store by them as some men would by their children, yet, to my eyes, they are a sore sight at any time, unless I'm privileged to work my will on them; in which case, I can't say but they are more to my liking...I call no country much improved, that is pretty well covered with trees. Stumps are a different thing, for they don't shade the land'... 'Opinions on such subjects vary much, in different countries,' said Marmaduke; 'but it is not as ornaments that I value the noble trees of this country; it is for their usefulness. We are stripping the forests, as if a single year would replace what we destroy. But the hour approaches, when the laws will take notice of not only the woods, but the game they contain also.' (Ch. XX)

This passage confronts clearly both poles of the argument, which is this time transferred from the animals to the trees. The judge already foresees the threat of extinction and tries to convince Kirby of a more sensible and less "wasteful" way to treat the trees, such as to make smaller incisions or to chop less trees. The confrontation is obvious: the judge who values the "noble trees" not as "ornaments" but "for their usefulness", against Kirby who naively thinks "there's a plenty of any thing in this mountaynous country" and who, rather dangerously, infers that there will always be enough trees to chop. Kirby must work his will on the trees; only by felling them can he coexist, and destroying them is "quite nateral" to him. The judge's only tool is the law which provides the perspective he is thinking in, and he hopes that sooner rather than later "the laws will take notice of not only the woods, but the game they contain also". Cooper later ridicules this idea and

demonstrates its impracticability when Bumpo is arrested and charged with having killed a deer during the closed season.

Kirby is obstreperous and reluctant to exercise the restraint which is suggested by the judge. He is only satisfied when he is "privileged to work [his] will on them [the trees]". Kirby, who symbolizes the "American common man", is introduced as a

noisy, boisterous, reckless lad, whose good-natured eye contradicted the bluntness and bullying tenor of his speech.... he would shoulder his axe and his rifle, ...and enter the woods with the treads of a Hercules. (Ch. XVII)

The judge describes him as a "careless son of the forest" (Ch. XXIII). With his power and will to work Kirby is simultaneously also a symbol for the drive to destroy, for the power of destruction, in particular as his attitude towards the resources of nature is rather superficial and dominated by greed for money. It is the same drive which occurs later at the killing of the pigeons or the excessive seine fishing.

I would like to establish here a link between *The Pioneers* and Cooper's novel *The Chainbearer*, which was published in 1845. It contains two short passages in which Cooper picks up two of the problems of *The Pioneers*, the woodchopping and the plight of the pigeons. The woodchopper Aaron Thousandacres represents exactly the same attitude towards the resources of nature as Billy Kirby in *The Pioneers*. In an argument with his neighbour Squire Newcome about the rights of possession Thousandacres explains his attitude towards the forests:

[Thousandacres] ...and there's reason why possession should count agin everything. By possession, however, I don't mean hangin up a pair of saddle-bags on a tree, as is sometimes done, but goin' honestly and fairly in upon land, and cuttin' down trees, and buildin' mills and houses and barns, and cuttin' and slashin' and sawin' right and left, like all creation. That's what I always doos myself, and that's what I call sich a possession as ought to stand in law - ay, and in gospel, too; for I'm not one of them that flies in the face of religion.³

Reckless felling of trees, with no regard at all for nature, is what characterizes Thousandacres's position. In addition his defiance is extended even to the highest moral authority, the church, for he is "not one of them that flies in the face of religion." H.D. Peck in his analysis *A World By Itself The Pastoral Moment in Cooper's Fiction* suggests that this passage is an image

of wanton and uncontrollable destruction, destruction which will leave behind a wasteland of stumps - a geography devoid of all the natural demarcations that structure the space of the forest. And this suggests the nature of Cooper's deepest fear. For while the immediate threat is that forest or family estate will be destroyed or stolen, the more frightening possibility is that the very idea of boundary will be destroyed. Thousandacres is not merely a destroyer of trees; he is an enemy of all forms of human distinction.⁴

As such the passage is completely in line with the analysis of Billy Kirby in this chapter. Its consequence is the total destruction of the forests, and hence the destruction of the wildlife habitat. Both Thousandacres and Billy Kirby only want to keep on chopping trees; they do not consider any careful or sensible management of the natural resources.

The second important passage describes, as in *The Pioneers*, a state where "the heavens are alive with pigeons":

Sureflint and Chainbearer were alone totally unmoved; for they had been at pigeons' roosts before, and knew what to expect. To them the wonders of the woods were no longer novel. Each stood leaning on his rifle, and smiling at our evident astonishment....While standing wondering at the extraordinary scene around us, a noise was heard rising above that of the incessant fluttering, which I can only liken to that of the trampling of thousands of horses on a beaten road. This noise at first sounded distant, but it increased rapidly in proximity and power, until it came rolling in among us, among the tree-tops, like a crash of thunder. The air was suddenly darkened, and the place where we stood as sombre as a dusky twilight. At the same instant, all the pigeons near us, that had been on their nests, appeared to fall out of them, and the space immediately above our heads was at once filled with birds. Chaos itself could hardly have represented greater confusion, or a greater uproar. As for the birds, they now seemed to disregard our presence entirely; possibly they could not see us on account of their own numbers; for they fluttered in between Dus and myself, hitting us with their wings, and at times appearing as if about to bury us in avalanches of pigeons. Each of us caught one at least in our hands, while Chainbearer and the Indian took them in some numbers, letting one prisoner go as another was taken. In a word, we seemed to be in a world of pigeons.⁵

Superabundance of pigeons is what dominates this passage, the pigeons appearing in such huge numbers that it is difficult to imagine, as they are virtually everywhere. Also the birds do not seem to fear the humans; they do not try to escape, but are easily caught because they can not see the humans "on account of their own numbers". The two hunters, Chainbearer and the Indian, are contrasted with the astonished and admiring narrator. They are "totally unmoved" and so used to catching pigeons that they are beyond being excited by such an experience; instead they are "smiling at [the narrator's] evident astonishment". The hunters are clearly distinguished and separated emotionally from the narrator, as is Thousandacres from Squire Newcome.

All these scenes are examples of the different ways in which natural resources were treated in the United States compared to Britain. Every settler of Templeton is, or can, participate in hunting. Virtually the whole community is infected by the "killing virus", chasing and killing animals or felling trees is an open and democratic activity, available to everybody. The above scenes can be read in a direct continuation of Crèvecoeur's earlier criticism of hunting. They are proof of his verdict that hunting and killing does actually influence the mind, and that it has an addictive effect upon man and makes him inaccessible to rational arguments.

The character of Natty Bumppo gives us further insights into the psychology of American hunting. From the beginning of the novel Bumppo is introduced as a man of the woods, out of which he comes at the beginning and into which he disappears at the end. He only occasionally, and sometimes rather reluctantly, leaves these woods, and he is always happy and eager to return to them. Bumppo is different because he has abandoned civilisation and lives with an Indian in the woods. At the age of seventy one he does not

appear to be gregarious; like the octogenarian Isaac McCaslin he is and remains a reclusive outsider, Although he acts in the Leatherstocking novels as a helpful and invaluable guide across the wilderness he remains a social outcast who never marries or enters into a relationship, and he is always conscious of his social inferiority. As such he is an example of the lonely old hunter, a reticent man who is superior in the woods, but feels awkward and uncomfortable whenever he is in society, a phenomenon which is a decisive trait of hunters in American fiction.

Bumppo's outer appearance amplifies the impression of a woodsman as a person who uses in a sensible way every possible commodity the woods yield. He wears a "cap made of fox-skin", a "coat, made of dressed deer-skin", "deer-skin moccasins, ornamented with porcupines' quills", "buck-skin breeches", a "belt of deer-skin", and "an enormous ox horn" (Ch. I). The many animals used for his apparel underline, as do the descriptions of birds at the beginning of Chapter XXII and XXIII, the richness of the wildlife, but they demonstrate also that Bumppo uses as many parts as possible from each animal he kills, so that as little as possible is wasted.

It is in this context important to note that civilisation, or the settlements, reflect badly on themselves via Bumppo. With his honesty and decency, his simplemindedness - he never reads a book - as well as with his understanding of wildlife as a creation of God, Bumppo makes many of the settlers, including Judge Temple, feel ashamed. Bumppo's deep religious faith, for he sees the wildlife as God's creation, given to man to treat it responsibly, together with his honesty, make his position as well as his whole person very credible and result in it being extremely difficult for the judge to enforce his understanding of the law on Bumppo. It is the irony of this text that the judge's game law is set up to deal

with waste and reckless destruction of the killing frenzies; but in the end this law backfires completely. It is intended to restrict people like Richard Jones or Billy Kirby, but it hits the man who fights hardest for the preservation of wildlife and forests. It is Hiram Doolittle who, although accidentally, initiated the killing of the deer by releasing Bumppo's dogs, but it is Bumppo who gets punished for having killed a single deer out of season.

Throughout the text Bumppo's function is one of constant opposition to the plans and projects of the judge, and whenever he defends nature he is immediately attacked and criticized by the Sheriff who calls Bumppo a "lawless squatter, and professed deer-killer". In two key speeches Bumppo explains his attitude towards nature and attacks the consequences of settlements:

'This comes of settling a country!' he [Bumppo] said - 'here have I known the pigeons to fly for forty long years, and till you made your clearings, there was nobody to skear or to hurt them. I loved to see them come into the woods, for they were company to a body; hurting nothing; being, as it was, as harmless as a garter-snake. But now it gives me sore thoughts when I hear the frighty things whizzing through the air, for I know it's only a motion to bring out all the brats in the village. Well! the lord won't see the waste of his creators for nothing, and right will be done to the pigeons, as well as others, by-and-by. (Ch. XXII)

Bumppo frequently reminds the judge about his being implicated in the destruction of the wilderness and when the judge tries to lure him into joining the fish massacre, the conflict suddenly surfaces with Bumppo giving his second defense of wildlife:

'Approach, Mohegan,' said Marmaduke; 'approach, Leather-stocking, and load your canoe with the bass. It would be a shame to assail the animals with the spear, when such multitudes of victims lie here, that will be lost as food, for the wants of mouths to consume them.' 'No, no, Judge', returned Natty,...ascending to the little grassy bottom where the fish were laid in piles; 'I eat of no man's wasty ways. I strike my spear into the eels, or the trout, when I crave the creators, but I wouldn't be helping to such a sinful kind of fishing, for the best rifle that was ever brought out from the old countries. If they had fur, like a beaver, or you could tan their hides, like a buck, something might be said in favour of taking them by the thousands with your nets; but as God made them for man's food, and for no other reason, I call it sinful and wasty to catch more than can be eat...we are not much of one mind, Judge, or you'd never turn good hunting grounds into stumpy pastures. And you fish and hunt out of rule; but to me the flesh is sweeter, where the creator has some chance for its life; for that reason, I always use a single ball, even if it be at a bird or a squirrel; besides, it saves lead, for, when a body knows how to shoot, one piece of lead is enough for all, except hard-lived animals'. ..Marmaduke appeared to

understand that all opposition to the will of the Sheriff [i.e. a second haul of fish] would be useless, and he strolled away from the fire..." (Ch. XXIV)

Again this passage is completely in line with the argument which Cooper maintains throughout the whole novel, but in addition Bumpo's deep religious conviction as well as his fine wit and irony are revealed. He, a man who cannot even pronounce the word "creature" properly and who later admits his illiteracy with the words "I never read a book in my life", but who not only strongly defends wildlife, in front of the judge who purports to be a Christian, but also ridicules the well educated judge with the words "when a body knows how to shoot, one piece of lead is enough for all...animals", a clear allusion to the judge who missed the buck five times. The judge cannot retort because Bumpo is absolutely right; instead "he strolled away".

Hunting is a necessity for Bumpo. One is forced to kill if one wants to survive, and because of this one has to exercise restraint with the treasures created by God. "Use but don't waste" is his philosophy. Although Bumpo emerges here as a defendant of wildlife his understanding of "Use" includes killing, and throughout the Leatherstocking novels this is an activity which, when exercised by himself, never causes him any problems.

D.H. Lawrence gives a rather sarcastic characterisation of this killer:

And Natty, what sort of a white man is he? Why, he is a man with a gun. He is a killer, a slayer. Patient and gentle as he is, he is a slayer. Self-effacing, self-forgetting, still he is a killer...Twice, in the book [*The Last of the Mohicans*], he brings an enemy down hurtling in death through the air, downwards. Once it is the beautiful, wicked Magua - shot from a height, and hurtling down ghastly through space, into death. This is Natty, the white forerunner. A killer. As in *Deerslayer*, he shoots the bird that flies in the high, high sky, so that the bird falls out of the invisible into the visible, dead, he symbolizes himself. He will bring the bird of the spirit out of the high air. He is the stoic American killer of the old great life. But he kills, as he says, only to live.⁶

Lawrence raises an important point in highlighting Bumpo's ambiguity with regard to killing. Both *The Pioneers* and *The Deerslayer* contain a number of descriptions of birds

killed by Bumppo only to display his superior marksmanship. We are reminded of Hemingway's "clean" killing, of the "art" of killing (see Ch. 7). The killing frenzies in *The Pioneers* are sheer butchery, but each of Bumppo's kills is a masterpiece. Although Bumppo shows strong remorse about his unnecessary kills, they significantly impair the credibility of his rule "Use, but don't waste". One rare explanation for this behaviour is given by Richard Slotkin in his book *Regeneration through Violence*, where he argues that Bumppo "hunts both for food and for the spiritual satisfaction of participating in the necessary, ennobling rite of the kill." ⁷ Although the birdkills are clearly a rite and ennobling, something which finds an immediate reflection with Deerslayer being rewarded with the rifle "Killdeer", this satisfaction is denied or not admitted by Bumppo. Despite this ambiguity Bumppo is still absolutely inseparable from the woods; they are the only environment in which he can exist and enjoy real freedom and independence from the threatening and restricting laws and rules of civilisation.

In the final part of this chapter I would like to look at the novel as a text of conflict, of anger and of aggression. Here hunting is chosen by Cooper as a means to demonstrate the clash between the laws, rules and habits of civilisation and those long since established by nature, such as Natty Bumppo's "Use but don't waste". The former are symbolized by Judge Temple, Sheriff Grant, H. Doolittle and the people of Templeton, the latter by Natty Bumppo, Oliver Edwards, and John Mohegan. They all live and work at the frontier which is here an absolute but changing border, always pushing westwards. It is a border between civilisation and wilderness, between Whites and Indians, between a landscape of 'civilisation', supported by politicians and land dealers, and an innocent original paradise whose threat was felt but tolerated by those who benefitted from the

settlements. Hence the consequences of confrontation dominate the text, civilisation has to protect the wealth, the natural resources and values which the wilderness provides, but the peaceful coexistence of civilisation and wilderness is anything but easy.

The novel is not dominated by the hunt for one particular animal, but starts with a hunting accident and a display of bad and dangerous hunting behaviour. The consequences of this accident permeate and dominate the first half of the novel. Hunting is further used to demonstrate that individual liberty cannot be preserved against tyranny imposed by the state. Natty Bumppo's alienation from Templeton and his withdrawal into the wilderness, further to the west and hence in line with the pioneer movement in general, symbolize the hunter's incompatibility with the society of Templeton, a problem already forecast by Crèvecoeur. As such *The Pioneers* turns hunting into a question about the quality of American life in general.

When Judge Temple on his return to Templeton in December 1793 suddenly spots a huge buck, he precipitately grabs his shotgun and, without making sure that no one is in the firing line, accidentally injures a young hunter who is simultaneously hunting and killing the buck. The following quotation describes this first hunting accident as well as the first killing of a deer in American fiction:

In a few moments the speaker [the Judge] succeeded in extricating a double-barrelled fowling piece... when the light bounding noise of an animal plunging through the woods was heard, and a fine buck darted into the path, a short distance ahead of him. The appearance of the animal was sudden, and his flight inconceivably rapid; but the traveller appeared to be too keen a sportsman to be disconcerted by either. As it came first into view he raised the fowling piece to his shoulder, and, with a practised eye and steady hand, drew a trigger. The deer dashed forward undaunted, and apparently unhurt. Without lowering his piece, the traveller turned its muzzle towards his victim, and fired again...The whole scene had passed with a rapidity that confused the female, who was unconsciously rejoicing in the escape of the buck, as he rather darted like a meteor, than ran across the road, when a sharp, quick sound struck her ear...sufficiently distinct to be known as the concussion produced by fire-arms...the buck sprang from the snow, to a great height in the air, and directly a second discharge, similar in

sound to the first, followed, when the animal came to the earth, falling headlong, and rolling over on the crust with its own velocity. (Chap. I)

This scene describes a spontaneous, on-the-spot attempt to kill a deer, an attempt which fails due to the insufficient hunting skills of Judge Temple who, in addition of his using the wrong gun, a shot gun or a "smooth-bore" instead of a rifle, is also guilty of dangerously neglecting basic safety rules, such as not shooting unless you are absolutely certain that no person is endangered by your shot. With the words "had I known you were in ambush, I should not have fired" the judge immediately admits his mistake and tries in every way to help the injured hunter Oliver Edwards; he even extends the generous hunting permit, given to Bumppo when the judge first acquired the land cheaply, to Edmunds:

'Admit it!' repeated the agitated Judge; 'I here give thee [Edmunds] a right to shoot deer, or bears, or any thing thou pleasest in my woods, forever. Leather-stocking is the only other man that I have granted the same privilege to; and the time is coming when it will be of value'. (Chap.I)

Bumppo's "permit" or "privilege" for hunting already foreshadows the later conflict, because he had been hunting these grounds long before the judge got hold of the land, and with the issuing of these permits the judge tries to prove that he is the highest legal authority as well as the real owner of the land. The implementation of the laws and rules of civilisation raises here a fundamental and important question: Who will be in charge of issuing hunting permits? Suddenly the woods do not belong to everybody anymore, the judge already exercises the right to call them "my woods."

But despite all this the judge cannot undo what has happened, and throughout the next days and month he is frequently reprimanded for this misbehaviour. The judge, who has missed five times and is hence depicted as a bungler, is here seen in stark contrast to the exceptional hunting skills of Bumppo and Oliver Edwards, who are both extremely

good shots. The end of the chapter with Bumppo killing a bird with a single brilliant shot underlines this discrepancy.

The above passage establishes important criteria for the assessment of hunting scenes. The encounter between animal and hunter is usually short and rapid, everything happens quickly, animal and hunter confront each other only very briefly, the animal tries at once to escape. The author uses a positive vocabulary for the description of the animal such as "a fine buck", it "dashed forward undaunted", and it "darted like a meteor". The reader automatically and more or less consciously begins to sympathize with the animal, a feeling which is further supported by the female's reaction "who was unconsciously rejoicing in the escape of the buck", and equally so does the reader. The position of Elizabeth as being opposed to animal-killing is further developed by her opposition to the turkey shoot at Christmas and is already presenting a picture of women either being opposed to or not participating in hunting. The killing of the buck is described very briefly, Cooper uses only a single sentence, and no suffering or pain is mentioned. These two points, brevity and the absence of any information about the animal's plight, characterise this first death of a hunted animal in American fiction, as well as the majority of later descriptions.

The argument which immediately arises over who should have the buck shows how valuable a commodity such an animal had become at this time (1793) and in this location. When the judge insists of taking the buck home, Bumppo cunningly replies:

'...I have known animals travel days with shots in the neck, and I'm none of them who'll rob a man of his rightful dues.' 'You are tenacious of your rights, this cold evening, Natty,' returned the judge,...(Ch.I)

Bumppo and Edwards cling tenaciously to all their rights in this argument, such as to hunt where, when, and what they want to hunt as long as this happens in a sensible and responsible manner.

Another passage again already anticipates what will be one of the major themes of later American hunting stories:

[Natty Bumppo] 'Ah! the game is becoming hard to find, indeed, Judge, with your clearings and betterments,' said the old hunter, with a kind of compelled resignation. 'The time has been, when I have shot thirteen, without counting the fa'ns, standing in the door of my own hut; - and for bear's meat, if one wanted a ham or so, he had only to watch a-nights, and he could shoot one by moonlight, through the cracks of the logs; no fear of his over-sleeping himself...(Ch.I)

"Compelled resignation" describes Bumppo's feeling, and already anticipates his final withdrawal westwards at the end of the novel. "Clearings and betterments" signifies the projects - and the ideology - of Judge Temple and the settlers of Templeton. The fact that Bumppo himself remembers better times in his lifetime shows how rapid Judge Temple's clearings and betterments are progressing and how quickly the destruction of the wilderness takes place. That sensible hunters remember better times or significantly better conditions within the last thirty or forty years of their life is another of the many characteristics of hunting stories and finds its reflection in, for example, William Faulkner's *Ike McCaslin*. The passage also reveals the hunter's way of dealing with game, a way which demanded that you shoot only as much as you need, so that a coexistence between hunter and game was possible. With the beginning of the settlements these times came to a very quick end; the game became scarce and had to withdraw.

It can hence be said that the discourse of *The Pioneers* is one of conflict, first on an internal level, among the settlers of Templeton, and second on an external level, the settlers versus nature. On the internal level the main problems are sorted out and the

marriage of Elizabeth and Oliver ends the whole narration peacefully. On the external level the end is completely different for nature, symbolised here by Natty Bumppo, has to retreat, civilisation superimposing completely different rules and laws on hitherto innocent and untouched parts of nature. This enforcement of different laws happens in the form of a westward movement, a movement which pushes or destroys everything which threatens to stop or even slow down its progress, and which includes technical changes such as the introduction of more efficient firearms like the repeating rifle, in contrast to, for example, the single-shot rifle Bumppo is using. Closely linked to this movement is the chronological structure of the text, with the decrease of the livestock and the decay of the wilderness, a change and deterioration which is also typical of several other hunting stories. In the beginning of the novel Bumppo remembers better times, when game was abundant and he literally only had to open his front door to have plenty of prey available. It is worth noticing that around 1800 the native hunters and Indians lived in harmony with nature and were able to maintain a naturally balanced livestock. Throughout the novel, or within the lifespan of one hunter, these conditions deteriorated dramatically, but without any real notice or response from those who caused this deterioration. Hence American hunting stories often begin in a state of abundant wildlife, only to change quickly to a state where the game is in the process of withdrawing or has withdrawn already. It is always the same pattern: hunting grounds were hunted to exhaustion, or the game withdraws, and the hunters have to move to different areas.

The Pioneers contains also a conflict of ideologies. The ideas and dreams of a "new land", often described by critics such as Henry Nash Smith as the "myth of the garden", proclaim values such as freedom, equality, and fairness, all of them incarnated in

the village of Templeton as well as in the person of Judge Temple, both of them modelled after Judge Cooper and Cooperstown. But these values are utterly ridiculed or devalued by the actual behaviour of settlers, hunters and wood-choppers who show no respect at all for the resources of nature. Hence Judge Temple, who is the only one who completely understands the importance and size of this conflict, has to constantly remind the settlers about their moral obligations and responsibilities for nature. The conflict is between an individual, relying only on himself and on nature as a sufficient provider of food, and a community or a group in which people depend upon each other, and, as Kay Seymour House aptly put it, "their differences ultimately are expressed in terms of conservatism and anarchy, of artificial law and natural justice."⁸

Cooper does not offer a practicable solution for this conflict, hence Natty Bumppo can only flee further westwards, away from civilisation, into a part of the land where he hopes not to clash again with civilisation. This flight is nothing but a reprieve or a postponement of the clash between wilderness and civilisation, not a solution. Cooper does not present any practical scheme of how to husband sensibly the natural resources and indicates with the postponement of the conflict that these events are going to repeat themselves again and again.

The text gives us also an insight into the psychology of hunting by frequently describing the exhilaration, the excitement, and the thrill of the chase. Hunting seems to be an activity which results in a different, bloodthirsty state of mind. Bumppo, seeing the deer in the lake, is suddenly affected by a kind of hunting fever, a fever which even touches Elizabeth, when she sees the size of the haul of fish brought in at night. Whenever anybody gets

involved in the hunt, s/he cannot stop; some sort of ecstasy takes over until the animal is finally killed.

It is interesting in the context of this study to question whether or not Cooper's rather simple picture of evil civilisation versus innocent wilderness, of irresponsible settler versus responsible pioneer, is absolutely true, and if so, why did it happen? Certainly Cooper had to make concessions because the novel was first of all planned to be a good read, to be commercially successful and to help establish him as a major novelist.

That killing frenzies and animal slaughter took place is a hard fact, yet the only critic to indicate any reason for this is Thomas Philbrick in his essay "Cooper's *The Pioneers*: Origin and Structure". There he argues that

in such episodes as the slaughter of the pigeons and the massacre of the bass, the citizens, organized by Richard Jones in what is by this point clearly a parody of communal cooperation, give vent to the destructive impulses that the winter discipline has stifled. ...The flow of the sap, the migration of the pigeons to their northern breeding grounds, the shoals of spawning bass are all manifestations of the creative vitality of nature, a vitality which man here intercepts and truncates with the needless ravages of his ax, gun, and seine. A heavy irony thus qualifies the paralleled renewal of motion in the natural and human worlds. The processes of nature yield life and plentitude; man's activity is productive only of wounds and death. But, for the season, nature serves as a convenient outlet for the destructive impulses that might otherwise act within the community, shattering its pretense of unity.⁹

Although I disagree with Philbrick's rather lighthearted description of the killing frenzies as "a parody of communal cooperation", his suggestion that these killings "give vent to the destructive impulses that the winter discipline has stifled" is in line with the overall picture of the killing of animals in the United States. This phenomenon as well as this reason for it are already mentioned in Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (see Ch. 2). However, I would like to widen this argument from the limitations of "winter discipline", for killing did not just occur briefly in spring time, to the personal circumstances of the new immigrants coming to the United States. Suddenly released from narrow European

boundaries and overpopulation in crowded cities, often struck by poverty and hunger, the vastness of the country, the beauty of the landscape, and the superabundance of wildlife must have been difficult to cope with for them. Tremendous psychological pressure to prove themselves in order to survive under these new conditions might have added further to this inclination to kill, and seems to have resulted in an unusually high amount of aggression and tension.

Notes

- 1) Cooper, J.F. *The Pioneers*, p.9
- 2) cf. Melville's mentioning of the plight of the buffalo in Ch. 105 of *Moby-Dick*, analysed in Ch. 3 of this study.
- 3) Cooper, J.F. *The Chainbearer*, p.273
- 4) Peck, H.D. *A World By Itself The Pastoral Moment In Cooper's Fiction*, p.151
- 5) Cooper, J.F. *The Chainbearer*, pp. 204, 205
- 6) Lawrence, D.H. *Studies In Classic American Literature*, p.65
- 7) Slotkin, Richard *Regeneration through Violence*, p.489
- 8) Seymour House, Kay "James Fenimore Cooper *The Pioneers*", in Stegner, Wallace (ed), *The American Novel*, p.9
- 9) Philbrick, Thomas "Cooper's *The Pioneers*: Origins and Structure" in Fields, Wayne (ed), *James Fenimore Cooper*, p.72

4. SUICIDAL FANATICISM: MELVILLE'S *MOBY-DICK*

Moby Dick, or the White Whale.

A hunt. The last great hunt.

For what?

D.H. Lawrence Studies in Classic American Literature

This chapter tries to illuminate three aspects of *Moby-Dick*: first, Ahab as a mad and fanatical hunter; second, the function of the white whale, and finally the notion of whaling and killing in *Moby-Dick*.

The figure of Captain Ahab is important for this study because he is the first and most extensively developed character of a hunter in what is the longest hunting novel in American fiction. In contrast to other hunting stories the reader gets a deep insight into Ahab's psyche, and the development of his obsession and his reasons for hunting one particular animal are precisely described.

Characterized by many critics as obsessed and "completely committed to destruction,"¹ the experienced and reticent hunter is by no means easy to analyse or understand. Although Melville describes mainly technical and historical aspects of whaling he regularly returns to Ahab's thoughts and ideas, or reports his current activities. Ahab is the only character in the novel whose emotional and mental life is narrated continuously. Throughout the novel Melville describes Ahab as either "monomaniac" or "moody", sometimes even as "crazy" or "mad". From a psychoanalytical point of view Ahab's life is characterized by two traumatic experiences. The first is only mentioned briefly at the beginning:

Captain Ahab did not name himself. 'Twas a foolish, ignorant whim of his crazy, widowed mother, who died when he was only a twelvemonth old. (Ch. 16)

Ahab grew up without any parents, and presumably without a happy childhood; his mother is characterized as “crazy”, and nothing is revealed about his father. In the same chapter we are informed by Peleg that Ahab “was never very jolly”, and the absence of anything funny or merry in and around Ahab is striking. Ahab’s second trauma is described and analysed in detail, and the narrator frequently recurs to it throughout the novel. But the first and longest description contains everything needed for an analysis of Ahab's character and motivation for hunting one particular whale:

Moby Dick had reaped away Ahab's leg, as a mower a blade of grass in the field...ever since that almost fatal encounter, Ahab had cherished a wild vindictiveness against the whale, all the more fell for that in his frantic morbidity he at last came to identify with him, not only all his bodily woes, but all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations. The White Whale swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung. That intangible malignity...Ahab did not fall down and worship it...but deliriously transferring its idea to the abhorred white whale, he pitted himself, all mutilated, against it. All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it.

It is not probable that this monomania in him took its instant rise at the precise time of his bodily dismemberment. Then, in darting at the monster, knife in hand, he had but given loose to a sudden, passionate, corporal animosity; and when he received the stroke that tore him, he probably but felt the agonizing bodily laceration, but nothing more. Yet, when by this collision forced to turn towards home, and for long months of days and weeks, Ahab and anguish lay stretched together in one hammock...then it was, that his torn body and gashed soul bled into one another; and so interfusing, made him mad. That it was only then, on the homeward voyage, after the encounter, that the final monomania seized him, seems all but certain from the fact that, at intervals during the passage, he was a raving lunatic; and, though unlimbed of a leg, yet such vital strength yet lurked in his Egyptian chest, and was moreover intensified by his delirium, that his mates were forced to lace him fast, even there, as he sailed, raving in his hammock. In a strait-jacket, he swung to the mad rockings of the gales. And, when running into more sufferable latitudes..the old man's delirium seemed left behind him with the Cape Horn swells, and he came forth from his dark den into the blessed light and air; even then, when he bore that firm, collected front, however pale, and issued his calm orders once again;... even then, Ahab, in his hidden self raved on. Human madness is oftentimes a cunning and most feline thing. When you think it fled, it may have but become transfigured into some still subtler form. Ahab's full lunacy subsided not, but deepeningly contracted...his special lunacy stormed his general sanity, and carried it, and turned all its concentrated cannon upon its own mad mark; so that far from having lost his strength, Ahab, to that one end, did now possess a thousand fold more potency than ever he had sanely brought to bear upon any reasonable object. (Ch. 41)

Nowhere else in hunting stories do we get such a deep insight into the hunter's mind, or subconscious, as here. Ahab's disease is described as "frantic morbidness", as a long process or development which took place during the lonely monthlong return home after he suffered the loss of his leg. "Body and gashed soul bled into one another; and so interfusing made him mad", and this "full lunacy subsided not, but deepeningly contracted...". What is of interest for this analysis of the hunter is that Ahab does not seem to have had any opportunity to get help from his social environment for his mental problems when he arrived back home. As soon as he had recovered, his first and only intention was to get on board a whaler and get his revenge. Neither wife nor child seem to have been able to comfort him or to dissuade him from undertaking such a dangerous plan; for unknown reasons Ahab was unable to communicate about the problems arising from his injury, and he still cannot talk about this during the voyage of the *Pequod*. He is now disabled and hence normally unfit to hunt whales, but his enormous greed for revenge enables him to overcome these problems, and his physical alertness and dexterity seem to be unaffected as we can see in chapters such as "The First Lowering" where Ahab commands his own catcher boat. Instead of resigning, his way of dealing with his humiliating defeat is to build up "a thousand fold more potency than ever he had sanely brought to bear upon any one reasonable object". And this object is the whale, which "swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them...". "Eating" describes precisely what is happening in Ahab's mind; the greed for revenge is eating him up, he fears missing the opportunity to kill the whale, the time to get his revenge is limited, and revenge is Ahab's only possible

catharsis. Two forces struggle within Ahab's mind, madness and fanaticism. Both create huge energies, together with his fear and panic in being too late to kill Moby Dick. He acts under tremendous pressure, a kind of pressure which can only be released via killing. It is a more serious, deadly and even suicidal continuation of the pressures analysed in Cooper's *The Pioneers*. All of these forces are gradually destroying Ahab, and while they are at work Ahab has to realise that the temporary fulfillment of his egoistic and reckless will results only in an unbearable sense of emptiness, loneliness and seclusion. Leo Bersani in his analysis of *Moby-Dick* observed that this mad isolation of Ahab is in marked contrast to the fraternal warmth engendered by the crew's many activities.² Another proof of the intensity of these pressures can be found in Ahab's reaction when the *Pequod* meets the *Rachel* and Ahab is told that only the day before the *Rachel* encountered Moby Dick:

[Ahab] 'Hast seen the White Whale?' 'Aye, yesterday. Have ye seen a whale-boat adrift?'... 'Where was he? - not killed! - not killed!' cried Ahab, closely advancing... (Ch. 128)

Ahab's first and only fear is to have lost his opportunity for revenge. As soon as he knows Moby Dick is still alive he rushes away, even disregarding the *Rachel's* captain's passionate plea for help in searching for his lost son.

At the beginning of the novel the reader becomes increasingly curious as Ahab appears very late on the scene, not until Ch. 27. During the time in port two other captains deal with all the many problems concerning the *Pequod*, the only person who "remained invisibly enshrined within his cabin" is the man commanding the ship. With the word "enshrined" Melville already foreshadows Ahab's later reclusiveness. The *Pequod* is already several days at sea when Ishmael first encounters Ahab early one morning:

...as I mounted to the deck at the call of the forenoon watch, so soon as I levelled my glance towards the taffrail, foreboding shivers ran over me. Reality outran apprehensions; Captain Ahab stood upon his quarter deck." (Ch.27)

Ahab seems to radiate toughness, determination and fear; he makes Ishmael shiver and we get the impression of a mysterious aura surrounding him. Only the acoustic signals of his ivory leg during his walks at night can be heard, as he stays mainly on the bridge, hardly ever seen by the crew. Rumours have been circulating among the crew since the *Pequod* set sail, but when Ishmael first sees Ahab he feels that "reality outran apprehensions", and the apprehensions of the experienced sailors on board the *Pequod* are already great. From this very first appearance of the hunter, polarization between Ahab and the whale begins and continues until the end. The following rather gruesome description strengthens the image of fear and obsession even further and shows Ahab as a rough and experienced, statue-like and thus immobile whaler who has gone through many ferocious fights. Hence he is absolutely merciless and determined to finish the job:

He looked like a man cut away from the stake, when the fire has overrunningly wasted all the limbs without consuming them, or taking away one particle from their compacted aged robustness. His whole high, broad form, seemed made of solid bronze, and shaped in an unalterable mould... Threading its way out from among his grey hairs, and continuing right down one side of his tawny scorched face and neck, till it disappeared in his clothing, you saw a slender rod-like mark, lividly whitish.... Whether that mark was born with him, or whether it was the scar left by some desperate wound, no one could certainly say." (Ch. 27)

This description is enough to make the reader shiver. This man "made of solid bronze" and with a "rod-like mark" must have seen and survived some incredibly hard times. He carries a huge scar and seems to be immobile, "unalterable", and fixed by his fanaticism, but although being maimed he does not give up; instead he is obsessed with the idea of revenge. But apart from this and the many rumours only sketchy facts about his life are revealed; he is and continues to be the lonesome stranger. Right until the end it proves that

"socially, Ahab was inaccessible", (Ch.33); further he remains during the whole journey absolutely unapproachable for everybody except Starbuck. Ahab is a "foreign body" within the group of hunters and he remains a foreign body although we get to know and understand him better throughout the novel. What isolates Ahab from the crew is his permanent zeal, his being absolutely vengeful, as well as his

inhuman determination to use the crew of the *Pequod* as mere tools. Ahab feels that he wears an iron crown; he lacks "the low enjoying power" of ordinary human beings. "I thought to find one stubborn" he says, "at the least; but my one cogged circle fits into all their various wheels, and they revolve."³

Thus the psychological impact of the humiliating defeat which Ahab suffered from the white whale must have been huge. He has undergone a terrible change: from the once physically strong and independent captain to a blinded and fanatical cripple, eager to get his revenge.

Ahab is the only but decisive driving force in this hunt and the reasons for his obsession and hate are of particular interest to the narrator and to the reader. From the moment Ahab is first mentioned, Ishmael tries to analyse and understand the character of this experienced and mighty man who is at once respected and feared, obsessed and blinded. Like all other hunters Ahab is to an astonishing degree familiar not only with the habits of spermwhales in general, but with Moby Dick's idiosyncrasies in particular. He meticulously records and gathers all sorts of information about the animal he hunts. *Moby-Dick* is hence a book which presents two different aspects of hunting, the hunt for whales in general and Ahab's hunt for one particular whale. The whalers kill whales to get their blubber, but Ahab hunts Moby Dick in order to kill him.

Ahab can not only lead and influence his crew (his seamanship is never questioned); he can also overcome their worst fears and problems of motivation - which

Ahab himself never experiences. As Ernest E. Leisy writes in his essay "Fatalism in Moby-Dick", the whole crew "was too much under his [Ahab's] terrifying spell to resist him".⁴ Except at the end, when Starbuck watches Ahab shedding a tear, Ahab never shows emotion or weakness. His tremendous power to fascinate, to magnetize, even to bewitch his crew in times of trouble, comes to light when he nails a doubloon to the mast and makes each crew member swear death to Moby Dick. On this occasion Ahab is confronted for the first time with Starbuck's opposition, for Starbuck is earnest, prudent, and dislikes Ahab's plans. In this scene Starbuck makes a very astute and revealing remark which shows his deep understanding of Ahab's character:

'if it [killing Moby Dick] comes in the way of the business we follow; but I came here to hunt whales, not my commander's vengeance... Vengeance on a dumb brute!' cried Starbuck, 'that simply smote thee from blindest instinct! Madness! To be enraged with a dumb thing, Captain Ahab, seems blasphemous.' (Ch.36)

The hunt for one particular animal symbolizes here the conflict between the atheist Ahab, who thinks that he had been unjustly singled out and maimed, and the religious Starbuck for whom this hunt is "blasphemous" and killing is nothing but "business". Ahab then has to use a long speech to calm Starbuck down for the time being and to succeed in his strategy of rousing the crew to a killing frenzy by making them forget their personal fears and objections.

Melville continues the psychological analysis of Ahab with a description of his dreams:

[Ahab] inhaled the salt breath of the new found sea; that sea in which the hated White Whale must even then be swimming. Launched at length upon these almost final waters...the old man's purpose intensified itself. His firm lips met like the lips of a vice; the Delta of his forehead's veins swelled like overlaid brooks; in his very sleep, his ringing cry ran through the vaulted hull, 'Stern all! the White Whale spouts thick blood!' (Ch. 111)

Moby Dick is causing nightmares for Ahab, it follows - or chases - Ahab wherever he goes, whatever he does. To see him dying is Ahab's as yet unfulfilled wish.

Another example of this development is Ahab asking the blacksmith to forge him a special harpoon. Then all three harpooners have to give their blood to temper the blade, a ceremony demonstrating the intensity of Ahab's obsession. He is absolutely determined to kill Moby Dick, it is his fate:

'No, no - no water for that; I want it of the true deathtemper. Ahoy there! Tashtego, Queequeg, Daggoo! What say ye, pagans! Will ye give me as much blood as will cover this barb?' holding it high up. A cluster of dark nods replied 'Yes'. Three punctures were made in the heathen flesh, and the White Whale's barbs were then tempered. 'Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!' deliriously howled Ahab, as the malignant iron scorchingly devoured the baptismal blood. (Ch. 112)

"Deathtemper" is the key to the psychology of this hunt, the future development of which is made clear by each harpooner donating his own blood, a proof of the fanaticism of Ahab which is now spreading to the harpooners. The harpoon, intended for Moby Dick only, is baptized, but Ahab does not want the help of God for his revenge. He knows that God would support reconciliation instead of cruel revenge, hence Ahab baptizes the "malignant iron" in "nomine diaboli". This scene is the "climax in the blasphemous parody of the baptismal service" ⁵ with Ahab preferring the support of the devil for his personal enterprise. He is so obsessed and excited by the whole ceremony that he "deliriously howled" the magic words. From a psychoanalytical point of view, hunting Moby Dick is Ahab's way of repressing the humiliating defeat he suffered from the white whale when he first tried to kill him. We do not get any information about what exactly happened in this first encounter between Ahab and Moby Dick, but the intensity of Ahab's obsession shows that the result of this defeat for Ahab was a traumatic experience, and Ahab seems to be blocked, to be unable to talk with anybody about what exactly had happened. As soon as

he hears anything new about Moby Dick he stops everything and rushes to the point where the whale was recently spotted. Hence hunting is his only form of therapy, only through the death of Moby Dick could he possibly release his tremendous pressure, and find peace and tranquillity.

Melville describes only once the emotional reaction of the hunter after a whale has been killed:

Though, in overseeing the pursuit of this whale, Captain Ahab had evinced his customary activity, to call it so; yet now that the creature was dead, some vague dissatisfaction, or impatience, or despair seemed working in him; as if the sight of that dead body reminded him that Moby Dick was yet to be slain; and though a thousand other whales were brought to his ship, all that would not one jot advance his grand monomaniac object. (Chap.64)

"Dissatisfaction, or impatience, or despair" are working in Ahab's mind, a process similar to that described more than eighty years later by Hemingway in his *Green Hills of Africa*: "having killed...you feel a little quiet inside...". (see Ch.7) Hectic and excitement are over and the dead body of the whale makes Ahab "quiet inside" and suddenly think of his "grand monomaniac object". But not even the killing of a whale can momentarily repress or relieve Ahab's desire to kill the white whale; he still remains active, alert and aggressive. Although killing triggers off a reaction in his mind, as it often does with hunters in later texts, the dead body only reminds Ahab that there is still another particular whale to kill. Despite the thrill and excitement of the hunt the final climax, the actual kill of each 'ordinary' whale is only briefly mentioned. Walter E. Bezanson in his essay "Moby-Dick: Work of Art" observed that

in each case a killing provokes either a chapter sequence or a chapter cluster of cetological lore growing out of the circumstances of the particular killing. The killings in themselves, except for the first and last, are not so much narrative events as structural occasions for ordering the whaling essays and sermons.⁶

Moby-Dick hence proves what is valid for American texts in general, that is that death or the kill is the hidden moment of most hunting texts. Killing seems to result in a blockage of imagination, to look for the moment of killing is to look for the unimaginable.

The whale, in order to justify Ahab's behaviour, must be a wild, active, threatening and horrifying beast. Yet this is a one-way hunt with only the whale being chased; it is not until the very end that he turns against his hunters and even in the final chase the whale still tries to escape. Moby Dick is described as ferocious, merciless and cruel beyond understanding, characteristics all of which we find again in Peter Benchley's great white shark (see Ch. 10). We have here a clear example of oppositions in a Derridean sense, the hunter versus the hunted; and Ahab needs Moby Dick in order to constitute and justify himself and his personal revenge. As Bersani observed, Ahab transfers "the idea of (and in an even madder way, the responsibility for) "all evil" to Moby Dick", subsequently the whale "would figure the absence of any intentionality whatsoever outside the human mind," ⁷ something strongly denied by, for example, Starbuck. To fulfill this threatening and horrifying function, the spermwhale emerges here as an aggressive, huge, powerful, mythic and highly dangerous personified monster which is so vicious and "with that malicious intelligence ascribed to him", that it can skilfully outmanoeuvre the small boats, destroy them with his jaws which are "like an enormous shears", and successfully attack his professional hunters. The sheer size of the whale - compared to for instance the catcher-boats - is enough to frighten some of even the *Pequod's* experienced crew.

Like Santiago's marlin and Benchley's shark, Moby Dick remains most of the time in the dark depth of the sea, way out of reach of any human being. This continuing absence seems to be his greatest strength; it is entirely up to him when he wants to surface

again, especially as he is not hooked or in any other way restricted. Like Faulkner's Old Ben, Hemingway's marlin or Benchley's shark, he alone decides the next moves in the hunt, Ahab can only follow and hope that the whale will grant him a confrontation, to search and to wait is this hunter's plight. This delayed physical appearance of the whale increases tension further, another similarity to *The Old Man and the Sea* and *Jaws*. Many of the nine ships the *Pequod* meets on her extensive and relentless search have only heard about Moby Dick and rumours are spreading widely. Personal encounters are rare and have always resulted in terrible and often deadly casualties. As a consequence the reader as well as the crew of the *Pequod* have heard only speculations or second-hand reports about the uncanny whale which results in mysticism, tension and fear.

All the procedures of whaling are linked with each other through the hunt for Moby Dick who is somehow always present, on every crewmember's mind. Yet the whale appears physically in only three of the 135 chapters and only these last three chapters depict the actual three-day chase and deadly fight with Moby Dick. All the way through the novel the crew - and the reader - are pursuing a vague, gigantic and dangerous legend, driven only by the inexhaustible energy of Ahab. Although the *Pequod* hunts and kills at least eight other whales during their journey, it is always Moby Dick, or even the tiniest piece of information, Ahab is looking for. This polarisation is achieved by focusing on the protagonists Ahab and Moby Dick, with the former being continuously and precisely described (and hence revealed) and the latter only vaguely but frequently alluded to. Melville carefully builds up and maintains fear of the whale which is Ahab's only antagonist and hence an imminent threat for everyone on board the *Pequod* except Ahab.

In *Moby Dick* Melville takes the already mentioned delayed appearance to extremes. It is not until Chapter 133, on the first day of the final three-day struggle, that Moby Dick surfaces and is described in detail:

As they [the whalers] neared him [Moby Dick], the ocean grew still more smooth; seemed drawing a carpet over its waves; seemed a noon-meadow, so serenely it spread. At length the breathless hunter came so nigh his seemingly unsuspecting prey, that his entire dazzling hump was distinctly visible, sliding along the sea as if an isolated thing, and continually set in a revolving ring of finest, fleecy, greenish foam. He saw the vast, involved wrinkles of the slightly projecting head beyond. Before it, far out on the soft Turkish-rugged waters, went the glistening white shadow from his broad, milky forehead, a musical rippling playfully accompanying the shade; and behind, the blue waters interchangeably flowed over into the moving alley of his steady wake; and on either hand bright bubbles arose and danced by his side... A gentle joyousness - a mighty mildness of repose in swiftness, invested the gliding whale. ...not Jove, not that great majesty Supreme! did surpass the glorified White Whale as he so divinely swam. On each soft side - coincident with the parted swell, that but once laving him, then flowed so wide away - on each bright side, the whale shed off enticings. No wonder there had been some among the hunters who namelessly transported and allured by all that serenity, had ventured to assail it; but had fatally found that quietude but the vesture of tornadoes. Yet calm, enticing calm, oh, whale! thou glidest on, to all who for the first time eye thee, no matter how many in that same way thou may'st have bejuggled and destroyed before. And thus, through the serene tranquilities of the tropical sea, among waves whose hand-clappings were suspended by exceeding rapture, Moby Dick moved on, still withholding from sight the full terrors of his submerged trunk, entirely hiding the wrenched hideousness of his jaw. But soon the forepart of him slowly rose from the water; for an instant his whole marbled body formed a high arch, like Virginia's Natural Bridge, and warningly waving his bannered flukes in the air, the grand god revealed himself, sounded, and went out of sight. Hoveringly halting, and dipping on the wing, the white sea-fowls longingly lingered over the agitated pool that he left. (Ch.133)

This is a key quotation for the interpretation of hunting and a prime example of the first appearance of a hunted animal. As explained above it is the antepenultimate chapter when the whale finally surfaces, with tension for the reader being close to the breaking point. Nature, or the sea, seems to react to the arrival of such a dominating monster-fish, "the ocean grew still more smooth,...seemed a noon-meadow, so serenely it spread". As in many of the later hunting stories nature seems to come to a standstill when the final confrontation between hunter and hunted is happening. Everything turns silent and all other activities stop, everyone seems to watch what is going to happen. The atmosphere and the aura of the whale seem to be so magical that even experienced hunters are "allured

by all that serenity" and have "fatally found that quietude but the vesture of tornadoes". Further the size and the horror of his outer appearance are described by associating it with commonly known great buildings: "Moby Dick moved on, still withholding from sight the full terrors of his submerged trunk, entirely hiding the hideousness of his jaw...for an instant his whole marbled body formed a high arch, like Virginia's Natural Bridge,..the grand god revealed himself..." The jaws, the terrible, deadly weapon, is described further as "two long crooked rows of white, glistening teeth...The glittering mouth yawned ...like an open-doored marble tomb", and later the "bluish pearl-white of the inside of the jaw..". Extraordinary size, threatening attacks, aggressive behaviour and the animal's most dangerous weapons are part of most of later animal descriptions in hunting stories which therefore have similarities to the way Melville describes the appearance of the white whale.

Finally, the general attitude towards whaling needs to be discussed for a deeper assessment of the psychology of hunting in *Moby-Dick*. Here hunting whales is an economic necessity, a means to make a living. Society - in this case the people of Nantucket and New Bedford - accepts and supports the killing of whales as something almost natural, with a long tradition and hence well established for centuries. This historical justification might be one reason why the novel contains very little criticism about extinction threats or environmental problems. Only in one chapter, entitled "Does The Whale's Magnitude Diminish?-Will He Perish?", does the narrator discuss two problems concerning the sperm whale, degeneration and threats of extinction. The fact that Melville discusses this problem as early as 1851 shows that there must have been a deterioration or significant reduction within the sperm whale population, compared to the

rich abundance of whales close to the coast which Captain John Smith found in 1614. The whole chapter is a skilful defense of sperm-whaling, similar to the later chapter on "The Advocate". Melville begins by stating that "the whales of the present day [are] superior in magnitude" compared to the remains of fossils. By repeatedly mentioning the increased size of the spermwhale, up to "seventy-two feet for the skeleton of a large sized modern whale", he tries to prove that whales have not degenerated. Melville's arguments are repeated comparisons with such remote things such as "Egyptian mummies" which "do not measure so much in their coffins as a modern Kentuckian in his socks" as well as quotations from natural histories, some as recent as "A.D.1825". But by quoting the French naturalist Lacépède who "sets down the Right Whale at one hundred metres", which is an extreme exaggeration, Melville shows how unreliable these sources are and in the end reduces his own credibility. He then addresses a point of criticism which is "often agitated by the most recondite Nantucketers", people for whom whaling is the most important source of income. The point is "whether Leviathan can long endure so wide a chase, and so remorseless a havoc; whether he must not at last be exterminated from the waters...". One is surprised to find such a characterisation of whaling, "so wide a chase, and so remorseless a havoc", hence acknowledging the cruelty and mercilessness of this business, in a novel which defends whaling. Again, Melville makes a comparison which undermines his argument, comparing the "humped herds of whales with the humped herds of buffalo", hence questioning if the "hunted whale cannot now escape speedy extinction". Involved into this discussion are two remarks about the western frontier and the change of living conditions due to settlements and capitalism:

[buffalo] scowled with their thunder-clotted brows upon the sites of populous river-capitals, where now the polite broker sells you land at a dollar an inch...

and

Whereas, in the days of the old Canadian and Indian hunters and trappers of the West, when the far west (in whose sunset suns still rise) was a wilderness and a virgin...(Ch.105)

These are clear allusions to the developments explained in Chapter 1 of this study. It is, however, interesting to see how Melville links developments on land and sea. The fate of the buffalo is related to the fate of the sperm whale, both of which had been abundant in years gone by. The far west, with its recent changes such as rising landprices and the extermination of the buffalo, is no longer an innocent and unthreatened "virgin" land. Melville's complaint is very similar to William Faulkner's in *Go Down, Moses* and *Big Woods* (see Ch.8).

Melville does not interpret the retreat of the whales from the American coast as a proof of the reduction of, and hence threat to, the whale. Instead he argues that they have just moved on, "for they are only being driven from promontory to cape". This is an even more surprising explanation because shortly before he had already accurately observed a significant change in the social behaviour of the whales within the last seventy years. He admits

that in former years (the latter part of the last century, say) these Leviathans, in small pods, were encountered much oftener than at present, and, in consequence, the voyages were not so prolonged, and were also much more remunerative. Because, as has been elsewhere noticed, those whales, influenced by some views to safety, now swim the seas in immense caravans, so that to a large degree the scattered solitaries, yokes, and pods, and schools of other days are now aggregated into vast but widely separated, unfrequent armies. (Ch.105)

Melville then finishes his defense of whaling with the selfreassuring statement that the whales have two save-havens, the poles, which he describes as "two firm fortresses,

which, in all human probability, will for ever remain impregnable". His final conclusion is clear, "the eternal whale will still survive".

Moby-Dick shows sperm whaling in its hey-day as a development so typical of commercial exploitation of natural resources. Whaling was seen as so vital that the church approved of this slaughtering. In the chapter entitled "The Sermon" Melville describes the blessing given to the whalers in the church service held by Father Mapple shortly before the *Pequod* begins her voyage. Hunting the spermwhale meant fighting a terrible monster, and for this fight the help of God was needed - and gratefully given by the Church. Frequently the congregation is reminded about the fate of Jonah: if you are faithful you have a chance of survival, if not you will end up in "the open maw of hell". Later the narrator returns to the link between the church and whaling:

he [a sperm whale] must die the death and be murdered, in order to light the gay bridals and other merry-makings of men, and also to illuminate the solemn churches that preach unconditional inoffensiveness by all to all. (Ch.81)

Killing whales is normal business, and never do the harpooners discuss or question it, let alone talk about their emotions during the voyage. As with all other hunting stories this remains a grey area, inaccessible to any outsider. Melville describes the mood in the catcher boats in the chapter "The First Lowering" where he summarizes the fast chase of whales with small boats with the words "all this was thrilling". He compares the chase with the excitement of a young recruit and "the fever heat of his first battle" and states that nobody "can feel stranger and stronger emotions than that man does, who for the first time finds himself pulling into the charmed, churned circle of the hunted sperm whale." Melville conveys here a mood of enthusiasm, speed, of thrilling excitement stronger and

more intense than "fever heat," which is an expression also used by other writers, for example, Révoil's "deer-fever" or Clifton's "buck-fever."

In the beginning of the novel in a chapter entitled "The Advocate" the narrator presents a great deal of economic data and historical detail to underline the size of, and thus legitimize, the American whaling industry and its importance for the economy. This is the most complex and extensive justification for hunting ever to be found in an American hunting story. The narrator passionately defends and justifies his profession:

...how comes it that we whalemens of America...sail a navy of upwards of seven hundred vessels; manned by eighteen thousand men; yearly consuming 4,000,000 of dollars; the ships worth, at the time of sailing, \$20,000,000; and every year importing into our harbours a well reaped harvest of \$7,000,000? How comes all this, if there be not something puissant in whaling? (Ch. 24)

Here Melville's argument is correct because during the eighteenth and nineteenth century sperm whaling was the biggest and most important industry in New England. It had an enormous economic power and provided the world's biggest whaling fleet. Kenneth Giggall in his *Classic Sailing Ships* writes that "in 1842, New England had 652 whalers, whilst all the rest of the world put together could muster a mere 230."⁸

Finally another completely different justification is worth mentioning. Ishmael describes the exploring function of whalers over the centuries as one from which many sailors have benefitted:

For many years past the whaling ship has been the pioneer in ferreting out the remotest and least known parts of the earth. She has explored seas and archipelagoes which had no chart, where no Cook or Vancouver had ever sailed. If American and European men-of-war now peacefully ride in once savage harbours, let them fire salutes to the honour and the glory of the whale ship, which originally showed them the way, and first interpreted between them and the savages. (Ch. 24)

This is similar to the argument put forward by Filson and Cooper at the time of the pioneers (see Ch.1.), with the pioneers exploring the western frontier and the whalers

ferreting out hitherto unknown coasts of the world. All parts of Melville's complex justification and defense of whaling are intended to prove the absolute necessity as well as the many benefits of whaling. Nowhere in the novel does he say or describe anything negative about the whaling industry, nor does he admit any extinction threats or dangerous consequences in general arising out of whaling. Accompanying this defense is the most complex and extensive praise of the actual prey, the sperm whale, ever to be found in any hunting story (Cetology, Ch. 32). Although the many dangers arising from confronting the sperm whale are frequently mentioned the general tone or underlying mood of most descriptions is a positive one, characterized by reverence, respect, and admiration rather than fear or hatred.

It is worth noting here that one of the most important texts in American literature is a hunting story, and that part of *Moby-Dick's* importance originates from the fact that, at least with regard to hunting, it is an original text, a text which marks a starting point and which provides a blueprint for many later hunting stories.

Notes

- 1) Murray, Henry A. "In Nomine Diaboli", in Hillway, T. and Mansfield, L. (eds), *Moby-Dick Centennial Essays*, p. 18
- 2) Bersani, Leo *The Culture of Redemption*, p. 144
- 3) Smith, Henry N. "The Image of Society in Moby-Dick", in *Moby-Dick Centennial Essays*, p.60
- 4) Leisy, Ernest E. "Fatalism In Moby-Dick", in *Moby-Dick Centennial Essays*, p.87
- 5) Smith, p.68
- 6) Bezanson, Walter E. "Moby-Dick: Work of Art", in *Moby-Dick Centennial Essays*, p.53
- 7) Bersani, p.143
- 8) Giggall, Kenneth *Classic Sailing Ships*, p.80

5. KILLING FOR PLEASURE: BENEDICT RÉVOIL

More than sixty years after Crèvecoeur and only a decade after Alexis de Tocqueville, the French writer, traveler and hunter Benedict Révoil left France in 1841 and spent about ten years in various parts of the United States and Canada. Révoil is one of several Frenchmen who went to the United States and published extensive accounts of their experiences. He worked briefly as a journal writer, but passed most of his time hunting. His *The Hunter And The Trapper In North America* was written sometime after 1860 in France, was translated into English by W.H. Davenport Adams in 1875, and published in Edinburgh and New York. The text is hence one of the first "insider" texts, written from the experience of a hunter himself. It will be analysed here for its picture of hunting itself, the inside information it contains about killing and death, its irresponsible attitude towards nature and wildlife, and the contradiction between mass-killing and the first awareness of the need for conservation measures.

The Hunter And The Trapper In North America is the first of three hunting texts analysed in this study which can be categorized simply as diaries of killing and glorifications of hunting. Roosevelt's *The Wilderness Hunter* and Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa* are later versions of this genre, all of which have an anthropocentric perspective. All twenty-one chapters of *The Hunter And The Trapper In North America* deal with the hunting and killing of no less than twenty-one different species, from birds to grizzlies, under all kinds of circumstances. The whole text is a systematic hunting diary of a long safari. The hunt is definitely not a metaphor for anything; instead Révoil himself calls his book a "record of my adventures as a sportsman". The expression "sportsman"

instead of hunter, also used by Cooper in *The Pioneers*, reflects Révoil's narrow object in hunting, to get as many enormous and rare trophies as possible. In his chapter about hunting the wild cat, he observes that "The Americans look upon the chase of the wild cat as one of the most exciting of their national sports." Joining this "national sport" fills Révoil with pride. In addition, he compares New-World-wild-cat-hunting with Old-World-fox-hunting and argues that the horn, "the only thing borrowed by the hunters of the New World from those of the Old", has "but one object: to make a noise, and celebrate a victory". To participate in an "exciting sport", and, of course, to "celebrate a victory", is what Révoil and his various fellow hunters associate with hunting; nothing else really matters. Although the text contains some biological and ethnological data, a fact used by the translator W.H.D.Adams who argued in his short introduction that if Révoil "had a quick eye for a victim to his rifle, he had also a keen perception of the beauties of nature", Révoil's text with its long descriptions of hunting scenes and dying animals nevertheless clearly reflects that hunting and killing was his only reason for traveling to the United States. Nearly all the information and data Révoil gives are either linked directly to killing or are intended to facilitate the tracing and subsequent killing of the animal; apart from this little is revealed about the hunted animal's habits or characteristics.

Many of the stories told clearly are, or contain, tall tales, or stories reported from hearsay. As such they are not reliable for their facts, but for the general picture of hunting, its rules and customs, and its psychology in nineteenth-century North America. The stories, however, demonstrate several points, such as the abundance of wildlife, the plight of the bison and the passenger pigeon, and the killing frenzies, all of which have been

discussed in previous chapters. The text also give a common justification for hunting, found frequently in other North American hunting texts:

An United States farmer complained, and with justice, of the damage committed in his maize plantations by a flock of turkeys, which would not yield to intimidation, and seemed even to defy the murderous gun.¹

The "trail of destruction", found in, for example, Cooper's *The Pioneers* and Faulkner's "The Bear", emerges here as the reason for a kind of vengeance killing. Economic interests collide with nature, and already nature is subdued, for the farmer then developed an "infernal machine", a kind of explosive device with which he killed "Forty-three victims" at once. Révoil's statement that the farmer complained "with justice" is one of several remarks which show that Révoil searches out and accepts every possible reason and justification for hunting. Besides its sheer pleasure and excitement, he lists the protection of crops, the economic benefits, the getting of food while traveling, and the proof of bravery and superb skills as reasons for killing animals.

Révoil describes himself as nothing but a passionate hunter, and he emerges from his writing as a man obsessed with the idea of getting as quickly as possible to his prey in order to kill and to get big trophies. Révoil is a hunting maniac in the truest sense of the word; he simply loves - and needs - hunting and killing. For him hunting is a strong drug, an activity which has to be repeated time and again, a daily ritual. He is proud of outstanding trophies and is always on the lookout for an opportunity to hunt. Révoil often hunts in company, he visits hunters some of whom he does not even know - in these cases he always has a letter of recommendation from another hunter - and these hunters take him immediately into an area with which they are very familiar and which always contains game galore. They often use the form of the battue (the driving of game by beating bushes

etc towards the sportsmen) with the result that several animals are killed at once. From all this we can see Révoil as a type of passionate hunter similar to Roosevelt and Hemingway.

In each of the twenty-one chapters the hunt for the animal mentioned in the title, such as "The Eagle", "The Opposum" or "The Stag", is the central event. The animal is nearly always found very quickly and usually several of the species are killed within a short time. Although Révoil purports to be an old hand at hunting, he admits that he frequently missed the target and he ignores two of the most important rules of the European hunting code: the close season and the taboo of killing female animals. For example, Révoil does not respect the close season for deer when he visits the island of St. John close to the coast of South Carolina, a rule which is obeyed by an old hunter guiding and accompanying Révoil, but rather lightheartedly disobeyed by Révoil himself. It is interesting to note that it is an old, experienced hunter who voices this concern and respect for the wildlife:

One of them, an old hunter, had brought no gun; for, said he, "the deer is not really game, nor can it be lawfully shot, except from July to December. I will not therefore expend an ounce of powder upon any one of them; but I can't resist the pleasure of seeing the noble beasts run, and the charm of your friendly company has decided me to violate my vow never to hunt during the close season".²

The old hunter's love and admiration for the "noble beasts" is then brutally contrasted with the random killing of several deer. The character of the old hunter, giving advice to greedy and careless young hunters, appears again in other hunting texts, with hunters such as Natty Bumppo or Sam Fathers. The question is how sincere the old hunter's love for deer really is, for by not resisting "the pleasure of seeing the noble beasts run" and by guiding Révoil and his hunting cronies to the island he deliberately exposes the deer population to a severe danger. The hunt itself in dense woodland is dangerous for the hunters themselves:

Before me [Révoil] a narrow avenue opened into the forest, which, according to my knowledge of the chase, ought to form a good road for the deer. I experienced an emotion which every hunter will readily comprehend, an emotion blended with fear; for I knew I had as many chances of receiving a stray bullet in my head as of seeing a deer within range. Suddenly, about twenty paces in front of me, the brushwood opened, and out of it leaped a magnificent ten-antlered stag, who stationed himself in the middle of the avenue, and stood there in statuesque dignity. A feverish agitation thrilled through my entire frame; I was seized with the disease known in the United States as the *deer-fever*, - an emotion very natural when one finds oneself close to an enormous beast. When I mechanically raised my gun, and discharged the trigger, the vision had disappeared, the reality was no longer aught but a dream. Borne on the wings of the wind, the stag had thrown himself between two hunters; their four barrels had proved useless; and he dashed into the middle of the plain, flying at his utmost speed to escape from a neighbourhood so dangerous as ours. (Révoil's emphasis)³⁾

The expression "deer-fever" reveals Révoil's hunting as some kind of illness, a creeping disease which takes him over and thrills him. It is "blended with fear" - which implies that he can prove his bravery - and his only treatment or form of relief is killing. For him, this fever is "natural" whenever he is close to living game, the vicinity of the animal incites him to kill it. Here, as well as everywhere else in the text, it becomes clear that Révoil and his hunting cronies neither make any attempt to consider carefully which function hunting has for them, nor do they try to find a remedy against deer-fever. The whole procedure is much more like that of a drug-addict who just tries day in day out to get his drug instead of undergoing therapy. The relief which each killing provides for Révoil is either very short or instead triggers off an even greater desire to kill. The term "fever", already used by Melville in *Moby-Dick*, surfaces again in the twentieth century as "buck-fever." Merritt Clifton in his article "Killing The Female: The Psychology of the Hunt" writes that "buck-fever" is "the hunters' term for what nonhunters call being "trigger-happy."⁴⁾

Further, Révoil frequently kills female animals, such as turkeys, stags, even a fawn, and bisons, regardless of any danger to the reproduction of the species. Often, when he describes an animal's death, he uses the verb "to enjoy" to explain his feelings; killing delights him regardless of any suffering he inflicts upon the animal, and every animal he

sees creates in him immediately the desire to kill again. The rarer the animal, the stronger is the craving. Killing animals is here synonymous with joy, success and good luck. In the chapter about the wild cat, Révoil links directly killing and fun:

In hunting the "tom-cats" of the American swamps, the hunters generally make use of pistols. It is not that the majority are unskilled in the management of this weapon; but, by means of their revolvers, it is possible for them to wound the cat, when he begins to leap from tree to tree, and renders the *fun* of the sportsmen more complete. In a word, the animal is a living target, against which each person displays his skill. Such a mode of hunting is not in agreement, certainly, with the "law Grammont;" but as the French legislator is unknown across the seas, and as, in general, hunters are not gifted with any very tender sensibilities, especially towards wild beasts, amongst which the wild cat is accorded a foremost place, I will abstain from any further remarks upon this point. (Révoil's emphasis)⁵

"Fun" is the keyword not only for this particular way of hunting tom-cats, but for Révoil's hunting expedition as a whole. Fun also implies here lightheartedness, pleasure, and the complete absence of any responsibility, seriousness or maturity; one is rather reminded of 'innocent' children's games than serious adults. Only once in the text does Révoil express doubts about his right to kill:

As a whole, this elk - the first which I had seen out of a cabinet of natural history - appeared to me the most admirable of the animals of creation, and I felt almost a remorse that I had been guilty of his murder.⁶

This elk is described by Révoil beforehand as an "enormous specimen", and then as "admirable"; his admiration nevertheless does not stop him from killing the animal at once, and neither does his later remorse stop him from further killing. His remorse is hypocritical and doubtful, otherwise it would result in him reconsidering killing and possibly giving it up.

The text contains three paragraphs which voice concern about the possible survival of various species, and demand government action, such as protective measures to preserve the animal populations. The first paragraph occurs after an extensive description of a pigeon-massacre:

As the reader will infer from the foregoing remarks, this variety of game [the passenger-pigeon] is, in America, threatened with destruction. In proportion as civilization extends into the vast wilderness of the West, men increase in number, and the human race, which everywhere reigns despotically, and permits no restraint upon its tyranny, gradually destroys the communities of animals. Already the deer, the goats, and the great horned cattle which peopled the ancient colonies of England, have almost disappeared in the principal states of the Union. The herds of bisons which, a hundred years ago, pastured peacefully on the savannahs beyond the Mississippi, see their ranks thinning daily; while the skeletons of their fellows, slain by trappers and emigrants and Indians, whiten on the ground, and mark the gradual advance of man. Everything leads to the belief that the pigeons, which cannot endure isolation, forced to fly or to change their habits as the territory of North America shall become peopled with the overplus of Europe, will eventually disappear from this continent; and if the world endure a century longer, I will wager that the amateur of ornithology will find no pigeons except in select Museums of Natural History.⁷

Révoil reveals here the scale of what he later calls the "systematic destruction" of animal life; already "the deer, the goats, and the green horned cattle...have almost disappeared". Now, bisons and pigeons are severely threatened; the total of five different species mentioned in this paragraph shows the widespread nature of the environmental threat of civilisation, exercised by the unstoppable increase of the population which "everywhere reigns despotically". As such Révoil and his craving for killing are synonymous with this deadly despotism. Révoil's final prediction was right, for only forty years later the last passenger-pigeon died in a New York zoo.

The second paragraph contains a much more widespread social analysis of the devastating consequences of civilisation and advanced technology:

It is true, however, that much of the glory of the Indian hunter has departed. Not only are wild beasts becoming scarcer in the North American forests, but the waste and the wilderness are rapidly disappearing before the steady advance of civilisation. Many of the Indian tribes have abandoned a nomadic life, and no longer trust for their support to the products of the chase or of fishing: they live in the towns, adopting various occupations, or cluster together in the neighbouring villages, tilling the ground after the white man's fashion. And where the passion for, and the necessity of, hunting still exists, the introduction of the rifle and gunpowder has taken away so much of the excitement of the sport as formerly arose from its evident danger. To confront a bison with a gun that will kill at two hundred or three hundred yards is a very different matter from facing it with bow and arrow that will not prove fatal at more than half that distance....the Indian hunter' of to-day, compared with this romantic personage, is a very prosaic and commonplace individual.⁸

Here, hunting - associated with "excitement" - is put in a much wider context, with civilisation destroying all possibility of Indian tribes living, and hunting, in harmony with nature. However, Révoil's conclusion is still positive, for he then states that "Still, it must be owned that the plains and woods of North America still afford ample scope for the exercise, on a moderate scale, of the hunter's craft". This quotation is further interesting because it again links hunting with proving one's bravery, for "facing [a bison] with bow and arrow" is much more of an "excitement" than killing it from a far bigger distance with a powerful rifle. Again, sportsmanship, shooting skills, and the ability to control your fears and face a danger is what characterises the true hunter, according to Révoil.

His last critical remark is again about the bison. In his chapter about hunting the bison, Révoil, after having participated in the slaughter of more than a hundred bison, begins by stating that despite the "immense destruction which the Indian pioneers and trappers effect among the innumerable herds animating the monotonous landscape of the praries, many years will glide by before the race disappears from the American continent."

Still, Révoil seems to be worried about the bison's future:

However, it is much to be desired that the American Government would find some means of preventing the disappearance of these noble quadrupeds, which are so great an ornament of the rolling praries, and so valuable a source of supply to the caravans that venture into their depths *en route* for Santa Fé or California. My readers will form some idea of the numbers killed, when I inform them that every year, in Canada and the United States, upwards of nine hundred thousand hides are sold; yet these hides are all female, the hide of the male being too thick, and not easily tanned.... I ought to add, in concluding the statistics of this systematic destruction, that the caravans which cross the praries seem to find a pleasure in strewing their route with the carcasses of bisons. (Révoil's emphasis)⁹

What links all these quotations is the obvious and strong contradiction between Révoil frequently demanding government action and himself participating at the forefront of just the kind of slaughter he wants to be prevented. It is doubtful whether Révoil is genuinely concerned about threatened animals or whether he simply wants to secure future hunting

opportunities for his own pleasure and satisfaction. His hunting behaviour is, in fact, the strongest possible contradiction to any measures of game preservation.

In the last part of this chapter I would like to look at a different form of communication, a silent agreement or understanding between either the hunters themselves, or between the hunter and the animal.¹⁰ When Révoil and his companion are out swan-hunting, they join a group of Cherokee Indians, primarily, of course, in order "to share in their swan-catching expeditions". He immediately senses that

An instinctive sympathy rapidly unites persons of the same tastes, whatever the nation to which they belong. These Indians, partial, like myself and my friend, to hunting and fishing and adventure, quickly surrounded us; and by the evening we were one and all the best friends in the world.¹¹

A quick agreement, an "instinctive sympathy" or *bonhomie*, is what unites these otherwise rather hostile groups of white and Indian hunters, and this although only Révoil's hunting companion speaks the Cherokee language. Hunting is associated here with an instinct, it is something which is in the deepest part of the hunter's mind or soul, and hence something which he cannot control or voice in an ordinary way, instead the subconscious desire to hunt dominates these hunters and directs their actions, often without verbal communication.

Later, when Révoil is stag hunting in dense woodland, with the possibility of being accidentally hit by a stray bullet, he senses "an emotion which every hunter will readily comprehend, an emotion blended with fear; for I knew I had as many chances of receiving a stray bullet in my head as of seeing a deer within range."¹² Hunting includes several feelings or attitudes which are shared by every hunter, and which are self-evident. These conventions or customs go without saying, such as the need to be absolutely silent when

tracing out an animal, the danger of being hit yourself by a bullet, or the necessity of being alert and always on the lookout for either prey or danger.

The first occurrence of this understanding between hunter and animal takes place when Révoil is suddenly confronted with an elk, which he describes as “a truly splendid animal...at least six feet in height”. Nevertheless,

The elk's sentence of death was probably written in my eyes. The poor animal knew he was to die, and from that moment made no effort either in flight or defence. I took at my ease, let go the trigger, and my ball hit him right in the chest.¹³

Here, the animal's awareness of its imminent death converts it from a “truly splendid” into a “poor” animal, a process which takes place frequently throughout the text: the animal changes from a “graceful” and “magnificent” animal - when first sighted - to a “poor” animal - when fleeing, being wounded, or dying. Further, Révoil is tough and merciless, although the animal is magically or mysteriously pinned down and hence defenseless, he continues to kill it instead of giving it a fair chance.

In his chapter about the grizzly bear Révoil describes the hunter's ability to anticipate imminent danger:

As a general rule, the hunter, whether white or coppercoloured, possesses by instinct extraordinary faculties of sight and touch, hearing and smelling, and these are daily more and more developed by practice. An unfortunate blind man is able, by the organ of touch, to recognize his food and clothing; he contrives to divine everything which is of value and importance to him, for it is upon this single sense that he brings to bear all the powers of his mind. The hunter of the desert possesses a faculty of sight rendered so keen and acute by practice that the lightest trace left upon the leaves, on the bark of trees, or even on the ground, he readily and unerringly detects; yet these signs, to any other person, would be as imperceptible as the course of a bird's wing in space.¹⁴

An outstanding ability to trace an animal is what constitutes a “true” hunter. In addition the hunter senses or “detects” signs which are absolutely “imperceptible” to anybody uninitiated to the secrets of hunting.

Summing up it can be said that Révoil's text demonstrates many of the typical themes which occur so frequently in North American hunting texts. It gives us an exceptionally deep insight into the emotional world of the obsessive hunter, a hunter who enjoys killing and who has fun and takes pleasure in terminating the lives of animals he otherwise knows to be threatened with extinction. Yet Révoil is unwilling to acknowledge this contradiction, for he knows that to acknowledge it would lead to a demand to change or even stop his way of hunting. The overwhelming impression of his text is one of lightheartedness and a rather naive killing-while-on-holiday attitude, never interrupted by any serious thought or contemplation. This is even more surprising taking into account that Révoil was addressing just the very group of people responsible for this environmental problem: hunters not only in Europe but in North America as well. As such the lack of any extensive and serious challenge to the mass-slaughtering of animals is even more regrettable.

The text is also the first one to glorify hunting and killing. The first-person narrator, with few exceptions, usually displays control and mastery, he safely guides the reader through the dangers of hunting. Never does he change the anthropocentric perspective or the point of view; from the first to the last page we get everything filtered through his eyes. The text's whole arrangement and the first-person narrative are very similar to Roosevelt's assertive style of writing in *The Wilderness Hunter* and *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*. They are also similar to Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa*, in being compilations of chapters describing the killing of animals by very self-confident and gun-loving men, eager to prove their masculinity, superiority and mastery over nature.

Notes

- 1) Révoil, Benedict *The Hunter And The Trapper In North America*, pp.49, 50
- 2) *ibid.*, p.194
- 3) *ibid.*, pp. 195, 196
- 4) Clifton, Merritt "Killing The Female: The Psychology of the Hunt", in *The Animals' Agenda*, p.26
- 5) Révoil, pp. 150, 151
- 6) *ibid.*, pp. 246, 247. A very similar passage can be found in Washington Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies*, p. 178 (Chapter XXIX). The passage goes as follows:

Dismounting, I now fettered my horse to prevent his straying, and advanced to contemplate my victim. I am nothing of a sportsman; I had been prompted to this unwonted exploit by the magnitude of the game, and the excitement of an adventurous chase. Now that the excitement was over, I could not but look with commiseration upon the poor animal that lay struggling and bleeding at my feet. His very size and importance, which had before inspired me with eagerness, now increased my compunction. It seemed as if I had inflicted pain in proportion to the bulk of my victim, and as if there were a hundred-fold greater waste of life than there would have been in the destruction of an animal of inferior size.

- 7) *ibid.*, pp. 136, 137
- 8) *ibid.*, pp. 283, 284
- 9) *ibid.*, pp. 376, 377
- 10) Concerning this form of communication, see also the chapter about Norman Mailer in this study.
- 11) Révoil, p. 99
- 12) *ibid.*, p.195
- 13) *ibid.*, pp. 245, 246
- 14) *ibid.* p. 286

6. GLORIFYING THE HUNT: THEODORE ROOSEVELT

The prolific writer, politician, hunter and U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) hunted from his early childhood until his final years. As such his personal commitment is typical of many U.S. hunters: he started very early and, being a wealthy man, he could afford to hunt all his life. He traveled extensively and seized virtually every opportunity to hunt. In 1888 he was co-founder of **THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB**, one of the most influential American hunting organisations and still today the ultimate authority with regard to trophy size assessment. Roosevelt was the club's first president from 1888 until 1894.

Roosevelt suffered from severe asthma, an illness which only improved after he moved to his farm in North Dakota. Consequently hunting was for him always linked to the beneficial and health improving effects of tough outdoor life. On his farm he usually spend the whole day on horse back, either doing farmwork or hunting. Roosevelt's hunting life is characterized by a strange paradox which is very difficult to assess. On the one hand he was the passionate and manly macho hunter for whom killing never was a problem and who relished hunting in the extreme. On the other hand, he was also at the forefront of the conservation movement, mingling with the United States' leading conservationists, and implementing several important wildlife and nature conservation measures. This paradox is easily detected in his writing where hunting scenes are often juxtaposed with descriptions of beautiful animals, particularly birds. This chapter examines this paradox: first, how Roosevelt describes and justifies hunting and killing and, second, his social criticism of hunting.

The Wilderness Hunter was published in 1893 and, as with every other work by Roosevelt, is written in clear and simple prose. The arrangement and the tone of the book are very similar to Révoil's *The Hunter And The Trapper In North America*. Both books contain twenty-one chapters, each dealing with the successful hunt of at least one species, and with the killing of several animals as the final fulfillment. Both authors make the chapters dealing with the hunt for the black and the grizzly bear their conclusion, thus reinforcing the idea that killing these animals is the most difficult and exciting kind of hunting. For them the animal which evoked best the horrible and brutal forces of nature was the bear. Both authors are also voicing considerable concern for the future of some species, such as the buffalo or the wolf.

About a century after Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*, *The Wilderness Hunter* is another text which uses hunting to promote a political vision. Both visions, however, are completely opposed to each other, the former attacking and condemning hunting, the latter glorifying the chase. In the preface of *The Wilderness Hunter*, Roosevelt clearly and directly states the aim of hunting:

In hunting, the finding and killing of the game is after all but a part of the whole. The free, self-reliant, adventurous life, with its rugged and stalwart democracy; the wild surroundings, the grand beauty of the scenery, the chance to study the ways and habits of the woodland creatures - all these unite to give to the career of the wilderness hunter its peculiar charm. The chase is among the best of all national pastimes; it cultivates that vigorous manliness for the lack of which in a nation, as in an individual, the possession of no other qualities can possibly atone.¹

Roosevelt's rather holistic view of hunting as a part of the ideal way of life tries to increase the importance of hunting by raising it to a national level. Many of the great hunters Roosevelt mentions in this book have also been national heroes or successful military leaders. Hunting provides one of the few remaining and perfect opportunities to train

attitudes vital for the survival of a strong nation. By writing that hunting "cultivates" the so badly needed "vigorous manliness", Roosevelt links hunting with education, thus increasing its value and completely avoiding the issue of killing, aggression or brutality. Hunting teaches the hunter the experience of the "rugged and stalwart democracy", so important for Americans. Roosevelt's choice of words, such as "rugged" in the sense of "rough, but kindly and firm" and "stalwart" in the sense of "firm and resolved", sets the reader on the track of frontier vocabulary, a track which continues throughout the book. It is, however, contradictory to say the least that Roosevelt stresses as one of the benefits of hunting "the chance to study the ways and habits of the woodland creatures", and then spends 460 pages describing his attempts to kill these creatures. In all his hunting books Roosevelt displays a profound biological knowledge and shows that he himself enjoyed observing animals as much as killing them, but nowhere does the acknowledgement of the beauty of a hunted animal actually stop him from killing it.

Frequently Roosevelt contrasts good with bad hunting behaviour, a distinction which is supported by the use of a specific terminology. Good hunting is always "fun", it is "exciting", "all is bustle and laughter" and every hunter "swings joyfully into the saddle". Under fair conditions animals make an "gallant fight", and whenever Roosevelt misses or is unsuccessful, he is "cast down", and subsequently he has to "redeem" himself by, for example, "killing four deer" in a row. Anybody who practices "inferior" sports, such as "crusting" or chasing deer in deep snow drifts, is in contrast a "butcher, pure and simple, and has no business in the company of true sportsman." Throughout his hunting texts Roosevelt maintains and praises the code of the sportsman who is always fair, kills cleanly and does not "butcher" animals. I would read this as a skilful tactic to defuse the mounting

criticism of sport hunting surfacing at the end of the nineteenth century, and to deny that a sportsman would derive pleasure from killing. Sadism and savagery were clearly kept away from the world of the sportsman, a strategy which is picked up later by Hemingway with his ideal of “the art of killing.”

Proper hunting is always arduous and difficult, hard work which demands persistency and willpower; it is never easy but extremely demanding and exhausting. The kill, even of females, is, according to Roosevelt, the well-deserved reward, but in addition each kill is nearly always justified by a demand for meat in the hunting camp. Contrasted with these frequent kills are descriptions of the animal's beauty and size, and the subsequent fascination which it has for Roosevelt.

After chasing caribou for weeks without success, Roosevelt finally manages to kill a bull, and cannot hide his elation:

Then we hurried down to examine with pride and pleasure the dead bull - his massive form, sleek coat, and fine antlers. It was one of those moments that repay the hunter for days of toil and hardship; that is if he needs repayment, and does not find life in the wilderness pleasure enough in itself.²

As usual this bull is of extraordinary size and will provide a superb trophy, and the immediate reaction this causes is “pride and pleasure”, but no remorse or regret; instead the hunter is rewarded “for days of toil and hardship.” Roosevelt's text abounds with descriptions such as this. The scheme of arduous pursuit and rewarding kill is nowhere changed. Roosevelt's whole book shows that for him life in the wilderness, without perhaps a rifle, is definitely not “pleasure enough in itself”. Killing is the most vital part of the game. What becomes clear here is that hunting and killing were Roosevelt's preferred ways of perceiving and appreciating nature; only via killing could he feel close to the wilderness.

Roosevelt's book contains three descriptions of social changes which took place in hunting as a result of the disappearance of the frontier. In his chapter about hunting the prong-buck, Roosevelt tells of his meeting with an old hunter deep in the wilderness. After giving a description of the hunter which is very similar to the one of Natty Bumppo in *The Pioneers*, he starts to analyse the great changes which took place in the 1870s:

A few years before this time the great buffalo herds had vanished, and the once swarming beaver had shared the same fate; the innumerable horses and horned stock of the cattlemen, and the daring rough riders of the ranches, had supplanted alike the game and the red and white wanderers who had followed it with such fierce rivalry. When the change took place the old fellow, with failing bodily powers, found his life-work over. He had little taste for the career of the desperado, horse-thief, highwayman, and man-killer, which not a few of the old buffalo hunters adopted when their legitimate occupation was gone; he scorned still more the life of vicious and idle semi-criminality led by others of his former companions who were of weaker mould. Yet he could not do regular work. His existence had been one of excitement, adventure, and restless roaming, when it was not passed in lazy ease; his times of toil and peril varied by fits of brutal revelry. He had no kin, no ties of any kind. He would accept no help, for his wants were very few, and he was utterly self-reliant. He got meat, clothing, and bedding from the antelope and deer he killed; the spare hides and venison he bartered for what little else he needed. So he built him his tepee in one of the most secluded parts of the Bad Lands, where he led the life of a solitary hunter, awaiting in grim loneliness the death which he knew to be near at hand.³

Roosevelt's social criticism is precise and shocking. It shows that once a hunter suffered "failing bodily powers", society, or the wilderness, had no use for him anymore, death was his only prospect. Roosevelt observed also the hunter's incapacity to "do regular work", a clear reminder of the conflict between the instinct driven individual and the restricting civilisation, discussed by Sigmund Freud (see Ch. 14). It is also important to note what Roosevelt writes about the old buffalo hunters; for example "when their legitimate occupation was gone" they still stuck to killing and satisfying the destructive instinct as "desperado, horse-thief, highwayman, and man-killer," another proof of the addiction of killing.

In another chapter Roosevelt continues his social criticism:

In a few wild spots...there still lingers an occasional representative of the old wilderness hunters. They do their hunting on foot, occasionally with the help of a single trailing dog...Nowadays as these old hunters die there is no one to take their places, though there are still plenty of backwoods settlers in all of the regions named who do a great deal of hunting and trapping. Such an old hunter rarely makes his appearance at the settlements except to dispose of his peltry and hides in exchange for cartridges and provisions, and he leads a life of such lonely isolation as to insure his individual characteristics developing into peculiarities. Most of the wilder districts in the eastern States still preserve memories of some such old hunter who loved his long life alone, waging ceaseless warfare on the vanishing game, whose oddities, as well as his courage, hardihood, and woodcraft, are laughingly remembered by the older settlers, and who is usually best known as having killed the last wolf or bear or cougar ever seen in the locality.⁴

This is a similar description to Cooper's Natty Bumppo, but this time given to promote and remember the many skills required to survive as a wilderness hunter. Living in isolation, rarely in touch with civilisation, this lonely hunter is a man full of "courage, hardihood and woodcraft", and it is attitudes and skills like these which Roosevelt sees as disappearing, and which he keeps praising in his hunting books in order to preserve them in his nation. Again, we find another example of the use of the war metaphor and the close link between hunting and military exercise, for the hunter's job is described as "waging ceaseless warfare on the vanishing game."

Roosevelt also observes the coming into existence of a new type of hunter, the civilised business-man:

Most of the hunts are in the neighborhood of great cities, and are mainly kept up by young men who come from them. A few of these are men of leisure, who can afford to devote their whole time to pleasure; but much the larger number are men in business, who work hard and are obliged to make their sports accommodate themselves to their more serious occupations. Once or twice a week they can get off for an afternoon's ride across country, and they then wish to be absolutely certain of having their run, and of having it at the appointed time; and the only way to insure this is to have a drag-hunt. It is not the lack of foxes that has made the sport so commonly take the form of riding to drag-hounds, but rather the fact that the majority of those who keep it up are hardworking business men who wish to make the most out of every moment of the little time they can spare from their regular occupations. A single ride across country, or an afternoon at polo, will yield more exercise, fun, and excitement than can be got out of a week's decorous and dull riding in the park, and many young fellows have waked up to this fact.⁵

This is one of several passages from American writers describing the phenomenon of how men under severe pressure from working in the new civilisation, as opposed to living in

the wilderness, tried to release or work off this pressure. This is a sudden and significant change in U.S. hunting, from the comparatively non-pressurized professional hunter, living in harmony with nature and hunting for long periods, to the business men who can only "once or twice a week [...] get off for an afternoon's ride across the country". On these rare occasions the men are absolutely determined to kill and to get as much satisfaction as possible out of the hunt. What Roosevelt observed, and supported, in the 1880s, is still to be found in the 1980s and 1990s, but with even more devastating consequences for the wildlife (see Ch. 1). The two last quotations fit exactly into the historical context described by the previously analysed texts. It is a continuous development from first the trapper and explorer to the backwoodsmen and settler and then finally the farmer and occasional hunter, whose appearance is contemporaneous with the disappearance of the frontier.

Finally, I would like to add some general remarks about Révoil and Roosevelt. How do these two writers work or what do they want to achieve with their texts? Both texts were widely read. Révoil's text, seen and eagerly read by its European audience as one of several texts bringing news about the New World, was so successful that it was quickly translated from the French into English. Roosevelt's books, as A.A. Norton points out in the preface to his *Theodore Roosevelt*, were never out of print. Yet both books are nothing but a collection of chapters describing the more or less difficult pursuit and killing of exceptionally large, cunning and dangerous game, and not much else. Each of these chapters seems to be interchangeable, with only a different species being hunted. There is no complex plot or unforeseen complication. Instead, both writers are repeating and virtually hammering out their message time and again; hunting and killing is exciting and

simply wonderful. This makes for easy reading, uncritical adventure writing, which tries to make the reader feel as if he were hunting himself. None of the hunters ever complains or is depressed; instead they are always joyful, firm and decisive, and, despite the greatest obstacles, in the end they always succeed.

When reading these texts today a certain monotony becomes quickly obvious; after having read two chapters the reader knows how the rest of the book will develop. The amount of information not directly related to hunting is minimal. The above mentioned passages of social criticism plus the few remarks about the need for game conservation measures are the only examples of deeper reflection to be found; everything else is just the repetition of one particular scheme. In the case of Roosevelt this complete absence of any deeper meaning is even more surprising if one takes into account that he had written only eight years before his *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, another very similar collection of hunting stories, centered around the work on his farm.

Hence it is justifiable to say that both texts are uncritical, simplifying and non-reflective texts. They do not leave anything for readers to decide, they do not stir up the mind, they simply glorify hunting - and hunters.

Notes

- 1) Roosevelt, Theodore *The Wilderness Hunter*, p. XV
- 2) *ibid.*, p. 151
- 3) *ibid.*, pp. 78, 79
- 4) *ibid.*, pp. 256, 257
- 5) *ibid.*, pp. 372, 373

... the way in which *Abby Dick* is a kind of textbook of wilderness ...
 ... of the ... which ... makes ... about ... of ...
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7. THE ART OF KILLING: ERNEST HEMINGWAY

This chapter focuses on four texts, *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), *Green Hills of Africa* (1935), “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” (1936), and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952).

Death in the Afternoon

Death in the Afternoon is not a hunting text; rather it is a manual of bullfighting, similar to the way in which *Moby-Dick* is a kind of textbook of whalecraft. It is included here because of the remarks which Hemingway makes in it about killing, all of which can be transferred to his hunting texts. Throughout the book Hemingway associates bullfighting and killing with art and beauty, with a “super-emotional climax”¹, and with something which is accomplished. The bullfighter is seen as a sculptor, as somebody who creates by destroying. Hemingway begins by stating that “one of the simplest things of all and the most fundamental is violent death. It has none of the complications of death by disease, or so-called natural death...but it is death nevertheless, one of the subjects that a man may write of.”² The attraction of violent death lies in its simplicity and straightforwardness. In statements such as this Hemingway attempts to turn killing and death into something positive and morally justifiable. He continues:

So far, about morals, I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after and judged by those moral standards, which I do not defend, the bullfight is very moral to me because I feel very fine while it is going on and have a feeling of life and death and mortality and immortality, and after it is over I feel very sad but very fine.³

“Sad but very fine” is the state of mind in which Hemingway is after he has witnessed the clean and morally correct killing of the bull. We get the impression that he experiences relief and quiet, a kind of emotion very similar to those described later in *Green Hills of Africa*. He goes on to analyse death and concludes that “death is not comic, and gives a temporary dignity to the most comic characters, although this dignity passes once death has occurred.”⁴ He thus links killing with dignity:

Such bullfighters will give a competent performance with a difficult animal, and because of the extra danger from the bull and the skill and the courage they must use to overcome this danger, to prepare for the killing and kill with any degree of dignity, the bullfight is interesting, even to a person who has never seen one before.⁵

Here we have the idea of the killer as a skilful performer, a man who has exceptional courage (we are back to killing as a means to prove one’s bravery) and who terminates life with “dignity.” But dignity alone is not enough, the master killer has to have exceptional skills, be it with the trigger finger or with his wrist:

As the trigger finger of a rifleman is sensitive and educated to the tiniest degrees of squeezing to approach and release the discharge of his piece, so it is with his wrists that a bullfighter controls and makes the delicacy of art with the cape and muleta. All the sculpturing that he does with the muleta is done with the wrist and it is with the wrist that he sinks the banderillas, and with the wrist, stiff this time, the chamois-wrapped, lead-weighted pommel of the sword held in the palm of the hand, that he kills.⁶

In the long penultimate chapter of the book, dedicated solely to killing, its history and its greatest masters, Hemingway goes from the explanation of skills to admitting that killing is pleasure:

[The bullfighter] must have a spiritual enjoyment of the moment of killing. Killing cleanly and in a way which gives you aesthetic pleasure and pride has always been one of the greatest enjoyments of a part of the human race. Because the other part, which does not enjoy killing, has always been the more articulate and has furnished most of the good writers, we have had a very few statements of the true enjoyment of killing. One of its greatest pleasures, aside from the purely aesthetic ones, such as wing shooting, and the ones of pride, such as difficult game stalking, where it is the disproportionately increased importance of the fraction of a moment that it takes for the shot that furnishes the emotion, is the feeling of rebellion against death which comes from its administering. Once you accept the rule

of death thou shalt not kill is an easily and a naturally obeyed commandment. But when a man is still in rebellion against death he has pleasure in taking to himself one of the Godlike attributes; that of giving it. This is one of the most profound feelings in those men who enjoy killing.⁷

This is close to the attitude of Révoil and Roosevelt, the confession that killing is “aesthetic pleasure and...one of the greatest enjoyments.” With all these statements Hemingway questions or turns round the notion of killing in Western thought, a notion which was hitherto characterized by disgust and repudiation. Suddenly the killer has become socially acceptable, even admirable. He is a superman who takes to himself “one of the Godlike attributes, that of giving” death, and he does so without even being blasphemous. Two of the main factors behind all this are Hemingway’s serious injury in the First World War, and Spanish culture and attitudes towards bullfighting.

Green Hills of Africa

Green Hills of Africa is the practical application of these ideas to an African safari. It was published in 1935 and is a diary-like autobiographical description of Hemingway's hunting in Tanganyika between February 20 and June 21, 1934. The group of hunters consists of various people, among them Hemingway, his wife Pauline, here called P.O.M. (poor old mother) who accompanied him on parts of the safari, Karl, and Pop. Karl stands for Hemingway's longtime hunting crony Charles Thompson with whom he was always in competition for bigger trophies, while Pop represents the white professional hunting guide Philip Percival. Both Hemingway and Karl are desperate to kill huge kudu bulls as well as at least one lion. They stay in various hunting camps all over the country, get up very early and hunt during the whole day, despite the stifling heat, and they usually return in the dark. Altogether this safari describes a way of hunting very similar to that in

“The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber.” The arrangement of the text, every chapter dealing with hunting only, and its contents, killing animals and nothing else, are exactly those of Révoil's *The Hunter And The Trapper In North America* and Roosevelt's hunting books. All three texts employ the already mentioned anthropocentric perspective and a very self-confident first-person singular narrator who is always at the centre of events, eager to master every difficulty. Further parallels include the absence of any polarization or relationship between hunter and animal because every day the hunters encounter various different animals, in the case of this safari buffalos, reedbuck, rhinoceros, sable, and kudus. The whole safari has a sporting or competitive character. The amount of time is limited (Hemingway's safari in 1934 lasted seventy-four days), and the hunters have payed dearly for their licenses for a number of animals, none of which they want to spare. As in so many hunts there is a clear hierarchy in which Hemingway and Karl decide what they want to do. The native trackers and skimmers are of no importance at all; the only concession Hemingway makes is when they show their great ability to track a kudu trail or find hitherto undiscovered areas full of game.

In contrast to other texts in this study the text contains some revealing remarks and discussions about hunting which are valuable for a deeper understanding not only of hunting itself, but of the repeated act of killing as well. The novel is divided into four parts with each title containing the word pursuit and a second noun describing the major event of that part: conversation, remembering, failure and happiness.

From the beginning the reader is confronted with Hemingway's simple philosophy of hunting. With his "rifle", "fresh tracks of four greater kudu bulls", a "flask of whisky" between his knees and "smelling the good smell of Africa", he is "altogether happy." The

novel then continues with an extensive discussion about hunting between Hemingway and a man named Kandinsky (his real name was Koritschoner) whom he meets while returning to his camp. Kandinsky spoiled Hemingway's hunt for kudu bulls when his noisy lorry passed by and had a breakdown. In the following dialogue Kandinsky, who has read works by Hemingway in the German journal "Querschnitt", questions Hemingway's reasons for hunting:

'What are you doing here?'

'Shooting.'

'Not ivory, I hope.'

'No. For kudu.'

'Why should any man shoot a kudu? You, an intelligent man, a poet, to shoot kudu.'

'I haven't shot any yet,' I said. 'But we've been hunting them hard now for ten years. We would have got one tonight if it hadn't been for your lorry.'

'That poor lorry. But you should hunt for a year. At the end of that time you have shot everything and you are sorry for it. To hunt for one special animal is nonsense. Why do you do it?'

'I like to do it.'

'Of course, if you *like* to do it.... (Hemingway's emphasis)⁸

This argument continues for a long time and is mixed with remarks about various famous authors. Kandinsky directs the discussion and occasionally tries to find out more about the reasons for Hemingway's hunt. His underlying criticism like "why should any man shoot a kudu? You, an intelligent man, a poet..." gives us the impression that he does not take Hemingway very seriously, that he tries to ridicule him. He thinks that no man of Hemingway's intellectual position should waste his time with hunting. Kandinsky tries to suggest that Hemingway does not have any real expertise in hunting in Africa and that he would need at least a year to understand hunting completely: "But you should hunt for a year. At the end of that time you have shot everything and you are sorry for it." This is the opposite of Hemingway's real feelings, for he rarely was genuinely sorry about the pain or

suffering he inflicted on an animal; he would even kill an elephant if it were just big enough, and this leads to further disagreement between Hemingway and Kandinsky:

'..Well at least you do not kill elephants.'
'I'd kill a big enough one.'
'How big?'
'A seventy-pounder. Maybe smaller.'
'I see there are things we do not agree on... You have a white hunter?'
'...Yes, a white hunter.'
'Why is he not with you?'
'He believes you should hunt kudu alone.'
'It is better not to hunt them at all.'⁹

Both of them seem to be able to live with this difference in opinion; they still enjoy each others' company although there are important things they "do not agree on." One of them is clearly kudu hunting, a difference in opinion which is striking because kudu hunting is what most of Hemingway's safari, and *Green Hills of Africa*, is about. Throughout the novel Hemingway continues to tell us how desperate he and Karl are to shoot kudu bulls and yet Kandinsky dares to advise him that "It is better not to hunt them at all". Kandinsky continues his line of argument until the end of a dinner conversation where he tries to convince Pop to come back to Africa to study the culture of the natives:

[Kandinsky] "To me it is always interesting, The natives and the language. I have many books of notes on them. Then too, in reality, I am a king here. It is very pleasant. Waking in the morning I extend one foot and the boy places the sock on it. When I am ready I extend the other foot and he adjusts the other sock. I step from under the mosquito bar into my drawers which are held for me. Don't you think that is very marvellous?"
'It's marvellous.'
'When you come back another time we must take a safari to study the natives. And shoot nothing, or only to eat. Look, I will show you a dance and sing a song.'¹⁰

Here Hemingway tries to ridicule Kandinsky by describing him first as a well educated man and then disclosing his true face as a man who still likes to treat blacks as slaves or subservient servants. Kandinsky is interested in the culture of the natives, but still likes to be dressed by them, because "in reality, I [Kandinsky] am a king here." By ridiculing

Kandinsky in this way Hemingway shows him as a hypocrite, questioning simultaneously the credibility of Kandinsky's criticism of hunting, and strengthening his own position as a true insider who knows what is going on in real life. One can only speculate why Hemingway included a discussion about the justification of hunting in a novel intended to glorify not only Hemingway's masculinity but also safaris in general. Maybe he wanted not only to ridicule Kandinsky but any other opponent of hunting as well, maybe he was simply fed up with having to justify his favoured leisure time activity, or perhaps he wanted to present his views to the reader in an objectified and dramatized presentation.

Green Hills of Africa contains a number remarks about the response to killing, an emotion usually not explained in hunting stories. Hemingway begins with an explanation of Pop's attitude to killing, which is totally different from Hemingway's. Hemingway explains it in detail, perhaps because he had great respect for his hunting guide:

'...There's a big rhino there too. Big track, anyway.'

'Good,' Pop said. 'Shoot the damn rhino too.' He hated to have anything killed except what we were after, no killing on the side, no ornamental killing, no killing to kill, only when you wanted it more than you wanted not to kill it, only when getting it was necessary to his being first in his trade, and I saw he was offering up the rhino to please me. 'I won't kill him unless he's good,' I promised.

'Shoot the bastard,' Pop said, making a gift of him.

'Ah, Pop,' I said.

'Shoot him' said Pop. 'You'll enjoy it, being by yourself. You can sell the horn if you don't want it. You've still one on your licence.'¹¹

This is again a rather strange conversation because what Hemingway reveals about Pop's attitudes is completely contradictory to what Pop actually says. Besides having the rather strange name of Pop, a nickname which reminds us about the sound of a rifle and the word 'father', Pop's real position is and remains unclear. Although he gives in to Hemingway's greed for killing, we feel that he might be dissatisfied with the absurd sacrifice of the rhino and would have much preferred to spare it. Despite Pop's acceptance of killing the amount

of game which is necessary to his "being first in his trade" as the best hunting guide in Africa, he hates "ornamental killing," but this is just what his rich European and American clients want to do. Pop seems to be an example of someone who, although he has killed many times, does still value and appreciate wildlife, but is unable to realise his ideas in his job. Personally he has found his own compromise, which is similar to that of Sam Fathers in Faulkner's "The Bear." (see Ch.8)

There is a continuing thread of statements about killing in the text, and each one seems to be different according to which animal is killed. Hemingway's confession "Now, when I killed, it was a joke as when we shot a hyena; the funniest joke of all" opens a series of statements about killing hyenas. Hemingway detests hyenas, in particular when they threaten, as happens at the end of the novel, a huge, prestigious and injured kudu bull. In contrast the feeling of killing a revered or dangerous animal is a totally different one, providing the hunter with pride, joy and self-confidence. During the whole second chapter, Hemingway continues to associate killing - either birds, hyenas or a lion - with being marvellous, providing joy and elation. He tries not only to influence and disgust the reader, but to justify the killing of the hyena by describing it as

hermaphroditic, self-eating devourer of the dead, trailer of calving cows, ham-stringer, potential biter-off of your face at night while you slept, sad yowler, camp-follower, stinking, foul, with jaws that crack the bones the lion leaves, belly dragging...¹²

The hyena is the only animal in any of the hunting stories in this study which is described as completely ugly, with no beautiful or gracious attribute, an animal about which one can only laugh or make derisory comments, an animal which is a "potential biter-off of your face at night while you slept". This description reveals even more about Hemingway himself than the hyena. He shows double standards by using an animal's outer appearance

as the main justification for slaughtering it, thus completely overlooking the important function which hyenas have in the food-chain. For several paragraphs Hemingway continues to relate killing to the term "joke", and his tracker M'Cola and he himself have always fun when Hemingway kills a hyena. There are three different kinds of fun, each one becoming more intensive:

It was funny to M'Cola to see a hyena shot at close range. There was that comic slap of the bullet... It was funnier to see a hyena shot at a great distance... But the great joke of all... the pinnacle of hyenic humour, was the hyena...that hit too far back while running, would circle madly, snapping and tearing at himself until he pulled his own intestines out, and then stood there, jerking them out, and eating them with relish.¹³

This passage is as superficial, and thus hypocritical and revolting, as the pistol shooting episode in Révoil's *The Hunter And The Trapper In North America*. Hemingway contradicts himself again because he does something which is strictly against the rules of the hunting code in enjoying the suffering of the hyena. He indulges in double standards in a horrific and disrespectful, even perverse, way. Every other animal must be relieved from suffering immediately; only the hyena is "funny" when it is badly injured, when it has "his own intestines" pulled out and when it is "eating them with relish". I wonder how readers in the 1930s reacted to such a passage; today, with our increased environmental consciousness, it would not be easily acceptable. Messages like these undermine Hemingway's authority as a hunting expert or a human being; the reader might start to question whether or not he is still a reliable narrator.

At the end of the fourth and final part, "Pursuit as Happiness", Hemingway again mentions the hyena, this time at the end of a long but unsuccessful hunt for a huge injured kudu bull. This passage, similar to the ones above, shows the confusion of feelings

Hemingway has. He does not care for the hyena, but he is extremely worried, even sorry, about the fate of the injured bull which he now cannot relieve from his pain:

Tonight he [the bull] would die and the hyenas would eat him, or, worse, they would get him before he died, hamstringing him and pulling his guts out while he was alive. The first one that hit that blood spur would stay with it until he found him. Then he would call up the others. I felt a son of a bitch to have hit him and not killed him. I did not mind killing anything, any animal, if I killed it cleanly, they all had to die and my interference with the nightly and the seasonal killing that went on all the time was very minute and I had no guilty feeling at all.¹⁴

Hemingway reveals again his inner self; he does "not mind killing anything" and he has "no guilty feeling at all." He describes himself as an indiscriminate mass slaughterer, and as long as he kills cleanly he is right in killing anything, anywhere, and at anytime. His obsession with "clean" killing surfaces again, only three years after *Death in the Afternoon* where he mentioned it first with regard to the proper end of a bullfight. "Hamstringing" the kudu bull and "pulling his guts out" seem to be idiosyncratic to the hyena, according to Hemingway, for that is what he associates with it and what he brings back to the reader's memory. His confession that he does not feel guilty about killing because his "interference" with it "was very minute" is hypocritical because it is only this interference which causes the animal's death. Here killing and guilt seem to be linked to quantity; if it is only "a bit" that you are killing it is right and you do not have to worry about it. Remarks like these which either justify killing in one way or another, or associate hunting and killing with being funny, can be found throughout the whole text.

The lion hunt which ends the first part of the novel bears many similarities to the one in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" that it must be seen as foreshadowing it. Parallels include not only the injuring of the lion, but the use of the same bullet type ("a 220-grain solid bullet from the Springfield"), and the fact that the second

shot misses as well, as it just "threw a cloud of dirt over him [the lion]." Hemingway admits his dissatisfaction with the way the lion died because of the lack of drama and heroic action, something which he had paid for and which, like a customer, he does not want to miss.

I was so surprised by the way he [the lion] had rolled over dead from the shot after we had been prepared for a charge, for heroics, and for drama, that I felt more let down than pleased. It was our first lion and we were very ignorant and this was not what we had paid to see.¹⁵

This is one of the very few moments where Hemingway is not in control of the situation, he is "surprised" and calls himself "ignorant". However, when his wife injures the lion which is then killed by Hemingway, she is excited and thrilled and enjoys being honoured for something which she did not do.

'You know, I feel as though I did shoot it,' P.O.M. said. 'I don't believe I'd be able to stand it if I really had shot it. I'd be too proud. Isn't triumph marvellous?'

'Good old Mama,' Karl said.

'I believe you did shoot him,' I said.

'Oh, let's not go into that,' P.O.M. said. 'I feel so wonderful about just being supposed to have killed him.'

You know people never used to carry me on their shoulders much at home.¹⁶

Later in camp she suddenly reveals how much she misses success and triumph in a society which "never used to carry [her] on their shoulders." P.O.M. seems to be desperate for social status, of being accepted as a lion killer. But the death of the lion excites not only P.O.M.; it excites the whole camp and makes everybody laugh, and again death results in laughter. Through P.O.M.'s behaviour Hemingway achieves the complete integration of a woman into the hunt, a move which improves the reputation of hunting and removes opposition by presenting hunting as a normal activity which delights women. P.O.M. does not seem to be forced to participate; she is depicted as a perfect hunter, enjoying herself and relishing the (faked) kill of a lion. However, Hemingway makes P.O.M. admit what he

himself would never admit, his desperate need for triumph and adoration at any price. Further, Hemingway destroys the difference or separateness between male and female domains; instead a hunting safari emerges as an ideal and pleasurable activity for men and women.

In the second chapter of this part the competitive character of the safari comes to light. It is the size of the trophy that counts, the bigger the better. When Hemingway kills his first rhino he again describes briefly his innermost feelings:

I was watching, freezing myself deliberately inside, stopping the excitement as you close a valve, going into that impersonal state you shoot from.¹⁷

This is the manifestation of Freud's definition of the uncanny, discussed in the conclusion of this study. Throughout the novel Hemingway is able to control his emotions in a mechanical and anonymous way, like "you close a valve". He is taking pride in giving death, and we are not certain whether he acts like a human being or an automaton. Hemingway's mind is clearly dominated by a compulsion to repeat, killing is an instinctual impulse, initiated by the sheer presence of a wild and dangerous animal. It is this constant occurrence of the same thing, killing, and a certain sense of helplessness, manifested by the killer's inaccessibility to rational arguments, which produces here a feeling of the uncanny. Like Captain Ahab, Hemingway is in a certain sense "inaccessible".

Hemingway is very upset when Karl succeeds in shooting a bigger rhino bull than he himself. Hemingway notices how upset and disturbed he himself is about this, but he cannot control his emotions:

There we were, the three of us, wanting to congratulate, waiting to be good sports about this rhino whose smaller horn was longer than our big one, this huge, tear-eyed marvel of a rhino, this dead, head severed dream rhino, and instead we all spoke like people who were about to become seasick on a boat, or people who had suffered some heavy financial loss. We were ashamed and could do nothing

about it. I wanted to say something pleasant and hearty, instead, 'How many times did you shoot him?' I asked...Poor Karl, faced by these three sad-faced congratulators, was beginning to feel his pleasure in the rhino drained away from him....[Hemingway] 'I'd rather have him beat me. You know that. Truly. But why couldn't he just get a good one, two or three inches longer? Why did he have to get one that makes mine ridiculous? It just makes ours silly.'...We had tried in all the shoot, never to be competitive. Karl and I had each tried to give the other the better chance on everything that came up. ...I knew I could outshoot him and I could always outwalk him, and, steadily he got trophies that made mine dwarfs in comparison...We had not treated him badly, but we had not treated him too well, and still he had beaten me. Not only beaten, beaten was all right. He had made my rhino look so small that I could never keep him in the same small town where we lived. He had wiped him out.¹⁸

What Hemingway fears is his trophies being made "ridiculous" or "silly", Karl getting even bigger trophies which "dwarf" Hemingway's in comparison and hence ruin his fame and reputation "in the same small town where we lived". This shows us a problem with which Hemingway had to battle all his life, his need to win. This is contradictory to the sportsman's code because being able to lose with dignity and not envying the opponent's superiority is as vital a constituent of this code as is the rule of clean killing. In both cases Hemingway had severe problems in applying these rules to himself. The passage is also proof of the group's inability to communicate frankly; Hemingway cannot admit that he is obsessed with the idea of having to have the biggest trophy. He is like Rusty in Mailer's *Why are we in Vietnam?*; he cannot return to "the same small town" without an exceptional trophy.

It is in the third chapter of this part of the text that Hemingway suddenly reveals some of his most intimate thoughts and feelings about killing. He begins by describing the effect the sudden appearance of game has on him:

We all had the nervous exhilaration, like a laughing drunk, that a sudden over-abundance, idiotic abundance of game makes. It is a feeling that can come from any sort of game or fish that is ordinarily rare and that, suddenly, you find in a ridiculously unbelievable abundance.¹⁹

"Ridiculously unbelievable abundance" of game makes him not only "nervous", a state of mind from which he frequently suffers before an important shot, it makes him lose control.

Like a "laughing drunk", he seems to reach some sort of ecstasy just at the prospect of having opportunity galore of killing, a development which is further underlined by the frequent use of the word "elation" in these circumstances:

Now, going forward, sure he [the rhino bull] was in there, I felt the elation, the best elation of all, of certain action to come, action in which you had something to do, in which you can kill and come out of it, doing something you are ignorant about and so not scared, no one to worry about and no responsibility except to perform something you feel sure you can perform...²⁰

And further on Hemingway explains that

...having killed, even when it is only a buffalo, you feel a little quiet inside. Killing is not a feeling that you share...²¹

These two quotations are by far the most revealing ones concerning the emotional circumstances of killing to be found in hunting literature. Killing is described as the "best elation of all", a comparison which can only be accepted by extremely passionate or fanatical hunters. The period after one has killed is associated with relief, you "feel a little quiet inside", presumably because you have fulfilled expectations of yourself or your fellow hunters. The whole description gives us a picture of a rather "blinded" hunter, heavily addicted to something which "is not a feeling that you share" but which you relish yourself. We are reminded of Révoil's use of the term "deer-fever." 'Elation' is an expression rarely used by other hunters. They are often proud of their prey, as for instance Santiago when he finally kills the marlin, but do not consider it their business to be stimulating or funny. Neither do they feel nor express elation or ecstasy in the way Hemingway does in this text.

The two final parts of the text, "Pursuit and Failure" and "Pursuit as Happiness", continue to describe big-game hunting in the same way as the first two parts; they do not provide any new or different insights into hunting or killing.

In summary, it can be said that in *Green Hills of Africa* Hemingway's hunting behaviour is full of contradictions and hypocrisy; it proves Earl Rovit's judgment that Hemingway had an "insatiate need to be an 'insider', a professional who performs rather than a customer who watches."²² Hemingway reveals himself as a compulsive mechanical killer who does not make mistakes and does not fear anything except being bitten by snakes. Hemingway relishes tracking dangerous and injured animals in thick bushland, and he prefers to deal with every risky or threatening situation himself. As a text dealing only with big-game hunting, *Green Hills of Africa* contains a series of valuable and revealing remarks about Hemingway's attitude towards hunting, reflections of which we find again in other hunting stories.

The Short Happy Life Of Francis Macomber

"The Short Happy Life Of Francis Macomber" was published in 1936, only one year after *Green Hills of Africa*. It describes the shooting and killing of dangerous and exotic animals for the sheer pleasure and relaxation of rich Americans who are only interested in picking the best of everything with as little effort and strain as possible. My reading of this story will examine four points: the absence of any genuine communication between the participants, the therapeutic effect of killing, the (non-) relationship between animal and hunter, and the brief employment of a biocentric perspective.

The three main characters, Francis and Margot Macomber and Robert Wilson, are characterized by a complete inability to communicate their honest feelings to each other. The text conveys an atmosphere of hypocrisy, with the only honest emotions being the occasionally revealed inner thoughts of Francis Macomber and Robert Wilson.

Hemingway does not hide this problem which is a vital part of the story, instead he reveals it in the first sentence where all are sitting under the tent, “pretending that nothing had happened.” Throughout the story the most serious problems of communication occur between Francis and Margot. The text abounds with phrases like “She did not speak to him when she came in”, “Let’s not talk about the lion”, “Conversation is going to be so difficult”, “There was no one to tell he was afraid”, “Once he had reached over and taken his wife’s hand without looking at her and she had removed her hand from his”, “Please darling, let’s not talk. I’m so very sleepy”, or “Macomber and his wife sat, not speaking, in the back seat”. A similar problem exists between the two hunters; in the tent they “avoided one another’s eyes”, and after Macomber has killed a buffalo the emotions surrounding the kill become taboo:

“Do you have that feeling of happiness about what’s going to happen?” Macomber asked, still exploring his new wealth.

“You’re not supposed to mention it,” Wilson said, looking in the other’s face. “Much more fashionable to say you’re scared. Mind you, you’ll be scared too, plenty of times.”

“But you *have* a feeling of happiness about action to come?”

“Yes,” said Wilson. “There’s that. Doesn’t do to talk too much about all this. Talk the whole thing away. No pleasure in anything if you mouth it up too much.”

“You’re both talking rot,” said Margot. “Just because you’ve chased some helpless animals in a motor car you talk like heroes.”²³

This passage admits on the one hand that there are special, perhaps disturbing, emotions surrounding the kill and gives us on the other hand the long established hunter’s advice about the possible danger for future enjoyment of killing, that is do not talk about it. For Wilson and Macomber this reluctance to talk about emotions is a way to demonstrate their masculinity; they are in charge and will not allow emotions to cause them any problems or create any doubts about the correctness of their killing sprees. Both hunters also either ignore Margot or are incapable of comforting her on the two occasions when she is

extremely upset. At the start of the story she leaves the tent bitterly crying, and after the buffalo killing she is equally upset; in both cases the men are incapable of helping Margot to overcome her tears. Hunting emerges here as an activity where tenderness and genuine caring love are out of place, and are replaced by the direct satisfaction of wild aggressive or sexual instincts.

In this story, hunting takes place within a triangular relationship, a relationship between two male hunters and a beautiful huntress. It is interesting to note here what Eve Sedgwick says about "Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles" in her study *Between Men English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*:

What is most interesting for our purposes...is...that, in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of "rivalry" and "love", differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent.²⁴

Macomber feels this double pressure; hunting fever and fear versus sexual rivalry is what characterizes his plight. His situation is made worse by the fact that, according to the hunting code, it is absolutely taboo to talk during the hunt about either fear or sexual rivalry, hence killing is his only way to release pressure.

The therapeutic effect of killing is demonstrated with the changes Macomber undergoes while hunting. In the story two types of killers are juxtaposed, the unsuccessful amateur and the superior professional. Macomber tries to kill as much as he can, not as much as he needs. Each killing is seen as a proof of bravery, of a man being able to overcome his fears, but with no regard at all to the animal's plight. How little Macomber cares about the animal's suffering is displayed by his demeanour after he wounds the lion: he is afraid to follow the lion; instead he prefers either to set the grass on fire or to send in

beaters or even to leave the lion in the bush, still tortured by agonizing pain. This upsets Wilson, who feels disgusted by this reckless and cowardly violation of the hunting code. Macomber's suggestion not to relieve the injured lion from his pain shows deep contempt for the animal's fate. As soon as the situation gets really dangerous Macomber does not want to risk anything, he is full of fear and panic:

'I don't want to go in there,' said Macomber. It was out before he knew he'd said it. He sat there, sweating under his arms, his mouth dry, his stomach hollow feeling, wanting to find courage to tell Wilson to go on and finish off the lion without him.²⁵

Macomber has lost control and fear and panic have taken him over. He is "sweating", he has a "hollow feeling" and he does not have the courage to tell Wilson the truth, let alone to go into the bush and kill the lion. The whole problem is made worse because what Macomber cannot do because of his fears is exactly what everybody expects him to do and what he himself so desperately would like to do in order to prove his manliness and courage. The whole event is then brought to the most humiliating climax by Macomber panicking and running away from the charging lion.

The profound and significant change Macomber then undergoes is an important difference to previous hunting stories. In this case it turns out to be a complex inner development, the defeat of fear. Despised by his wife and Wilson after his panic and flight from the lion, he manages to overcome his fears while hunting buffalo, partly he replaces these fears with a deep hatred for Wilson because Wilson with his toughness had attracted Margot's attention. Wilson immediately understands this sudden development and gradually changes his opinion about him. Macomber feels joy and elation and immediately wants to prove his newly gained power and self-control. But he can enjoy his new luck only very briefly, because he is then shot by his wife. Here the title of the story becomes

clear. Macomber briefly feels real happiness; not only because he has overcome his fears, but also because he has successfully killed, hence killing emerges here as a source of happiness, even elation.

What Macomber tries to achieve is in line with so many other Hemingway heroes. He does not give up after his humiliating withdrawal from the lion. Although he feels ill and weak and is by no means convinced of his inner strength, he goes out again to face the equally dangerous buffalo. The buffalo thus suffers the utmost indignity of becoming the simple extension of Macomber's threadbare macho-image. Giving-up is impossible, a man has to face such a challenge time and again to prove and justify his strength, toughness and self-control. Only when he succeeds is he accepted, for fleeing or failing is unacceptable.

But the genuineness of the challenge of this hunt has to be questioned because this kind of hunting involves the use of sophisticated equipment, such as powerful rifles²⁶ and a car. The hunt by car has several important consequences; the hunters are much faster than the game, hence there are no long and agonizing waiting periods, no time for contemplation, self-criticism or other thoughts. The hunters are safe and well protected; they have a safe haven and are much less exhausted than the fleeing animal. And the actual time spent on the hunt close to the animal is much shorter, hence no sort of relationship can develop between hunter and animal. But chasing animals by car is forbidden and a severe breach of the hunting code, and as by allowing Macomber to hunt buffalo from the car Wilson puts himself in a difficult position because if this becomes public he could lose his hunting license.

Under these well protected circumstances, parts of the hunt become much less dangerous, and it is easier for the inexperienced citizen to prove his bravery via killing.

Whenever there is some sort of danger the white professional hunter always either offers advice or clears up the situation himself. This leads to a clear social structure, a kind of hierarchy of killers, in the group of hunters. The experienced and tough Wilson dominates and directs the group. A professional hunter with "extremely cold blue eyes", he is a specialist in killing everything which comes within range of his .505 Gibbs rifle. For him killing cleanly, quickly and without emotion is his business. He tries to avoid suffering for the animal, not because he feels mercy or sympathy, but because it is a vital part of the hunting-code for whose acceptance and observance of Wilson is renowned. The complete absence of any emotion while killing is further undermined when Hemingway again describes his eyes as "machine-gunner's eyes". This extremely tough and often reticent hunter fascinates Margot Macomber so much that her husband immediately tries to copy his behaviour and to prove himself an equally merciless and emotionless killer. With this Hemingway indicates perhaps one reason for the tough "macho" behaviour of the hunters, which seems to attract a beautiful woman like Margot Macomber. In this text, the ability to kill without any remorse equals sexual fascination.

The introduction of a female character into the rough world of hunting is a new development. Margot Macomber is an intelligent and beautiful former model who accompanies her husband during the hunt and takes an active part in it as well. However, Hemingway does not allow the reader to participate in her thoughts; he gives us Francis's, Robert's, as well as the lion's perspective and "thoughts", but not Margot's. Her innermost feelings remain a mystery, but she is nevertheless the main reason Francis Macomber demonstrates his toughness. Margot causes major problems for him when she spends the night in Wilson's tent. Later she kills her husband with a hunting rifle. She

introduces erotic tension and passion into the hunting motif for the first time. The erotic relationship between Margaret and Wilson (she kisses Wilson in the jeep after he killed the lion) increases the tension between Macomber and Wilson and puts additional pressure on Macomber who is already strained from his cowardly flight. Although she immediately breaks down and cries after his death, it remains unclear whether or not his death was an accident or brutal murder.

The relationship between hunter and animal is similar to the one of Révoil and Roosevelt. There is hardly any admiration, love or respect for nature or animal. The more dangerous and bigger the animal is, the more its value as a trophy. The hunter kills as many animals as he likes (or can), without any economic justification or need for food. The motivation is the greed for trophies as big and impressive as possible and the whole hunt has a competitive character. Lion and buffalo usually flee as soon as they notice their hunters, for they only become dangerous when they are challenged or injured. It is the hunters who are crossing the boundary and are intruding into the animal's terrain. Further, this is a speedy hunt, similar to a car chase: the animal is hunted until it is exhausted and hence much easier to kill. As a consequence there is no room for reflection or criticism; on this hunt the hunters do not "feel a little quiet inside" after they have killed. Instead, personal problems take over immediately after each killing; the Maccombers and Wilson are all unable to enjoy the safari because they are too concerned with their own problems and roles in the triangular powergame.

The animal itself is only valued for its skin or head, the bigger the more impressive the trophy. For today's reader it is difficult to find any convincing reason or justification for this slaughter; apart from the rich abundance of game in Africa in the 1930's as well as

the fact that it was very fashionable among wealthy Americans to go to exotic countries for hunting. Big-game safaris are still surprisingly popular today, and have become a major industry in countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Botswana, and Mailer in *Why are we in Vietnam?* describes briefly the terrible consequences of the many safari operators now hunting with helicopters in Alaska. Obviously, the opportunity to prove his bravery and to overcome personal fears is one of the motivations for Macomber to go on this safari. The desire to shoot and kill is what brings the Macomers and Wilson together. The desire to hunt serves here as the only basis or motivation for such a big safari.

This absence of any compassion regarding animals is underlined by Hemingway in the integration of two passages into the story in which the narrative slips into the lion's mind and shows the feelings and inner thoughts of the animal, a technique rarely employed in hunting stories:

The lion still stood looking majestically and coolly toward this object that his eyes only showed in silhouette, bulking like some super-rhino. There was no man smell carried toward him and he watched the object, moving his great head a little from side to side. Then watching the object, not afraid, but hesitating before going down the bank to drink with such a thing opposite him, he saw a man figure detach itself from it and he turned his heavy head and swung away toward the cover of the trees as he heard a cracking crash and felt the slam of a .30-06 220-grain solid bullet that bit his flank and ripped in sudden hot scalding nausea through his stomach. He trotted, heavy, big-footed, swinging wounded full-bellied, through the trees toward the tall grass and cover, and the crash came again to go past him ripping the air apart. Then it crashed again and he felt the blow as it hit his lower ribs and ripped on through, blood sudden hot and frothy in his mouth, and he galloped toward the high grass where he could crouch and not be seen and make them bring the crushing thing close enough so he could make a rush and get the man that held it.²⁷

Thirty-five yards into the grass the big lion lay flattened out along the ground. His ears were back and his only movement was a slight twitching up and down of his long, blacktufted tail. He had turned at bay as soon as he had reached this cover and he was sick with the wound through his full belly, and weakening with the wound through his lungs that brought a thin foamy red to his mouth each time he breathed. His flanks were wet and hot and flies were on the little openings the solid bullets had made in his tawny hide, and his big yellow eyes, narrowed with hate, looked through ahead, only blinking when the pain came as he breathed, and his claws dug in the soft baked earth. All of him, pain, sickness, hatred and all of his remaining strength, was tightening into an absolute concentration for a rush. He could hear the men talking and he waited, gathering all of himself into the preparation for a

charge as soon as the men would come into the grass. As he heard the voices his tail stiffened to twitch up and down, and, as they came into the edge of the grass, he made a coughing grunt and charged.²⁸

Hemingway describes here the most crucial moment of every hunt: the brief period of injuring or killing the animal. The description is outstanding because the reader suddenly leaves the group of hunters and switches to the animal, which is at this very moment suffering terrible pain. It is one of the rare moments in hunting fiction where the narrator switches from the usual anthropocentric to a biocentric perspective. Although it is only for two paragraphs that the reader's attention is diverted, this clearly has a deep impact on the reader in creating compassion and understanding for an area hitherto not dealt with. With the exceptions of James Curwood's *The Bear* and Norman Mailer's *Why are we in Vietnam?* we do not find many similar passages in American hunting fiction.

The description of the lion's intention to get the hunter into the high grass and then attack him increases the tension and suspense. Hemingway's famous style with its few adjectives, simple relative-clauses and his choice of words (cracking crash, solid bullet, hot scalding nausea, blood hot and frothy, thin foamy red) amplifies this effect even further. The mentioning of technicalities which do not say anything to the average reader (a .30-06 220-grain solid bullet) is another example of Hemingway's desire to present himself as an experienced insider rather than an innocent bystander.

Both paragraphs focus extensively on pain, injury, and the suffering of the animal, all of which have hitherto rarely been described in hunting stories; so far most authors tried to avoid giving detailed descriptions of this most terrifying moment of hunting. In addition both paragraphs integrate the reader completely into the action. S/he suddenly feels observed by the lion which is "looking majestically and coolly", a lion which is frightening and which dominates the whole scene, even when he is injured. His "big yellow eyes" are

"narrowed with hate", and he is waiting for his chance to attack and kill. All this creates a hair-raising tension, a tension which finds its climax when the lion "made a coughing grunt and charged". The extensive use of a vocabulary of visual perception (eyes, to look, to watch) reminds one of the dying pigeons in Cooper's *The Pioneers*; suddenly the victim is looking at its killer and the reader realises the actual amount of pain and suffering inflicted upon the animal.

With this description Hemingway puts two parts of the hunt in a shocking contrast: on the one hand the rich couple, relaxing and taking pleasure in killing various animals and on the other hand the detailed, surprising and revealing description of the pain and terror suffered by the lion. Hemingway who, as explained above, took hunting extremely seriously may have wanted to express his disgust about superficial people hunting only because it is fashionable or great fun but without showing proper respect for the animal or the hunting code.

Structurally, the number three is of importance in this text. The story covers a three-day period; there are three hunters and a triangular relationship; three hunts and three nights; a three-part development in the relationship between the Macombers and Wilson; and three different kinds of animals (impalas, lions, buffalos) are hunted. During the three days there is a movement of going up and down in the chain of events; this movement reveals the vicissitudes of hunting with the final and dramatic solution on the third day.

The Old Man and the Sea

The final part of this chapter looks at *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway's novella of the fisherman and the marlin, which is another famous example of a story whose main action is hunting. Santiago and the marlin are the only real actors in this duel with no other person or force participating in the fight. Santiago's young friend and pupil Manolin plays only an ancillary role. The small number of persons involved, as well as the total absence of any distracting sub-plot, allows the reader no diversion from the matter in hand: Santiago - and only he - is going to hook, chase and kill a very big fish. My reading of the text will look at the description of the hunt and at the antagonists, Santiago and the marlin.

Hemingway begins immediately with the hunt. While Santiago is still in the harbour, the "big" fish is mentioned or alluded to six times. Santiago has not even set off in his skiff, but it has already become clear to the reader that he is destined to encounter a fish of extraordinary size. Throughout the novella Hemingway continues to mention this very fish, but he uses only three different adjectives (huge, big, great) to describe the marlin's size.²⁹ This has two important effects; first, the reader is constantly reminded that it is a powerful, majestic animal and hence very difficult to catch. Santiago's task seems to be impossible for an ordinary old man, even if he is experienced, has "resolution" and knows "many tricks." Second, Hemingway creates with this constant repetition of adjectives a kind of monotony which is typical of Santiago's last eighty-four days which passed without any catch. Such an agonizingly long waiting period would make anybody desperate and doubtful about his own capabilities, thus putting an additional burden upon the hunter's shoulders.

Here important parallels can be drawn with *Moby Dick* concerning the description of the hunt. Both authors try quickly to establish that the basic idea is the hunt for a huge and dangerous animal. Within the first pages of each text the reader is informed that there is a mysterious animal somewhere in the depth of the sea and that the *Pequod* and the skiff are predestinated to meet this animal. Both Ahab and Santiago go on a quest-like search for their prey and both are well used to accept long periods of monotonous and unsuccessful hunting. Both hunt an animal which most of the time they cannot see; they only have occasional glimpses or rumours as their only sources of information. This uncertainty gives ample space for speculation and exaggerations which make it more fascinating for the reader to follow the hunt. Another parallel concerns the 'strange' use of the word "strange" in both texts. With regard to *Moby-Dick* this occurrence has been analysed in the article "Uncanny Narration in Moby-Dick" by Samuel Kimball.³⁰ In the case of *The Old Man and the Sea* both Santiago and the marlin are linked by this term. Santiago has "strange" shoulders and is twice described as a "strange old man." The marlin is also described twice as either "strange" or creating "some great strangeness." Taking into account the many definitions provided for this term by, for example, the OED, such as "unknown", "unfamiliar", "not experienced before", "exceptional or singular", we come back to Freud's definition of the uncanny (see Ch.14). It could at least be argued that both antagonists in this hunt are exceptional, or of a character, willpower or stamina rarely encountered, and hence surrounded with mysticism or an aura which cannot be understood rationally.

Like so many of Hemingway's heroes, Santiago is an experienced and acknowledged professional, a "professional who performs rather than a customer who

watches", thus again reflecting "Hemingway's insatiate need to be an insider." Santiago, the modest and amazingly patient Cuban fisherman, is far too old for the rough and exhausting job of deep-sea fishing and one realizes quickly that his best years are well behind him. However, he still has fighting spirit (he is not yet defeated and he will not be defeated), experience and determination: "'I may not be as strong as I think,' the old man said. 'But I know many tricks and I have resolution.'"³¹ When he hooks the marlin he also displays some kind of awareness and foreboding, similar to the one analysed in Révoil's *The Hunter And The Trapper In North America*:

Just then, watching his lines, he saw one of the projecting green sticks dip sharply. 'Yes,' he said. 'Yes,' and shipped his oars without bumping the boat. He reached out for the line and held it softly between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. He felt no strain nor weight and he held the line lightly. Then it came again. This time it was a tentative pull, not solid nor heavy, and he knew exactly what it was. One hundred fathoms down a marlin was eating the sardines that covered the point and the shank of the hook....³²

Santiago's perceptive abilities reach here into the depths of the sea, and are rather "strange" or "uncanny". They even enable him to identify his prey immediately by "softly" holding the line.

Hemingway's motto that a man can be destroyed but not defeated is clearly reflected in the fact that Santiago still believes in his luck and has much hope, although he has not caught any fish for so long. This rather silent and inward determination is one of Santiago's most important traits of character. It can clearly be compared to Ahab's fanatical greed for revenge. From the novella's beginning - as in *Moby Dick* - outstanding determination is directed against the "truly big fish." But the struggle is so exhausting that Santiago needs to build up his courage either by constantly asking God for help or by reminding himself about times long gone by. Hemingway distracts the reader with these

interruptions from the actual hunt and uses them at the same time to tell us more about Santiago and his faith, as when he tries to motivate himself by remembering his winning of the title "El Campeon" in an armwrestling competition against a huge negro. Santiago's search for help and his extreme physical suffering make him all the more understandable and sympathetic to the reader. He undergoes probably the hardest and longest ordeal of any hunter in American fiction.

In the novella Santiago shows an emotional change which one would not expect of a hunter. Beginning with a fisherman's usual desire to hook a fish, he then gradually develops deep and sincere love and admiration for the marlin, a development similar to the one in Curwood's *The Bear* (see Ch.14). The adoration of the marlin's strength, stamina and beauty leads to the personification of the marlin as his brother. Three quotations may make this plain:

You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more nobler thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.

'Keep my head clear,' he said against the wood of the bow. 'I am a tired old man. But I have killed this fish which is my brother and now I must do the slave work.'

He started to pull the fish in to have him alongside so that he could pass a line through his gills and out his mouth and make his head fast alongside the bow. I want to see him, he thought, and to touch and to feel him. He is my fortune, he thought. But that is not why I wish to feel him. I think I felt his heart, he thought.³³

Santiago personifies the marlin as something he loves, and he wants to have the fish as close to him as possible. He wants to touch and to feel him, there is no hatred or anger, only admiration. This complete emotional change takes place in less than two days. This physical and emotional closeness to the marlin is a constructive and positive experience, in

sharp contrast to the later moment when Santiago pushes the harpoon right into the fish's heart:

The old man dropped the line and put his foot on it and lifted the harpoon as high as he could and drove it down with all its strength, and more strength he had just summoned, into the fish's side just behind the great chest fin that rose high in the air to the altitude of the man's chest. He felt the iron go in and he leaned on it and drove it further and then pushed all his weight after it.

Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty. He seemed to hang in the air above the old man in the skiff. Then he fell into the water with a crash that sent spray over the old man and over all of the skill.

The old man felt faint and sick and he could not see well.³⁴

This passage is unique in several ways. It is the first extensive description of the physical act of killing an animal, here by pushing the harpoon deep into the marlin's heart. In the overwhelming majority of American hunting texts the actual kill is not - or only very briefly - described, there is a conspicuous absence of death descriptions. The passage reveals also a paradox in Santiago's attitude towards the marlin. Despite his love and admiration for the fish he is still able to develop enough aggression to push the harpoon, to kill him with a very violent and forceful act, an act which is far stronger than, for example, pulling the trigger. And, surprisingly for Hemingway, the marlin's death does not result in elation or excitement, instead Santiago feels "faint and sick," and is tired and exhausted.

The structure of this hunt contains many long periods of often agonizing waiting (two whole nights), so they provide ample space for thinking and reflection. Santiago, like Ishmael, is the only mediator of these thoughts. There is very little dialogue, in fact none during the hunt itself, hence only Santiago's interior monologue provides us with facts, observations and experiences. We witness the struggle through his eyes; at no time do we

get any insight into the opposite side. This oneness or anthropocentric perspective is another of the many similarities to "Ishmael's mighty book."

One final point remains to be discussed: Santiago's attitude towards the environment. Since his childhood Santiago has grown up with the sea, he was "born to be a fisherman." The sea is consequently his natural habitat and, like the frontiersman and his rifle, the skiff and harpoon are his daily tools; when he is at sea he feels like one among others. He often expresses feelings of tenderness and pity, as for the tired warbler on the fishing line, and has a deep respect for all the animals, even for the fish he must catch. He still notices things such as beauty, colour, form, strength, of creatures and of the sea, all of which is very precious to him. Hemingway portrays Santiago as a man with an astonishingly deep insight into the sea and the stars he can see at night, as well as into the weather and its changes, and it is Santiago's long experience which has taught him to, for example, predict hurricanes. Critics like Robert P. Weeks have doubted the accuracy of facts given, but what seems to be much more important is simply that Santiago is a human being who - despite having to struggle hard to make his living - still respects nature and lives in harmony with his environment. Santiago is probably the most positive or optimistic hunter of all the texts analysed here, and it is this optimism and faith which allows him to endure so much physical pain as well as the loss of his prey. In this he has a great similarity to Cooper's Natty Bumppo or Faulkner's Ike McCaslin who all try equally hard to preserve their respect and admiration for nature by shooting only as much game as they really need.

The marlin is the exact opposite of Santiago, a mystery which remains most of the time invisible to the reader in the dark depths of the sea. In this he is almost like the

spermwhale Moby Dick who is until the end only seen by very few sailors. The reader hears only about the results of the marlin's deeds: the long towing of the skiff against the stream, the injuries he inflicts on Santiago when he suddenly and violently jerks the fishing line, the impression he makes on Santiago whenever he leaps. The only information we get are about his extraordinary size (about eighteen foot), and his inexhaustible strength and his colour. About everything else one can only speculate and this produces further mystification for the reader. All this we can observe with Moby Dick as well; he is of extraordinary size and strength, and his rare colour (white) is frequently reported, too.

Despite this lack of any information the marlin is always around, he is the story's pivot, he is always on our mind. He not only virtually circles around Santiago's skiff, due to his absolutely unpredictable actions or behaviour - his deeds are irregular and do not fit into any pattern - he is always present, if only in the subconscious of the reader. But in contrast to Moby Dick, Old Ben or Benchley's white shark, the marlin is much less aggressive. He never attacks his hunter; instead he bravely struggles for his freedom, a struggle which results in Santiago's deep admiration for the marlin (he calls him a "noble" creature).

The irregular behaviour and appearance of the marlin is another difference to Faulkner's "The Bear", where the hunters know from previous experiences almost certainly when and where Old Ben is going to appear and how he is going to behave. Ike McCaslin as well as Ahab have met the animal they are hunting before, often with terrible consequences. Compared with this, Santiago enters the fight fairly unencumbered - although not unexperienced - and hence without any feeling of hate or revenge, he does

Notes

- 1) Hemingway, Ernest *Death in the Afternoon*, p.211
- 2) *ibid.*, p.8
- 3) *ibid.*, p.9
- 4) *ibid.*, p.12
- 5) *ibid.*, p.17
- 6) *ibid.*, p.75
- 7) *ibid.*, pp.205, 206
- 8) Hemingway, Ernest *Green Hills of Africa*, p.16
- 9) *ibid.*, pp. 16, 17
- 10) *ibid.*, p. 32
- 11) *ibid.*, p.22
- 12) *ibid.*, p.37
- 13) *ibid.*, pp. 36, 37
- 14) *ibid.*, p.205
- 15) *ibid.*, p.39
- 16) *ibid.*, p.40
- 17) *ibid.*, p 65
- 18) *ibid.*, pp. 70-72
- 19) *ibid.*, pp. 85, 86
- 20) *ibid.*, p. 93
- 21) *ibid.*, p.96
- 22) Rovit, Earl *Hemingway*, p.31
- 23) Hemingway, Ernest *The Snows of Kilimandjaro and other Stories*, p. 151
- 24) Sedgwick, Eve *Between Men English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, p.21
- 25) Hemingway, Ernest *The Snows of Kilimandjaro and other Stories*, pp. 135,136
- 26) Wilson's rifle is described as the "short, ugly, shockingly big-bored 505. Gibbs".
- 27) *ibid.*, pp.132,133
- 28) *ibid.*, pp.136,137
- 29) Peter Benchley in his 1974 thriller *Jaws* uses exactly the same expression, cf. the very first phrase: "The *great fish* moved silently through the night water, propelled by short sweeps of its crescent tail." So does Melville in *Moby-Dick*.
- 30) Kimball, Samuel "Uncanny Narration in *Moby-Dick*", in *American Literature*, December 1987, Vol. 59, Nr.4, pp. 528 - 547.
- 31) Hemingway, Ernest *The Old Man and the Sea*, p.17
- 32) *ibid.*, p.33
- 33) *ibid.*, pp.79, 81, 82
- 34) *ibid.*, pp.80, 81

8. THE DYING WILDERNESS: WILLIAM FAULKNER

This chapter analyses two of Faulkner's texts, *Go Down, Moses* (1942), and *Big Woods* (1955). Like Melville and Hemingway, Faulkner has received a large amount of critical attention. This reading is therefore going to deal with only a few specific points: the harmonious and educational relationship between Sam Fathers and Isaac McCaslin, the communication between the hunters, the hunt for Old Ben, and the conflict between wilderness and civilisation.

Go Down, Moses

Go Down, Moses consists of seven stories, three of which describe Isaac's hunting experiences: "The Old People", "The Bear" (both also included in *Big Woods*), and "Delta Autumn". "The Old People" describes Isaac's initiation into the woodsman's craft under the supervision of his mentor Sam Fathers and closely monitors Isaac's hunting education from the very beginning until he shoots his first deer at the age of twelve. Everything happens under the tutelage of Sam Fathers, an elderly, unmarried reclusive and experienced hunter, described as "the old man, the wild man not even one generation from the woods, childless, kinless, peopleless - motionless."¹ He, the lonely and single master of the hunt, ensures that all is done according to the hunting code, and he teaches his disciple Isaac all the necessary skills not only to survive, to hunt, to find his way, to follow the trail but also to maintain the wilderness as it is, something holy and very precious which, once it is lost, can never be regained. This is an example of a respectful, admiring relationship between hunter and wilderness. The hunter kills only as many animals as he himself needs,

and he kills only at certain times of the year, similar to Natty Bumppo's rule "Use, but don't waste." Isaac is taught very early what is one of several conspicuous differences between Faulkner's hunting stories and stories written by other writers, the ability to let go:

He [Sam Fathers] taught the boy the woods, to hunt, when to shoot and when not to shoot, when to kill and when not to kill, and better, what to do with it afterward. Then he would talk to the boy, the two of them sitting beneath the close fierce stars on a summer hilltop while they waited for the hounds to bring the fox back within hearing, or beside a fire in the November or December woods while the dogs worked out a coon's trail along the creek, or fireless in the pitch dark and heavy dew of April mornings while they squatted beneath a turkey-roost.²

This passage describes a kind of hunting which is a participation in an old and natural process which does not necessarily include killing. Faulkner frequently describes a hunt without a final kill, a phenomenon which is analysed later. The passage also shows two important characteristics of the relationship between Isaac and Sam Fathers. First, that Isaac gets a complete and profound hunting training and, secondly, the close teacher - pupil relationship between Sam and Isaac, clearly dominated by trust, respect and understanding. They spend long hours together, sharing the experience of something so precious that it is passed from generation to generation through individual tuition. Typical of this relationship is Sam's constant refusal to answer any questions of Isaac:

Then he [Sam Fathers] would talk to the boy... while they squatted beneath a turkey-roost. The boy would never question him; Sam did not react to questions. The boy would just wait and listen and Sam would begin, talking about the old days and the People whom he had not had time ever to know and so could not remember (he did not remember ever having seen his father's face), and in place of whom the other race into which his blood had run supplied him with no substitute.³

Whenever Sam and Isaac sit together Sam does the talking, the boy listening, "never" daring to question what is happening. This one-way communication reveals one of the characteristics of hunting: although hunting is such an old and traditional activity it has never been really discussed, justified or questioned. This comes to light time and again in

all other texts dealt with in this study. The reader gets here an impression of a lonely hunter, an absence of family or social life, an inability to talk openly about emotional problems, and the impossibility of improving the situation, of opening up and entering into real dialogue.

Sam Fathers' character reveals much about the relationship between himself and Isaac. Although only few details are given by Faulkner about Sam Fathers' life, it becomes clear that he represents a kind of man with a positive, caring, and loving attitude towards his environment. Sam Fathers' teaching is a reflection of Indian traditions which include the hunter's responsibility for the wilderness and which are passed on to Isaac McCaslin.

As Warren Beck argues in his essay on *Go Down, Moses*:

His [Sam Fathers] gifts to Isaac included not only a hunter's skills but their inclusive code, based on a primitive piety (of American Indian derivation) toward the whole creation, giving the boy an immediate personal example of abiding integrity. Beyond this upbringing Isaac is quite the regional character, growing up on the McCaslin plantation he is heir to, and inheriting also as the child of his times, born in 1867 into the defeated South's melancholy and exacerbation, its vulnerabilities and confusions and the chronic anxieties of a failed culture. This is the book of life out of which he learns to read, and it is no wonder he prefers the lucidity and satisfying consistency of Sam Fathers' surer word⁴

This "inclusive code" gives Isaac help and strength to make his way in a wilderness which is seen as a "creation". Hunting (as one example of abiding integrity and of pride and humility) is the area in which Isaac feels at home, and where he succeeds (another one is his later education as a carpenter). Beck's characterisation of Sam Father's hunting code, he calls it a "surer word", as lucid and consistent can be applied to hunting conversations in general. Hunters and their talk are unsophisticated and plain, and throughout the novel Faulkner gives us some hints about this, for instance,

It was of the men, not white nor black nor red but men, hunters, with the will and hardihood to endure and the humility and skill to survive, and the dogs and the bear and deer juxtaposed and relieved

against it, ordered and compelled by and within the wilderness in the ancient and unremitting contest according to the ancient and immitigable rules which voided all regrets and brooked no quarter; - the best game of all, the best of all breathing and forever the best of all listening, the voices quiet and weighty and deliberate for retrospection and recollection and exactitude among the concrete trophies... There was always a bottle present, so that it would seem to him [Isaac] that those fine fierce instincts of heart and brain and courage and wiliness and speed were concentrated into that brown liquor which not women, not boys and children, but only hunters drank, drinking not of the blood they spilled but some condensation of the wild immortal spirit, drinking it moderately, humbly even, not with the pagan's base and baseless hope of acquiring thereby the virtues of cunning and strength and speed but in salute to them.⁵

She [Isaac's wife] already knows more than I [Isaac] with all the man-listening in camps where there was nothing to read ever even heard of. They are born already bored with what a boy approaches only at fourteen and fifteen with blundering and aghast trembling.⁶

Here we get the impression of a communication restricted to "retrospection and recollection and exactitude among the concrete trophies", extensive examples of which are Révoil's *The Hunter And The Trapper In North America* and Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa*. It is an atmosphere of determination, "hardihood", endurance and "skill to survive." Similar to Roosevelt, Faulkner paints here a picture of "the ancient and unremitting contest," of hunting as an activity for which you have to have exceptional skills and abilities.

The afore mentioned Indian traditions as well as veneration of the woods characterize many of Isaac's deeds and it is these woods which have the power to accept or refuse a new young hunter according to Indian belief. For Isaac, the ambitious apprentice, to be accepted is important and he needs Sam Fathers' help. Sam Fathers has the difficult task to increase Isaac's self-confidence; he has to encourage him so that he is mature, experienced and strong enough to hit the deer. Faulkner's subtle description of this moment shows Sam Fathers' great empathy for the boy's insecurity:

But they would stand there, Sam a little behind him and without a gun himself, as he had been standing when the boy shot the running rabbit when he was eight years old. They would stand there in

the November dawns, and after a while they would hear the dogs. ...'I'll never get a shot,' the boy said. 'I'll never kill one.' 'Yes you will,' Sam said. 'You wait. You'll be a hunter. You'll be a man.'⁷

Close to the boy and without any weapon Sam gives the boy the strength and confidence to pass the threshold, to kill his first deer. With the equation hunter equals man the importance of this test is increased to being a full member of the hunting group. All these hunting traditions (communication, hunting code) continue in "The Bear" and finally in "Delta Autumn", when Isaac - now an old man - has to realize that as a direct result of extensive commercial lumbering he has to be driven more than 200 miles to get into what was once the adjacent unspoiled paradise of his childhood days. Here it becomes clear how complex the hunting motif in *Go Down, Moses* is, it is linked to everyday life; it accompanies virtually the whole life-span of every man in this society. Faulkner takes Isaac as an example to show how hunting is connected with all periods of human life. From the first rather precocious attempts of his first hunting lessons at the age of eight ("The Old People") through the process of maturation ("The Bear") to the position of the experienced octogenarian, returning to the big woods for his final hunt (Delta Autumn), hunting accompanies all stages of this development. A look at what Faulkner himself said when he taught graduates at the University of Virginia in 1957 makes clear how he wanted "The Bear" to be understood. Asked if Isaac "would ever have compromised with his ideals?" Faulkner replied "...But he [Isaac] would have stuck to his position, that I will not profit from this which is wrong and sinful." Isaac's "ideals" or "what is wrong and sinful" have been taught to him via hunting, via living in the wilderness, via trying to adopt to ideals given to him by the hunters in the camp. Hunting emerges here as the force which formed and developed the character of a man who is later going to make a decision with widespread consequences for himself, his wife, and his cousin.

The hunt for a big deer is at the centre of "The Old People". As in *Moby-Dick* the animal is well known to Sam and has been encountered frequently before. But neither Sam nor Isaac hate it, nor are they obsessed with the idea of killing, which might be due to the fact that there is no danger or imminent threat from the animal. The deer does not look for any confrontation, he simply tries to escape. For the first time in his life twelve-year-old Isaac is going to shoot a deer but he is doubtful whether or not he will succeed; he fears that he will miss the deer. This decisive moment, which is followed by the initiation rite, is described several times in the novel:

Then Sam Fathers, standing just behind the boy as he had been standing when the boy shot his first running rabbit with his first gun and almost with the first load it ever carried, touched his shoulder and he began to shake, not with any cold. Then the buck was there. He did not come into sight; he was just there, looking not like a ghost but as if all of light were condensed in him and he were the source of it...'Now,' Sam Fathers said, 'shoot quick, and slow.' ... Then he [Isaac] was standing over the buck where it lay on the wet earth still in the attitude of speed and not looking at all dead, standing over it shaking and jerking, with Sam Fathers beside him again, extending the knife. 'Dont walk up to him in front,' Sam said. 'If he aint dead, he will cut you all to pieces with his feet. Walk up to him from behind and take him by the horn first, so you can hold his head down until you can jump away. Then slip your other hand down and hook your fingers in his nostrils.' The boy did that - drew the head back and the throat taut and drew Sam Fathers' knife across the throat and Sam stooped and dipped his hands in the hot smoking blood and wiped them back and forth across the boy's face. ... They were the white boy, marked forever, and the old dark man sired on both sides by savage kings, who had marked him, whose bloody hands had merely formally consecrated him to that which, under the man's tutelage, he had already accepted, humbly and joyfully, with abnegation and with pride too; the hands, the touch, the first worthy blood which he had been found at last worthy to draw, joining him and the man forever...⁸

and at the end of the story:

So the instant came. He pulled trigger and Sam Fathers marked his face with the hot blood which he had spilled and he ceased to be a child and became a hunter and a man....the moment of the buck, the shot, Sam Fathers and himself and the blood with which Sam had marked him forever one with the wilderness which had accepted him since Sam said that he had done all right.⁹

These quotations describe just one event, and the repetition stresses the importance of this act for Isaac, the young hunter who had "the prints of the bloody hands on his face, who had nothing to do now but stand straight and not let the trembling show." He is nervous,

excited and can still not believe that "he had done all right." Part of this complex ritual is the mutual acceptance of the young hunter, not only in the companionship of a select party of experienced hunters, but also by the wilderness with which Isaac becomes "forever one" through the judgement and marking of Sam Fathers. Another part of the ritual is the proper dressing of the animal. Every confrontation between a deer and the hunters in *Go Down, Moses* as well as in *Big Woods* is described in a positive and ceremonial way, with the deer at the centre. Faulkner employs a religious vocabulary to describe the deer; he is "looking not like a ghost but as if all of light were condensed in him and he were the source of it." These words create admiration and excitement, the reader feels as if s/he is participating in a religious service or a secret ceremony. The killing of the deer, the cutting of the throat and Isaac being baptized with deer-blood are the visible and incontestable proof that Isaac has received and finished his elementary instruction and has been made acquainted with the rules of hunting. Further he has now become a man and demonstrated that he is strong, tough and mature enough to live and survive in the wilderness. Throughout the novel this scene recurs several times in similar passages and it is hence an example of segments of action which are repeatedly placed out of their chronological order. Similar rituals are still part of the education of young hunters; for example, in Germany after shooting his first buck the young hunter is usually presented by his hunting teacher with a branch of a pine-or fir-tree covered with the buck's blood as a visual sign and symbol of his success and acceptance, and he is "blooded".

This initiation rite can be explored further in the context of recent research undertaken in U.S. hunting. Merritt Clifton in his 1990 article "Killing The Female: The

Psychology of the Hunt" quotes American writer Sydney Harris's objections to the participation of young boys in deer hunting:

My objection to deer hunting...is not so much to what is done to the deer as the what is done to the boy. For one thing it desensitizes him to cruelty; for another, it justifies whatever is done to win your antlers (the symbols of manhood) ; and for another, it turns killing into a casual, thoughtless act.¹⁰

These three things do not happen in Faulkner's description of the initiation rite. Instead just the opposite takes place. The young hunter develops a very special relationship to the wildlife, he respects it and even after its death Isaac makes proper use of the deer's meat. Isaac is not desensitized, rather the opposite, with a kill being still an exception. There is nothing like greed for trophies or the desire to prove himself in this scene, the antlers are not primarily a symbol of manhood. The whole event seems to be in harmony with nature, with a certain transcendence taking place. The wilderness gives the deer but Isaac does not take the deer for granted; he appreciates it as something holy and precious. The killing is not "a casual, thoughtless act."

In the second part of "The Old People" Faulkner describes a spontaneous hunt for a huge deer. It begins when Boon suddenly spots the deer while the hunters are already on their way home. The first thing we get to know about the animal is the extraordinary size of its antlers: "Boon cried: 'Get the dogs!. If he had a nub on his head, he had fourteen points!" This indicates a very big deer and immediately all of the hunters are excited and infected with hunting fever. In the context of this deer hunt I would like to mention the form of communication or awareness discussed in previous chapters. Sam Fathers' intimate and supernatural knowledge of the woods is striking, for he seems to know already what is going to happen, where and when the deer, or later the bear, is going to

appear again. When Major de Spain asks: "Could the dogs bring him back?" Sam's reply shows experience and telepathic omniscience, he seems to be at one with the wilderness:

'We won't need the dogs,' Sam said. If he don't hear the dogs behind him, he will circle back in here about sundown to bed.'¹¹

It turns out that he is right for Sam and Isaac both see the deer before it finally escapes.

This is another example of the hunter being very familiar with the habits of the animal he hunts. In "The Bear" Faulkner uses three different words to describe this phenomenon:

It [the bear] ran in his knowledge before he ever saw it. It loomed and towered in his dreams before he even saw the unaxed woods where it left its crooked print...It was as if the boy had already *divined* what his senses and intellect had not encompassed yet. (my italics)¹²

[Sam] "If he [the bear] gets hemmed up and has got to pick out somebody to run over, he will pick out you."

"How?" he [Isaac] said. "How will he know..." He ceased. "You mean *he already knows me*, that I aint never been to the big bottom before, aint had time to find out yet whether I..." (my italics)¹³

The boy watched him while the men knelt, measuring the tracks. There was something in Sam's face now. It was neither exultation nor joy nor hope. Later, a man, he realised what it had been, and that Sam had known all the time what had made the tracks and what had torn the throat out of the doe in the spring and killed the fawn. It had been *foreknowledge* in Sam's face that morning. (my italics)¹⁴

'To divine,' "to know already" and "foreknowledge" indicate what Révoil had already described and what Mailer is describing in his grizzly hunt (see Ch. 9), that there is a special awareness of each other's presence between hunter and hunted, that both seem to be receptive to signals undetectable for outsiders. The special feeling the hunter has for his prey is again touched on by Faulkner when he describes the atmosphere of this moment and finally says that the importance of this moment can only be properly understood by people of the wilderness:

Or perhaps that made no difference, perhaps even a city-bred man, let alone a child, could not have understood it [the mood of this moment]; perhaps only a country-bred one could comprehend loving the life he spills¹⁵

"Loving the life he spills" brings us exactly to the statement of Michael Millgate where he talks about the feeling of the hunter for "the beast he loves and kills."¹⁶ This contradiction, killing something you love, is what distinguishes Faulkner's hunting stories. There is an absence of hatred or aggression; even the later trail of destruction left by Old Ben does not cause any fanatical desire to kill, comparable to Ahab's emotions; instead we feel a milder form of anger and disappointment with the bear having "broken the rules."

Faulkner's beautiful description of the "silence" of the woods is another important aspect of this hunt. Sam and Isaac feel exactly the same, they are "one" with the surrounding woods, they enjoy and appreciate this sudden silence where everything seems to stand still:

Then once more he and Sam stood motionless together against a tremendous oak in a little thicket, and again there was nothing. There was only the soaring and somber solitude in the dim light, there was the thin murmur of the faint cold rain which had not ceased all day. Then, as if it had waited for them to find their positions and become still, the wilderness breathed again. It seemed to lean inward above them, above himself and Sam... the buck moving in it somewhere, not running yet since he had not been pursued, not frightened yet and never fearsome but just alert also as they were alert, perhaps already circling back, perhaps quite near, perhaps conscious also of the eye of the ancient immortal Umpire. Because he was just twelve then, and that morning something had happened to him: in less than a second he had ceased forever to be the child he was yesterday.¹⁷

The personified wilderness is 'breathless' for a moment, and Sam and Isaac both feel it. Nature seems to be untouched, innocent, and there are no noises except "the thin murmur of the faint cold rain which had not ceased all day," a situation very similar to the one described by Melville in *Moby-Dick* when the whale dives down during the final chase. This new depth of understanding changes Isaac, he matures, he suddenly feels and understands the woods in a different way, "he had ceased forever to be the child he was yesterday". Faulkner's description of this moment is in line with the rest of *Go Down, Moses*, a description of a man who loves these woods, has spent many hours exploring

them and who feels that they are threatened by railways and sawmills. Faulkner tries with his extensive and repeated descriptions of moments like this to make the reader feel and understand what is at stake. The wilderness is something great and majestic which cannot be treated badly, otherwise it will disappear forever. Faulkner underlines this mysticism at the very end of "The Old People" when Isaac and McCaslin both go to bed and Isaac tells his cousin about the huge deer. When McCaslin dares to doubt the appearance of the deer Isaac passionately cries: "But I saw it!" Then with one brief explanation, Faulkner closes the circle with McCaslin's reply: "Steady. I know you did. So did I. Sam took me in there once after I killed my first deer." This confession reinforces the regularly repeated ritual of hunting and that this way of hunting contains aspects which cannot be explained rationally. Isaac and his cousin McCaslin have both undergone the same treatment and education; both were taken by Sam into the same parts of the big woods and both saw the huge, magical deer. And in both cases none of the hunters tried to kill the deer, the reasons of which remain unclear. Probably Sam, McCaslin and Isaac were equally fascinated by the beauty, grace and strength of the deer. They loved the animal, they revered it and wanted it to go on living instead of killing it. One reason for this could be the difference in the kind of animal: the deer is much less aggressive than Old Ben, it does not threaten or kill its hunters and it has not left a trail of destruction; and it is graceful and beautiful. The whole encounter is in line with other scenes describing Sam Fathers' and Isaac's attitude towards wildlife: they are much more game-keepers than trophy-greedy and trigger-friendly hunters. This shows further that the beautiful moments of hunting stories do not necessarily have to include the moment or act of killing; a story can deal with the equally,

if not even more, rewarding experience of caring and maintaining the wildlife as it is. "The Old People" is in so far a different story as it tries mainly to convey a mood or atmosphere of silence, eternity, of magical woods, woods which enchant the people who are living in them, compared to "The Bear" which clearly centers on one dangerous animal.

The third and longest story, "The Bear", consists of five sections, three of which depict the four-year long annual hunt for a strong and cunning bear, called "Old Ben" who is the patriarch of these ancient woods, feared and respected by everyone. The story is told from Isaac's perspective and the boy is closely involved in every part of the hunt. Section I-III of "The Bear" is therefore also the history of the development of Isaac McCaslin and shows the educational function hunting can have for a young boy. With Isaac now sixteen years old his hunting skills and wisdom have increased significantly; he is now one of the best in tracing the bear and he has a superb knowledge of the woods. He is hence given a place in the forefront of the hunt. Compared to other examples of the hunting motif, this hunt shows several important differences. It involves a group of elderly hunters, among them Sam Fathers and Isaac. Hence there is no polarization between one man and one animal; instead the hunters gather once every year especially for this hunt, always at the same place in November. The hunters have different jobs and cultural backgrounds. Due to the regularity of the hunt - it is in its fourth year - every year various people from the area arrive at the camp to watch the spectacle. Many of the spectators have a strong personal interest in the killing of Old Ben because of the damage he has done to their crops and livestock, but do not want to participate personally because they fear the bear.

For the first time, a second animal is involved in the hunt and has a major function. The powerful and ferocious dog Lion, tamed and trained by Sam and Boon, is the only animal fearless and strong enough to bay and attack Old Ben who has until now killed several hunting dogs. The conflict is hence between a group of hunters and a huge dog on the one side and a single dangerous bear on the other side. Despite the predominance of hunters the tricky Old Ben manages until the end always to escape into the woods without even being seriously wounded. Only a few hunters had had the opportunity to shoot at him, but never succeeded in bringing him down. Involved in this hunt are descriptions of several mysterious and again telepathic encounters between Isaac and the bear, accompanied by an equally mysterious silence:

He [Isaac] only heard the drumming of the woodpecker stop short off, and knew the bear was looking at him. He never saw it. He did not know whether it was facing him from the cane or behind him. He did not move...

Then it was gone. As abruptly as it had stopped, the woodpecker's dry hammering set up again, and after a while he even believed he heard the dogs - a murmur, scarce a sound even...¹⁸

Then he saw the bear. It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. Then it moved. It crossed the glade without haste, walking for an instant into the sun's full glare and out of it, and stopped again and looked back at him across one shoulder. Then it was gone. It didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion as he had watched a fish, a huge old bass, sink back into the dark depths of its pool and vanish without even any movement of its fins.¹⁹

These passages associate Old Ben with magic and supernatural abilities; he bewitches or hypnotises Isaac, he virtually pins him down, and he himself, moving slowly, fading away, is the majestic lord of the big woods. Whenever he appears nature falls silent and everything stops until he has disappeared. Old Ben's death happens in the third of the story's five sections but by no means constitutes the end of the story, the story of Isaac continues. The killing of Old Ben is described briefly and despite the struggle being violent

and brutal, it is narrated as being one event among other; there is no extensive focusing on the act of killing.

[The bear] caught the dog in both arms, almost loverlike...he [Isaac] saw the bear, half erect, ...and then rising and rising as though it would never stop, stand erect again...The boy saw the gleam of the blade in his [Boon's] hand...his left arm under the bear's throat where Lion clung, and the glint of the knife as it rose and fell.

It fell just once. For an instant they almost resembled a piece of statutory: the clinging dog, the bear, the man stride its back, working and probing the buried blade...then the bear surged erect, raising with it the man and the dog too, and turned and still carrying the man and the dog it took two or three steps towards the woods on its hind feet as a man would have walked and crushed down. It didn't collapse, crumple. It fell all of a piece, as a tree falls...²⁰

This is the death of an animal which even in its death remains majestic and superior. The towering and erect bear is like a statue, like a tree, with time being suspended for a moment, and a short stasis before he finally falls. There is no hatred, sadism, cruelty or viciousness in this passage, it is the appropriate and acceptable end for Old Ben who for so long dominated the wilderness. This is a special and comparatively 'bloodless' moment rather than slaughter. The story itself continues to flow and Old Ben's death is not an extreme release of tension.

The last difference is that this hunt is not the only project of the hunters. Everybody is deeply involved but no one bothers with the killing of Old Ben postponed for another year; in fact, that is what most of the hunters expect to happen. Some of them have different interests or jobs and are not professional hunters, they come to hunt animals they know they can kill, as well as hunting the elusive bear, and they are neither obsessed or mad nor do they hate Old Ben. Instead they try to use their common sense and avoid unnecessary risks. Similar to *Moby-Dick* these hunters are to an astonishing degree familiar with the bear's habits (the print of the maimed foot) and strength. They often know precisely when and where the animal is likely to appear. They are so familiar with it

that both *Moby Dick* and *Old Ben* have been given a name by their hunters. As Michael Millgate argues in his analysis of *Go Down, Moses*: "In the hunting episodes the love is mainly that of the man for the beast he hunts and kills, and for the animal which assists and accompanies him in the hunt."²¹ It is not only this love but respect and admiration for the animal's power (and hence danger) and cleverness that characterize the relationship between hunter and animal in these two novels. This love develops often despite the animal being a severe threat to the community (*Old Ben*) or to its hunters (spermwhales, the white shark), the only exceptions being Ahab and Quint who both hate the animal they are hunting. *Old Ben* threatens the farmers and swampers in the surrounding area, he has over the years killed many of their domestic animals and hunting dogs. Due to this trail of destruction all hunters - like the whalers in *Moby-Dick* - know very well that they have to exercise extreme caution while approaching the bear.

Old Ben serves here as a powerful symbol for the dying, receding and suppressed wilderness. The death of the bear signifies also the end of the annual hunting camp; it will never be the same. The hunters never again use Major de Spain's house; instead they "loaded two wagons and drove two days and almost forty miles beyond any country the boy had ever seen before and lived in tents for the two weeks". From now on the rapid decline of the wilderness begins, introduced by the selling of the land to the lumber company by Major de Spain. The "new planing-mill" in Hoke's, "the tiny log-line junction" is hence a symbol for the exact opposite of *Old Ben*. The bear is unchanged for years, the big woods have been his home ever since, and he is motionless, eternally fixed in his part of the wilderness. In stark contrast is the sawing mill, an emotionless machine always

hungry for trees of the big woods, the visual manifestation of the rapid and relentless progress of civilisation and industrialisation.

Sam Fathers' responsibility for the wilderness comes to light again in the fifth section of "The Bear" and in parts of "Delta Autumn". In the final section of "The Bear" Faulkner uses a flashback to show the striking differences between now (November 1941, the year of Isaac's return to camp) and then (1879, the year in which Isaac shot his first deer). Isaac's conviction of hunting only for personal need, a direct result of Sam's teaching reappears in this flashback: "and since he had already killed his buck for this hunt and was not to shoot again unless they needed meat, he offered his gun to Ash..." However, modern civilisation in the form of extensive commercial lumbering does not seem to respect nature in this way; it pushes nature - and hence game - back without any common sense. The consequences are felt during a conversation in camp between Uncle Ike, Wyatt and Roth Edmonds:

A while ago Henry Wyatt there said how there used to be more game here. There was. So much that we even killed does. ...' Some folks still kill does,' Wyatt said. ' There wont be just one buck hanging in this bottom tomorrow night without any head to fit it.' 'I didn't say all men,' the old man said. 'I said most men' ... 'We dont kill does because if we did kill does in a few years time there wouldn't even be any bucks left to kill, Uncle Ike,' Wyatt said.²²

This conversation takes place more than fifty years after the events of "The Bear" in November 1941 when Isaac, now the oldest and most experienced hunter, returns to his old hunting grounds, the Mississippi Delta. The significant reduction of trees and life-stock in the delta within a man's lifespan is symbolized here by the scarcity of deer, "there used to be more game here," they are the visual signs of the destruction caused by reckless profit-orientated lumbering. He tries to demonstrate how much the wilderness has been pushed back and suppressed just within the seventy-two-year life-span of Isaac's life:

He [Isaac] watched, as he did each recurrent November while more than sixty of them passed, the land which he had seen change. At first there had been only the old towns along the River and the old towns along the hills, from each of which the planters with their gangs of slaves and then of hired laborers had wrested from the impenetrable jungle of water-standing cane and cypress, gum and holly and oak and ash, cotton patches which as the years passed became fields and then plantations. The paths made by deer and bear became roads and then highways, with towns in turn springing up along them and along the rivers...²³

The title "Delta Autumn" describes hence not only the season of the hunt but in a wider sense also the end of all seasons in the Delta. There will never be any hunting in the old way due to - and this is one of this novel's most important messages - the reckless enforcement of man's economic principles (commercial lumbering, extensive roadbuilding, plantations). Everything on this final hunt is spoiled. The conversations are rather nasty, everyone ridicules Isaac and nobody pays him any respect, and finally a doe is killed in breach of the hunting code.

These different and irrevocably changed conditions are one of the book's themes and has been analysed extensively by critics such as Warren Beck, Cleanth Brooks and others. The question remains in which ways hunting is used by Faulkner to disseminate his thoughts about the changes in the Delta. He uses hunting as an activity inseparable from the lives of all men in the Delta. Hunting changes in the same way in which living conditions in the Delta are changing; it was but is no longer an essential part of daily life. It can hence easily be used to depict good behaviour (Isaac's responsibility and skilful way of hunting) as well as the bad and irresponsible (Roth Edmonds' rather unskilful killing of the doe). Further it can be used to make plain the rapid (within a man's lifetime) and significant reduction of livestock (scarcity of deer and bear). Finally, hunting can reveal each man's character through his different attitude and approach to it, be it rather diffident and careful or reckless and greedy. This attitude is often revealed in conversations in the

hunting camp as well as by the actual behaviour of each hunter while hunting. Due to the length of the hunt and the intimacy of the camp, hunting provides ample space for talking and discussing many things, not all of them related to hunting. Hunting serves here as a forum for discussion, as an exchange of views and stories, and as a way of education by teaching awareness and responsibility for the wilderness.

Big Woods

The story-collection *Big Woods* was published in 1955 and contains four stories: "The Bear", "The Old People", "A Bear Hunt" and "Race at morning". Faulkner wrote a brief introduction to each story and a final epilogue. All four stories deal with hunting and the receding wilderness and had been previously published, either in *Go Down, Moses*, in short story collections or in newspapers. Analysed here are two of the introductions and the stories "A Bear Hunt" and "Race at Morning." At the beginning of the first introduction Faulkner lists the many treasures of wildlife in the big woods:

bear and deer and panthers and bison and wolves and alligators and the myriad smaller beasts,
and then relates them directly to the people living there:

and unalien men to name them too perhaps - the (themselves) nameless though recorded predecessors who built the mounds to escape the spring floods and left their meagre artifacts: the obsolete and dispossessed, dispossed by those who were dispossessed in turn because they too were obsolete: the wild Algonquian, Chickasaw and Choctaw and Natchez and Pascsgoula...²⁴

The wildlife is directly linked to the injustices and many crimes committed by the white settlers against the native habitants who were living in harmony with nature in the big woods. Faulkner amplifies this impression by reminding the reader that the Anglo-Saxons were only one group among the Spanish and French who treated the Indians poorly. He

also attacks the behaviour of the white settlers in the Mississippi delta and describes them as "the pioneer, the tall man, roaring with Protestant scripture and boiled whisky". By linking Biblical sermons with alcohol addiction, an extremely derogatory picture is painted which is in line with several other ones throughout the introduction. All of them show Faulkner's hostility towards the white man's behaviour, a hostility which is continually developed until the end with the devastating equation "profit plus regimen equals security". Security is the only thing which is really important for Americans, and they are increasingly willing to sacrifice even the wilderness for material gain, despite the fact that this is an irreversible sacrifice. By contrasting the "two-hundred-year-old tree" with its two dollar profit, which is not even from the tree itself but from an animal "whose hide was worth at the most two dollars", Faulkner continues to develop our understanding of the fate of the big woods. He describes the deeds of the Anglo-Saxon settler as

turning the earth into a howling waste from which he [the settler] would be the first to vanish, not even on the heels but synchronous with the slightly darker wild men whom he had dispossessed, because, like them, only the wilderness could feed and nourish him;²⁵

By accusing the settlers of virtually destroying their only source which "could feed and nourish" them, Faulkner prepares the ground for his final reproach: money and profit are the new gods of America, and everything is sacrificed to them because they stand for the only way to safety and wealth, values which have become more important than the preservation of a beautiful and living forest. "Profit plus regimen equals security" is stronger than the "two-hundred-year-old tree". The whole introduction can be summarized as a scathing, incessant and continuing attack against the white settler, who represents civilisation and industrialisation. Faulkner continues his argument in the introduction to the fourth story "Race at Morning."

The introduction to "The Old People" describes the hunt for a black man who escaped from a cotton plantation. He is chased by two men and during the flight bitten by a "cottonmouth mocassin", a highly venomous snake which "slashed him suddenly across the forearm with a thick, sluggish blow". He finally has to give himself up because he is too exhausted and he is brought back to the plantation. The whole story is told from the black man's perspective and in this particular context, with several surrounding hunting stories, one feels immediately reminded of a chased animal. Choosing the black man as the centre of the story enables Faulkner here to show from a different perspective the process of being chased in the big woods: suddenly the reader is with the black man in his hiding place, on the ground, in the thicket, and experiences his fear and exhaustion. Although this is not a hunt for an animal it is definitely a hunt which is typical of the big woods of Faulkner's time. Slaves often tried to escape from the horrible conditions of forced labour, and they were chased without mercy by their owners who did not want to lose precious labourers. With the detailed description of the snakebite, the way the black man tries to hide, and the way he returns to the plantation Faulkner again shows his intimate knowledge of the big woods.

The third story, "A Bear Hunt", describes an attempted bear hunt, spoiled by the chronic hiccup of one of the hunters, Lucius Hogganbeck. The story takes place many years after "The Bear" and is narrated in the first person singular by the grandson of Old General Compson. Although no real hunt takes place in this story and not a single shot is fired, the story nevertheless conveys the mood, habits and daily routine of a hunting camp, all of which have remained the same over the years. One of the hunting camp's regular servants is the black man Ash who is carefully preparing hunting gear:

...there was old Ash, looking like he always did, oiling Major's boots and setting them behind the stove and then taking up Major's rifle and beginning to load the magazine. He just looked once at my face when I come in, and went on shoving ca'tridges into the gun.²⁶

This is an example of the strict hierachy in the camp. Oiling boots and loading guns was done by black men, who also did the cooking and cleaning, the cutting of firewood, and who were responsible for setting up the camp, all of which is described by Faulkner in these stories. Another habit is the alcohol consumption, usually in the evening. Alcohol is hence one of the many remedies recommended by the hunters to Lucius to relieve his hiccup, the loud noise of which makes any participation in a hunt impossible and keeps the other hunters awake at night. The hunters are shown here as realistic and tough guys who are eager to hunt and are quickly annoyed by anything which could spoil their hunt.

The fourth narrative is a hunting story from the very first to the last line. It is a very fast hunt, a race in the early hours of the morning, this time for a buck. The story is told by a young boy, who together with an elderly man called Mister Ernest, chases the buck on horseback. The relationship between the boy and the man is exactly the same as the one between Sam Fathers and Isaac McCaslin; in fact, one is reminded of this very forcibly and Faulkner may have wanted to give an example for the regular repetition of the hunt, the camp, and the passing of the hunting lore from old hunter to young apprentice, from generation to generation.

Like "The Old People", "Race at Morning" ends with the final confrontation between the hunters, an old man and a boy, and the animal. In both cases the hunters are fascinated by the animal's grace and decide not to kill it. Minutes before the buck is finally encountered, Mister Ernest deliberately unloads his shotgun; he anticipates the coming encounter and he has already decided to fire with an unloaded rifle:

And then we seen him [the buck] again. It was the last time - a thicket, with the sun coming through a hole onto it like a searchlight. He crashed jest once; then he was standing there broadside to us, not twenty yards away, big as a statue and red as gold in the sun, and the sun sparking on the tips of his horns - they was twelve of them - so that he looked like he had twelve lighted candles branched around his head, standing there looking at us while Mister Ernest raised his gun and aimed at his neck, and the gun went, "Click. Snick-cluck. Click. Snick-cluck. Click. Snick-cluck" three times, and Mister Ernest still holding the gun aimed while the buck turned and give one long bound, the white underside of his tail like a blaze of fire, too, until the thicket and the shadows put it out; and Mister Ernest laid the gun slow and gentle back across the saddle in front of him, saying quiet and peaceful, and not much louder than jest breathing, "God dawg. God dawg." ²⁷

Again, Faulkner gives a very positive and beautiful description of the animal. The buck is "big as a statue and red as gold in the sun", he has huge antlers, twelve horns which look like "he had twelve lighted candles branched around his neck" and when he flees "the white underside of his tail [is] like a blaze of fire,..., until the thicket and the shadows put it out." The behaviour of Mister Ernest is surprising because until the moment of the encounter he chased the buck mercilessly and was not even stopped by a severe hunting accident when he fell from his horse. Despite the determination to chase the buck inexorably into unknown country, he then spares it, speaking afterwards in a "quiet and peaceful" way, a description which reminds us of Hemingway's post-kill feelings in *Green Hills of Africa*. Mister Ernest gives the explanation for this later when he and the boy have returned to the camp:

'Yes!' I[the boy] said. 'No wonder you missed that buck yestiddy, taking ideas from the very fellers that let him git away, after me and you had run Dan and the dogs durn night clean to death! Because you never even missed him! You never forgot to load that gun! You had done already unloaded it a purpose! I heard you!' 'All right, all right,' Mister Ernest said. 'Which would you rather have? His bloody head and hide on the kitchen floor yonder and half his meat in a pickup truck on the way to Yoknapatawpha County, or him with his head and hide and meat still together over yonder in that brake, waiting for next November for us to run him again?' ²⁸

This is an unusual justification of a hunter for sparing a deer, disapproving of having his "bloody head and hide on the kitchen floor yonder and half his meat in a pickup truck." "Head and hide" as well as "meat in a pickup truck" describe the changed hunting

conditions in the county, an increasing trophy greed and a reckless economic marketing of deer meat solely for profit. Both are a severe threat to the deer population and are subsequently criticized by Faulkner. Another explanation for the repeated sparing of hunted animals is given by Faulkner at the beginning of the thirty-third session with graduates at the University of Virginia. This time he was asked about the meaning hunting has to him. He replied:

The hunt was simply a symbol of pursuit. Most of anyone's life is a pursuit of something. That is, the only alternative to life is immobility, which is death. This was a symbolization of the pursuit which is a normal part of anyone's life, while he stays alive, told in terms which were familiar to me and dramatic to me. The protagonist could have been anything else besides that bear. I simply told a story which was a natural, normal part of anyone's life in familiar and to me interesting terms without any deliberate intent to put symbolism in it. I was simply telling something which was in this case the child - the need, the compulsion of the child to adjust to the adult world. It's how he does it, how he survives it, whether he is destroyed by trying to adjust to the adult world or whether despite his small size he does adjust within his capacity. And always to learn something, to learn something of - not only to pursue but to overtake, and then to have the compassion not to destroy, to catch, to touch, and then let go because then tomorrow you can pursue again. If you destroy it, what you caught, then it's gone, it's finished. And that to me is sometimes the greater part of valor but always it's the greater part of pleasure, not to destroy what you have pursued. The pursuit is the thing, not the reward, not the gain.²⁹

"Not to destroy what you have pursued" is exactly what some of Faulkner's hunting characters stand for. Sam Fathers, Isaac McCaslin, Mister Ernest and the boy, all feel that "The pursuit is the thing, not the reward, not the gain" and for them it is always "the greater part of pleasure" "not to destroy, to catch and then let go" because next November "you can pursue again". For all of these characters love, admiration, even adoration of the hunted animal are of equal importance to the pleasure of pursuing, and this worry about the dying wilderness constitutes the major difference between Faulkner's hunting texts and most of the other texts of this study.

Notes

- 1) Faulkner, William *Go Down, Moses*, p.236
- 2) *ibid.*, p.164
- 3) *ibid.*, pp. 164, 165
- 4) Beck, Warren *Faulkner*, p.376
- 5) Faulkner, p.184
- 6) *ibid.*, p.300
- 7) *ibid.*, pp.169,170
- 8) *ibid.*, pp. 157-159
- 9) *ibid.*, p.171
- 10) Clifton, Merritt "Killing The Female: The Psychology of the Hunt," in *The Animals' Agenda*, p. 30
- 11) *ibid.*, p.172
- 12) Faulkner, p.185
- 13) *ibid.*, p. 193
- 14) *ibid.*, p.206
- 15) *ibid.*, p.175
- 16) Millgate, Michael *The Achievement of William Faulkner*, p.204
- 17) *ibid.*, p.174, 175
- 18) Faulkner, pp. 194, 195
- 19) *ibid.*, pp. 200, 201
- 20) *ibid.*, pp. 230, 231
- 21) Millgate, p. 204
- 22) Faulkner, p.331
- 23) *ibid.*, p.324
- 24) Faulkner, William *Big Woods*, p.5
- 25) *ibid.*, p.7
- 26) *ibid.*, p.162
- 27) *ibid.*, p. 190, 191
- 28) *ibid.*, p. 197
- 29) Blotner, J.L. and Gwyny, F.L. (eds), *Faulkner in the University*, pp. 271, 272

9. MENTALLY DERANGED: MAILER'S GRIZZLYHUNT

Norman Mailer's novel *Why are we in Vietnam?* appeared in 1967, two years after the beginning of the Vietnam War (1965-73). Although the political implications of this text are clear from the title, as well as from the historical context in which the text was published, it is not only an anti-war novel but also an anti-hunting story, and as such it will be analysed as showing the similarities and differences between this and other American hunting stories.

The text is divided into eleven short preambles, entitled "Intro Beep", each of which is then followed by a longer chapter. Most of the Intro Beeps end by taking the reader, after some excursions, back to the safari in Alaska. The text as a whole takes the form of a radio broadcast, invented by an eighteen-year old Texan disc-jockey sitting "at the dinner table in the Dallas ass manse". He is the fulcrum of the story and is referred to throughout the story as D.J.. Together with his best friend Tex Hyde he has to leave for Vietnam on the next day. The story itself progresses rapidly in an uninterrupted stream-of-consciousness technique, with very little dialogue.

Mailer's characters use throughout the novel an obscene and often scatological vocabulary and the reader gets the impression of a rough, emotionless, male dominated and aggressive world, in which there is no place for weakness, tenderness, humanity or emotion, and which is hence the ideal place for brutality and atrocities. With the exception of the description of the Arctic lights or Aurora Borealis in the last chapter, everything and everybody in the novel is displayed in a negative and often morally repulsive manner. Anti-semitism and racism are also easy to locate, for expressions like "New York Jew ass

Banker", "Yankee ass Jew circumcised prick", "Harlem nigger" and "nigger ass" can be found throughout the text. The narrator does not even shrink back from ridiculing the Jewish therapist of D.J.'s mother by describing how he suddenly charges three times the usual fee for the session, a clear allusion to the reputation of Jews as usurers. Mailer's anti-semitism and racism adds further to the overwhelming impression of negativity which the text provides.

John W. Aldridge in his essay "From Vietnam to Obscenity" calls the text "very probably the most obscene novel ever published in this country", and states that the book has two contradictory sides: "a verbal surface of grinning, foulmouthed iconoclasm and a concealed subtle, even murderous intent."¹ This "murderous intent" is demonstrated via hunting, via an activity which was extremely familiar and appealed to many Americans. With obscenity being everywhere in the text, the question about what were Mailer's intentions with this hitherto little employed stylistic device remains. Aldridge argues that

if the language is obscenity of a particularly violent and imaginative sort, it is obscenity used with a clearly radical moral intention: to help alleviate the psychological pressures that have driven us to commit the atrocity of Vietnam.²

"Psychological pressures" drive most of the U.S. hunters; they certainly push Ahab, Quint, Macomber, as well as Rusty and M.A. Pete, all of them stand for what Aldridge calls the "rather banal retelling of the classic American mythic tale of quest, initiation and ultimate absolution". And "ultimate absolution" can only be achieved through killing, whether it is animals or Vietnamese civilians. Only when these hunters return with record trophies can they feel accepted within their society.

It is interesting to consider why Mailer chose hunting as his means demonstrating his views about American involvement in Vietnam. Modern hunting in this novel is an

activity which confers power on the hunters, a kind of power which they presumably cannot get while sitting at a desk in their company office. Due to their heavy armour, Mailer spends the whole chapter five on "a rundown on the guns" which the hunters take with them; the reader feels much more reminded of an arsenal of army artillery than about hunting rifles, similar to the killing frenzies in Cooper's *The Pioneers*. Their "military superiority" in which they even use a helicopter to attack a grizzly, is overwhelming. Every hunter is rich and well equipped with hunting gear, including several of the most powerful, modern rifles. The group can even afford to hunt by helicopter. The whole hunting procedure bears a remarkable similarity to the one presented in Hemingway's "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber": the hunters come from far away, they hire a professional hunter as a guide, they use sophisticated technical equipment, they are eager to challenge and kill various very dangerous animals, and they want to return with impressive trophies. These points are typical of a modern big-game safari. In total a picture emerges which makes modern hunting seem look like modern warfare, very well equipped and planned like a major military operation. In addition each killing in the text is described as an emotionless act, a rather neutral technical process. It goes without saying that whenever an animal appears it is killed. Mailer describes frequently the suffering of the animals, but nowhere does he describe the emotions of a hunter while he is killing; the hunters do not feel anything when they are killing; like a soldier they emerge as killing machines. In presenting this grim picture Mailer's text is, in an extreme form, in line with many other hunting stories.

Similar to Cooper's *The Pioneers*, the novel mentions a wide variety of animals, such as caribou, mountain goats, cranes, moose-deer, wolves, "lemmings and voles,

foxes", and "grizzer". With only one exception, a very old caribou, the hunters kill every animal they encounter, no matter whether or not they want it as a trophy and no matter whether it is edible or not. They do not have to hunt for food nor do they even care to dress or transport the dead animal; this is always done by the hunting guides and with the help of the helicopter. This fanatical and insatiable craving for killing is as equally unnecessary and senseless as one of the killing frenzies described in *The Pioneers*.

That killing, both by hunters and soldiers, is the novel's most important point, becomes clear within its first paragraph:

...here is D.J. the friendLee voice at your service...I've gone too long, it is too late to tell my tale...let him declare there's blood on my dick and D.J. Dicktor Doc Dick and Jek has got the bloods, and has animal murder, out out damn fart, and murder of the soldierest sort, cold was my hand and hot³

"Animal murder" and "murder of the soldierest sort", or big-game safari versus Vietnam war is one of the topics of the text, yet nowhere except in the novel's title and at the end of the text reference is made to Vietnam. Mailer then introduces several of the characters by describing their sexual perversions, many of which have to do with blood or killing. He uses a technique of gradually releasing more and more details about each character, all of which fit into a certain framework. Altogether they provide a shocking analysis of American society. The first mention of the hunt itself is made at the end of the second chapter:

Therefore, attention America to how Rusty shapes up in a contest against a man who is not an asshole - to wit, Mr. Luke Fellinka, head guide and hunter extraordinaire for the Moe Henry and Obungekat Safari Group on a hunting trip up in Brooks Range, north of Arctic Circle, Alaska. Yeah, follow along on this. Get your head clear. Get ready. Followers of D.J. are going to be hung on Alaska for a lot of high-grade genius rating consciousness now, because Rusty is the most competitve prick there is, and Big Luke is a sweet old bastard, who's so tough that old grizzly bears come up and kiss his ass. Yeah.⁴

"Contest" and "competitive" are the keywords for an understanding of this venture, organized in a rather business-like way. The contest will take place between Rusty, who, together with "his ilk is hard-working" and who "can't bear the sight of a man who ever broke under pressure", and Big Luke Fellinka, the experienced hunting guide and "hunter extraordinaire" who is "primus inter pares". Rusty, who admits that

'you got to be a nut about competition. That's the way. You got to be so dominated by a desire to win that if you was to squat down on the line and there facing you was Jesus Christ, you would just tip your head once and say, 'J.C., I have to give you fair warning that I'm here to do my best to go right through your hole,'⁵

has only a "simple" problem, "he can't begin to consider how to go back without [having killed] a bear." Rusty cannot "present himself at 4C and P [his company] with a deer's head and no bear". Later in the text Mailer writes about Rusty that "if he don't get a bear now, he can transfer to Japan". Like Francis Macomber, Rusty needs a record trophy, nothing else will do. This pressure to find, and kill, a "grizzer" is so great that the hunters even "push on Luke to go out tracking for bear, to push any direction into the wind down trails through woods, fuck the cautions...". This is not only bad hunting behaviour, it can be suicidal, taking into account how dangerous grizzlies are.

Although Mailer prepares carefully the ground for the contest between Rusty and Big Luke it actually never takes place; instead Mailer shows how preposterous Rusty's boasting about worldwide hunting experience is:

[the pilot] put Rusty out first at Rusty's demand, Rusty going down the winch, that two hundred yards' separation from the bear not very much when you're waiting for the guide...so there was Rusty...all alone when the bear instead of deciding to meander away from the helicopter and the man...came bearing instead into them with a roar...the Cop jammed his whirlybird right down on a line toward the bear charging so near overhead that the bear reached up with his paws and took a mighty swipe, at which point Rusty got a shot off, a decent shot, decent enough to miss the copter by as much as it missed the bear, and sound of the shot, Old Grizzer split ass for the woods, while Cop-bird whirlybird came back and picked up Old Rust-Old Zinc White ex Rusty Jethroe - even the shit hue in his eyes pale as junket...Discussion that night. Rusty was sick.⁶

This is a humiliating experience for Rusty who is suddenly "Zinc White", with "his eyes pale", and who cannot hit a grizzly from less than two hundred yards. Mailer's underlying irony, it is a "decent" shot which missed "the copter by as much as it missed the bear", that is it was a serious miss, a blunder, amplifies the humiliation and derision of the man who "can't bear the sight of a man who broke under pressure". Now he himself has failed to perform well under pressure, as a result of which he is "sick". The whole scene is very similar to the events in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber"; first the client runs away, then he tries again to prove his bravery. Hence as soon as Rusty realizes that it might be possible that they are not going to encounter a "grizzer", he is virtually forced to take his son D.J., leave the safety and protection of the hunting guides, and try on his own to track and kill a grizzly.

The greater part of the text describes this grizzly and caribou-hunt in the state of Alaska, a so-called "Arctic-Safari", taking place in and around the Brooks Mountain Range of Alaska. The time of the year is a week in early September. Four men come up from Texas for a seven-day guided hunting trip in the mountainous forests of the most northerly part of the United States. This kind of game hunting is shown to be so popular that the hunters have to reserve an "Alaskan guide eighteen month in advance", again an indirect criticism of American society which fancies this kind of 'bloodsport' so much. No women take part in this hunt; as usual the hunters are 'wifeless' during the hunt. However, sexuality, or perverse fantasies, are frequently described by Mailer, and so this is a text in which women, such as Rusty's wife or D.J.'s girl friend, or sexual fantasies, are constantly present. Sexuality plays an exceptionally important role in this hunting story because all hunters have unfulfilled sexual wishes or fantasies, combined with an unusually strong

aggressive and destructive instinct. Their only outlet to release this pressure is hunting and slaughtering, with killing instead of talking as their way of coping with this problem.

In contrast to all other hunting stories, *Why are we in Vietnam?* contains several lengthy descriptions of dying animals. Mailer does not shrink from focusing on the very moment of hunting which is usually excluded in hunting texts. The first animal to be killed is a wolf, shot by Tex, followed by the initiation rite, an event which is analysed below. Mailer's disgust at killing becomes clear early in the text when he characterizes the death of the wolf with these words:

Anyway the whole fucking kill was unaesthetic, cause a 180-grain bullet which lets a wolf walk away after hitting him must hit no closer than a red-hot poker along his ass. Fact, that's what on examination the first shot proved itself to be, for the weight and hard nose of the bullet (bought to penetrate a grizzly hide) went right through the wolf's two legs, breaking only one. Well this fine critique ain't just piss grapes from D.J., because proof is that he is now repeating Tex Hyde's very own critique of his own shot. 'If I hadn't been fever ass,' says Tex, 'I'd have taken the time and got the 100-grain soft nose magazine into Winnie, and I could have torn a hunk of old Wolf right out of his heart so he didn't have to suffer and we didn't have to chase. I can hit *anything* with the hundred grain. That was a fink and fuckup kill, D.J.'(Mailer's emphasis)⁷

The whole event was a "fuckup kill" because Tex, and, as is shown later, Pete as well, is an inexperienced clumsy hunting novice. Mailer describes them as nothing else but smug bunglers. They are bad shots and both fail to kill the animal with a single shot. Tex knows that "if [he] hadn't been fever ass", and if he had chosen the right ammunition, the wolf would not have had to suffer.

M.A. Pete is the next to kill an animal, this time a caribou. Again the animal is only injured with the first shot and has then to be tracked down with the help of the helicopter. This is an unfair way of chasing, similar to the hunting of buffalos from a car in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber". The animal has no chance to escape, a chance which it would normally have in mountainous terrain such as this. The notion of fairness or fairplay

is not only ridiculed, it is completely absent. No one of the hunters has any desire to be fair to the game, they are not even thinking about how unfair the whole hunt is. Obviously Big Luke disapproves of this, he detests the use of the helicopter:

Big Luke now got his kicks with the helicopter. He was forever enough of a pro not to use it with real hunters, no, man, but he had us, gaggle of goose fat and asshole, killers of bile-soaked venison, so the rest of the hunt, all next seven days he gave what was secretly wanted, which was helicopter heaven, and it was curious shit, all rules and regulations, for of course we did not hunt from the air, no freakmen from TV land us, but rather noble Dallasassians, so we broke open a war between us and the animals...⁸

D.J. disqualifies himself and the rest of the group, they are not "real hunters"; instead he belittles the group as a "gaggle of goose fat and asshole, killers of bile-soaked venison", a group which is going to "open a war between [them] and the animals". Mailer's use of the word "war" as well as the whole action itself directs the reader's mind to associations of jungle or guerilla warfare in Vietnam rather than leisure time hunting. Big Luke on the other hand has to compromise and overcome his principles; he has to give his clients "what was secretly wanted, which was helicopter heaven", the most convenient and the least exhausting way of slaughtering animals. With that Mailer also questions Big Luke's credibility and ridicules the whole procedure of an "Arctic-Safari", for the result of the use of the helicopter is a killing frenzy similar to the one described in Cooper's *The Pioneers*:

...that copter was dividing us up, carrying us here, there, every which spot, shooting in parties of two and four, guide and guest, or two guides, two guests, and it was a haul of big-ass game getting, for among the five of us safari payers we had a limit of twenty-five assorted grizzly, moose, ram, goat and caribou, and there was animal steaks being cut and packed all over the place...⁹

Here Mailer gives us the image of a supermarket, when you are a "safari payer" you will find "animal steaks being cut and packed all over the place". This is another of the many negative comparisons Mailer uses to devalue this kind of slaughtering; the moment you

have payed you automatically get the right to kill, hence animal lives are just a question of money.

As with the wolf before, the caribou and every other animal is going to die slowly and painfully; it is always injured by a bad shot first, and killed later:

...and there is M.A. Pete stepping out gingerly from the copter, like, man, he's *close* to the caribou, and got his cannon with him, and just as Old Buck Broken Ass gets to the top of his little cliff, hopping slow on three legs, M.A. Pete sends a Nitro Express up into his gut from the rear, right into the red mask of the old wound and that animal does a Geländesprung right into the air as if his spine is illumined in incandescence, and somersaults in the air, and falls twenty feet from the cliff, smashing one set of antlers off his head (to be wired on later, nothing other) and the .600 900-grain blasted through his intestines, stomach, pancreas, gallbladder, liver and lungs, and left a hole to put your arm in, all your arm, up to the shoulder if you are not squeamish, entrail swimmer, and then bullet breaking, some of the fragments ripped into the brain and out the head, leaving it scarred to the point where M.A. Pete could claim (and believe) two years later that the scars on the mouth and face of his deer trophy were the fighting marks of a big buck caribou fighter; other fragments sawed through the ribs of the lungs, and deteriorated like buckshot in the forequarter. Big Luke brought that animal back to feed us. Its guts, belly and lungs were one old jelly flung together by the bullets, one blood pudding of a cocktail vibrated into total promiscuity by the twenty-foot fall down the rocks. Yes, prince, yes, Big Luke got the head off, and rescued the loose antler, and gutted the entrails, dressed the meat to clean fragments...(Mailer's emphasis)¹⁰

For the first time in the novel the reader is taken close to, or nearly into, the animal, and s/he can suddenly understand the terrible pain inflicted upon the caribou by the bullet, a bullet so powerful that it "left a hole to put your arm in". Pete has nothing to do for this kill, the caribou is just presented to him and no hunting skills whatsoever are demanded; the only thing he has to do is to pull the trigger. Afterwards it is Big Luke who dresses the animal; M.A. Pete is instead going to "claim (and believe) two years later that the scars on the mouth and face of his deer trophy were the fighting marks of a big buck caribou fighter", with Pete seriously pretending to have been the fighter himself. The whole episode shows terrible hypocrisy, and reveals a fragile character and a weakness which is in line with the earlier description of Pete as a career greedy sycophant:

Pete has grown up with a nice Savage 99 lever action .250 deer gun, and he runs and freezes his own scared hot shit in a suburban rental frozen food locker when he gets the invitation to Alaska from Rusty, for that means a two- to five-year expediting of his dangerously dull slick as owl shit ascent of the corporation ladder provided he can make it on this Yukon expedition.¹¹

Pete is scared and reluctant to go, but he has to join if he wants to ascent "the corporation ladder". It is either "kill or perish". As a consequence of this tremendous pressure within the group Pete "did not sleep too well", he suffers nightmares and has "visions of a grizzly bearing down on him with a wild cry like a niggerwoman gone ape with a butcher knife". What is important is that Pete does not pull out. Like Macomber this is what he would like to do, but it is also what he cannot do, because everybody expects him to stay and to undergo this "challenge" time and again, with the main principle being not to show any weakness or fear. It is interesting to remember here that Captain Ahab suffers nightmares too. (see. Ch. 4)

Mailer carefully prepares the ground for his attack on killing with a preceding passage which bears many similarities to the one describing Macomber's reluctance to track the injured lion:

...in the distance, up along a thousand yards, was what looked to be the caribou, yes, it was, and through the field glasses Big Luke, watching, shook his head. 'You hit him an outside rump shot, Pete.' 'Then he'll be all right?' 'No, impact seems to have broke his leg or maybe shocked his spine. He's using only one hind leg. Walking not much faster than us. That's bad. We can't leave him.' 'Say', said Pete, trying to shift the rump of the subject, 'why'd leave that buck leave timber?' 'Didn't want to die in those woods. Sometimes you get a buck will cross three open ridgelines to get into the particular woods where he wants to hide or give it up.' 'Then he ain't too bad if he can move that much.' 'He', said Big Luke, 'is bad enough that we got to get him.'¹²

Clearly Pete does not fear tracking the caribou as much as Macomber fears moving close to the lion, but what this passage shows once more is bad hunting behaviour, neglecting the injured animal, and disobeying the hunting code's rule to relieve an animal from suffering as soon as possible. And all this is in addition to Pete's bad shooting skills and his reluctance to track the caribou in the first instance. The animal is "in the distance", it has

withdrawn into "those woods", and it is the hunting guide who makes sure that the injured animal is tracked down and killed. Like Hemingway's professional hunter Robert Wilson, Big Luke represents similar attitudes concerning the strictness of hunting rules. The following excerpt demonstrates how important it is for Big Luke not to let an animal suffer unnecessarily. Big Luke's tour guide coordinator has just picked up the group from the airport and explains now what is happening:

... we have the best guide in Alaska, and the finest clientele. We're here to take you around and give you *proper* hunting. We're not in competition with the counters. There are counters out in that wilderness, hunters of medium income (and medium ability to stick the muzzles of their rifles into a muddy piece of ground) who have nonetheless saved their pennies to come here - it's the experience of a lifetime for them, and as you know, sir, the experience of a lifetime excites *greed* in the common man and a terror of being cheated. So they are out to get everything they can. They count every last pelt, they'll twist the tape measuring a Dall's horn to get an extra quarter of an inch on the length of it, they'll use handload cartridges make you gasp - it's a wonder simple steel can stand it - they hunt from four in the morning to midnight before they get back to camp, up at four again, they bring out every last piece of meat they can tote, or they take the head and leave the flesh, imagine! and they maim, Mr. Jethroe, they maim game all over the damn place and then let them suffer. We ain't like that. ... Because we offer hunting which is reasonable, decent in risk, fair to the game, and not utterly deprived of comfort. (Mailer's emphasis)¹³

This attitude towards hunting is similar to the one of Sam Fathers and Robert Wilson; a strict adherence to the hunting code is expected from every participant. Excessive greed for trophies such as getting "an extra quarter of an inch on the length of it", as well as cruel behaviour and unnecessary suffering, "they maim game all over the place and then let them suffer", are detested and rejected by the professional hunters. To be "fair to the game" is what characterizes the real woodsman and what constitutes "proper hunting". Mailer describes in this text the exact opposite of fair and proper hunting, "animal murder" at its worst, no moment of real and fair competition or fighting takes place, only cheating, maiming, power games and hypocrisy among the hunters.

Only a short time later the first animal, a wolf, is killed by Tex who needs three shots to finish the job. With the first one he hits the guts, the second is a miss and only the

third finally brings the wolf down. The first description Mailer gives of the wolf is one of innocence and beauty; it is clearly visible and totally unprotected:

a wolf standing and pointing a half mile above the timber, just standing there and studying the dawn in a wolf silence like he had come to some conclusion about the problems of life and occupation,..

This description of stasis and contemplation is then brutally contrasted:

Tex took him down with a shot into the gut...¹⁴

What happens then bears a superficial similarity to the initiation of Isaac McCaslin in Faulkner's "The Bear:"

The look on Big Luke's face was amiable like any boy who could hit a wolf at four hundred yards was not totally undeserving of guided service. Well, he got down and gave us each a cup of blood to drink and that was a taste of fish, odd enough, and salt, near to oyster sauce and then the taste of wild meat like an eye looking at you in the center of a midnight fire, and D.J. was on with the blood, he was half-sick having watched what Tex had done, like his own girl had been fucked in front of him and better, since he had had private plans to show Tex what real shooting might be, and here was Tex, King Front Sight Indian Hunter, Killer of Wolves.¹⁵

Like Isaac, the young men are "blooded", initiated into manhood after Tex killed his first animal. But D.J. feels disgust and envy, he "had had private plans to show Tex what real shooting might be". D.J. wants already, at this early stage of the safari, to show off, to prove he is better, and with this behaviour he falls into the same category as his father Rusty who sees hunting as a competition about which "you got to be a nut". This initiation is an aggressive and revolting experience, with no respect or admiration for the wildlife at all. Isaac's initiation in "The Bear" is a moving experience, a kind of transcendence or ceremony to worship nature.

One important point emerges here: Mailer links hunting and the hunter directly with sex, an area which is totally excluded from all other hunting stories. D.J. has disgusting sexual associations after having watched this kill, for he is "half-sick having

watched what Tex had done, like his own girl friend had been fucked in front of him". Killing arouses feelings of nausea and disgust in D.J.; he had planned everything in a different way, he had expected a different experience. He suddenly also feels inferior to Tex, for he sees his best friend now as "King Front Sight Indian Hunter, [successful] Killer of Wolves". Killing is what defines the status within this group. Mailer continues to describe D.J.'s sexual feelings when D.J. cannot sleep at night because he is so desperate to encounter a grizzly:

it's D.J. on the edge of masturbating in the Alaska night, with the excitement of going for griz in the morning, and holding off, holding off, cause a handful of spit on a sixteen-year-old dick puts a worm on the trigger and you slip off your shot.¹⁶

"Going for griz in the morning" equals sexual excitement, and D.J. cannot wait until he gets his chance to prove himself. It is this chance which then leads to the split between D.J. and his father, when they encounter a huge grizzly, because D.J. kills the grizzly, but when they return to the camp Rusty cannot admit this and unjustly claims to have killed it. Mailer uses the attack on Rusty and D.J. by a huge grizzly as another opportunity to deride their notion of masculinity and bravery:

'Never heard of a grizzer charging like that,' said Rusty's voice, weak as piss over pebbles...They are waiting for the other to be first to say, 'Let us go back to camp'... they [Rusty and D.J.] are close to puking they are so scared. D.J. feels shit yellow between his toes, his bowels slosh internal bilge, every bit of hard shit in him has broken down to squirts like spit and dishwater rumblings.¹⁷

Mailer tries here to describe the natural feeling of fear and anxiety, a feeling which both Rusty and D.J. have, but which both of them are suppressing; instead they are "waiting for the other" to admit 'I don't enjoy this anymore, I simply want to go home'. But the rules of their notion of masculinity do not allow any weakness; the hunter cannot withdraw even if

"every bit of hard shit in him has broken down". Here we can feel the destructive "psychological pressures" which Aldridge mentions in his essay.¹⁸

During the forthcoming hunting events Mailer employs again a military vocabulary, for he talks several times about "Big Luke General Fellinka", making "his military disposition". This plan is then thwarted by the solo trip of Tex and D.J. who leave the camp at night and decide to find a grizzly on their own. This trip is very similar to the one Isaac undertakes in "The Bear" in order to find Old Ben. Tex and D.J. have first to divest themselves of all their hunting gear:

[Tex] gets the purification ceremony straight in his head, and announces to D.J. that they gonna wrap their weapons and lash them in a tree...They each know even as he says it that this is how you get the fear, shit, disgust and mixed shit tapeworm out of fucked-up guts and overcharged nerves. ...No sleeping bags. No food. No compass. ...About the time they cache all belongings, they own clean fear now, cause they going to live off the land.¹⁹

"Purification" is what is going to happen to Tex and D.J., they suddenly undergo a significant change. Without any weapons and equipment, they are off into an animal kingdom which is totally different from what they have encountered before. Now they see various animals such as a "pale pink fox go springing through the snow", "squirrels dart from the wood", as well as moose and cranes. Only now do they realise that "that meadow is beautiful", and they are able to laugh at each other; the first funny situation in the text so far. Mailer juxtaposes and contrasts this episode, which occupies two long chapters, with the brutality and destruction of the safari itself. The contrast consists of the inferior and rather sick state of the mind of the hunters and the sudden experience of animal and landscape beauty without any weapons and hunting. It is the same problem as in most of the other American hunting stories: civilisation versus wilderness. Even such a remote and hostile country such as Alaska has already been invaded by leisure time hunters. Mailer

describes in the beginning the increasing competition between safari operators, a development from which Big Luke's company is suffering, and from which the animals are also suffering, for Big Ollie, the Indian hunting guide notices that "animal no wild no more, now crazy". Aldridge aptly states that

we come to understand long before this that the obvious symbolism of the heavy weaponry, helicopters, guerilla tactics, and the terrible plight of the animals is finally important to Mailer not because it pertains to the boys or pantomimes Vietnam but because it dramatizes the plight of the hunters. Their sickness of soul is the issue that interests him above all else. Around it he builds his case study of the individual and national psychosis which, in its most virulent pathological extension, seems to him to have created the Vietnam war.²⁰

This psychosis affects even the church and Mailer finishes the novel with a scathing attack on religion which, like Father Mapple in *Moby-Dick*, gives its blessing either to animal slaughter or to the armed forces. Even the highest moral authority, God, suddenly gets affected by the hunting fever and becomes a triggerfriendly beast:

For the lights were talking to them [Tex and D.J.], and they were going with it, near to, the lights were saying that there was something up here, and it was really here, yeah, God was here, and He was real and no man was He, but a beast, some beast of a giant jaw and cavernous mouth with a full cave's breath and fangs, and secret call: come to me....for God was a beast, not a man, and God said, "Go out and kill - fulfill my will, go and kill",...and the deep beast whispering Fulfill my will, go forth and kill...²¹

Mailer shows here that the virus of killing has reached all parts of American society, even the church, which he accuses of hypocrisy. He reduces God to a voracious monster, trying to bedevil the two youngsters, to convert them into killers, so that they can "fulfill his will" - and kill.

The second half of *Why are we in Vietnam?* is dominated by the bear or "grizzer", no matter whether he is present or absent. The vision of the huge, dark and suddenly attacking grizzly hovers over Rusty, Tex and D.J., dominating their lives. The grizzly sets a task, the mastering of which is absolutely essential for the future of these hunters. The

bear sets the tracks which the hunters have to follow, and one often gets the impression that these tracks are set deliberately, intentionally, they are a message sent to the hunter with some hunters receiving these messages more easily than others. Not only in this text but in other hunting stories as well, the hunters seem to have a special sense, a supernatural awareness for the presence of an animal, usually a particular animal, and usually a very dangerous one. They seem to smell it, and the novelist tries to convey this feeling to the reader, a feeling which cannot be explained rationally and which hence creates an aura of mysticism. There seems to be a mutual relationship, an unspoken agreement, between hunter and prey, between the animal murderer and his target, between the pursuer and a living, huge and sinister threat. This seems also to be the case with Faulkner's Old Ben, a bear who is a master in leading young Isaac deeper and deeper into the woods. The same applies to Melville's Moby Dick, who seems to time his appearances in just the way that Ahab is able to follow him. Isaac and Ahab are both able to "sense" the animal in a way no one else can. The hunters move into the animal's terrain, they are crossing the boundary, and they follow the animal, not vice-versa. This sort of "one-way" communication can be described as the hunter's ability to figure out or to know in advance where the animal is likely to "surface" next.

In Mailer's text the grizzly emerges as a monster, similar to Benchley's white shark, and the hunters' response, as well as their state of mind, depends on their equipment. As soon as either Tex and D.J. or Isaac have taken off their compass and guns, the situation changes completely. Tex and D.J. are so scarred, they quickly climb up trees whenever they sense the presence of a bear, and Isaac's state of mind has changed as well, he is suddenly aware of Old Ben's presence, he feels that he is watched by the bear although he

cannot watch the bear. Stripping off their equipment, the sudden feeling of being unprotected, leads to a different state of mind, to a sort of hyper-awareness. Aldridge describes the importance of this change as follows:

But he [D.J.] and Tex are also telepathically connected with the animals. They find that by sending out intense psychic voltages of murder they can frighten away a white wolf which threatens them, and a moment later they observe the destructive effect their message has had on his courage when he ineffectually fights off an attacking eagle. The boys too achieve harmony with the elemental forces of life, and during a long night while they lie awake under the electric blaze of the aurora borealis, they pass through the locks of homosexually homicidal impulses toward each other. They have hung together on the edge of a conflict between sexually possessing each other and killing each other.²²

In several passages of *Why are we in Vietnam?* Mailer uses the word telepathy,²³ but he uses other expressions as well, expressions which are related to sensing something distant, something vague but powerful and, of course, threatening. What characterizes all these expressions is that something is near but cannot be located precisely, such as "the touch of danger"; "grizzer could be anywhere near, is ozone bubble in your nose"; [Rusty and D.J.] "believe in man-bear radar" (again Mailer uses war vocabulary); "communes of spookiness...we are on the track of something"; "the stone ice telepathic hollow from the bowels of the earth", (something is coming up from an area where we have no access to, the notion of the uncanny); [the wolf] can't see, but can sense...He can't determine. Animal murder is near. (again something is "near" but cannot be located precisely); "the message is simple...bear is nearby"; "something in the radiance of the north went into them [Tex and D.J.], they did not know, they just knew telepathy was on them". The notion of the uncanny can be clearly felt, a notion which produces constant tension, fear, friction, and obviously suspense. It is also worth noticing that the telepathy in Mailer's text is manifold, one is happening between Tex and D.J., another one between the youngsters and the lights

and the earth, and a third one takes place between the hunters, in particular Rusty and D.J., and the grizzlies.

Why are we in Vietnam? operates at least on two levels, both of which are similar to those of Cooper's *The Pioneers*. On a literal level *Why are we in Vietnam?* is 'just' a hunting story, on an allegorical level it makes the reader think about possible metaphorical interpretations of the text, a process which is encouraged by the words "we" and "Vietnam" in the book's title. It is not difficult to perceive the whole hunting expedition in a mountainous remote area as a metaphor for a reconnaissance platoon in the Vietnamese jungle, with the animals standing for civilians, unnecessarily slaughtered by young men with no war experience at all; and American society displayed as one where you have to come back as a victor with huge trophies, otherwise you are not accepted. A third level could include a thorough criticism of American society, a society which supported to send an armed force to Vietnam, and a society which includes people like Rusty or Pete, hypocrites and sycophants eager for social success at any price. This society is so smug, inert and wealthy that a writer can even dare to provoke it with extreme obscenities. It can hence be said that Mailer uses hunting in this text as an allegory or a vehicle for a savage criticism of American society.

Notes

- 1) Aldridge, Robert "From Vietnam to Obscenity", in Lucid, Robert F. *Norman Mailer The Man and his Work*, p. 181
- 2) *ibid.*, p. 188
- 3) Mailer, Norman *Why Are We In Vietnam?*, p. 7
- 4) *ibid.*, p. 38
- 5) *ibid.*, p. 41
- 6) *ibid.*, p. 106
- 7) *ibid.*, p. 79
- 8) *ibid.*, pp. 98, 99
- 9) *ibid.*, p. 100
- 10) *ibid.*, pp. 97, 98
- 11) *ibid.*, p. 80
- 12) *ibid.*, p. 95
- 13) *ibid.*, p. 64
- 14) *ibid.*, p. 68
- 15) *ibid.*, p. 69
- 16) *ibid.*, p. 116
- 17) *ibid.*, p. 142
- 18) Aldridge, in Lucid, R.F., p. 188
- 19) *ibid.*, pp. 175, 176
- 20) Aldridge, in Lucid, R.F. p. 185
- 21) Mailer, pp. 202-204
- 22) Aldridge, in Lucid, R.F. p. 191
- 23) Mailer, pp. 128, 129; 135; 159; 181; 187; 194; 204

10. SIMPLY HORRIFYING: BENCHLEY'S JAWS

Peter Benchley's "horror-thriller" or "novel of relentless terror", as it was described on the cover blurb, was first published in February 1974. It was a huge commercial success, in particular after its filming by Steven Spielberg, and it went through thirty-four printings by August 1975. When analysing this story one has to bear in mind that the author's main intention is to create a feeling of horror, and to entertain. There is no outstanding or special "message" in this novel and it is not the reflection of a particular period or event in the history of the United States. However, it is a hunting story, and one which is in its conception as well as in many of its components similar to the stories dealt with so far.

Compared to all the previously analysed texts *Jaws* is totally different in style, descriptive technique and conception. Its plot is kept extremely simple and nowhere is the reader in any necessity to conclude or guess anything, to put complicated facts together or to reach difficult conclusions. Right from the beginning everything is presented in chronological order, no flashbacks are used, and all the information needed is offered at exactly the right moment. The novel contains no complicated vocabulary or complex sentence structures and can easily be read and understood. In contrast to *Moby-Dick*, where the reader is left in the dark until the very last chapters before the monster appears, the opening chapter of *Jaws* starts with a young woman, who, after making love on the beach, plunges into the calm water and meets the emotionless Man-eater. This is the most direct beginning possible; within the first two pages the reader is confronted with the

brutal killing of a woman, a description which exceeds in openness and length every previously analysed description of the moment of death:

At first, the woman thought she had snagged her leg on a rock or a piece of floating wood. There was no initial pain, only one violent tug on her right leg. She reached down to touch her foot, treading water with her left leg to keep her head up, feeling in the blackness with her left hand. She could not find her foot. She reached higher on her leg, and then she was overcome by a rush of nausea and dizziness. Her groping fingers had found a nub of bone and tattered flesh. She knew that the warm, pulsing flow over her fingers in the chill water was her own blood. Pain and panic struck together. The woman threw her head back and screamed a guttural cry of terror. The fish had moved away. It swallowed the woman's limb without chewing. Bones and meat passed down the massive gullet in a single spasm. Now the fish turned again, homing on the stream of blood flushing from the woman's femoral artery, a beacon as clear and true as a lighthouse on a cloudless night. This time the fish attacked from below. It hurtled up under the woman, jaws agape. The great conical head struck her like a locomotive, knocking her up out of the water. The jaws snapped shut around her torso, crushing bones and flesh and organs into a jelly. The fish, with the woman's body in its mouth, smashed down on the water with a thunderous splash, spewing foam and blood and phosphorescence in a gaudy shower. Below the surface, the fish shook its head from side to side, its serrated triangular teeth sawing through what little sinew still resisted. The corpse fell apart. The fish swallowed, then turned to continue feeding. Its brain still registered the signals of nearby prey. The water was laced with blood, and shreds of flesh, and the fish could not sort signal from substance. It cut back and forth through the dissipating cloud of blood, opening and closing its mouth, seining for random morsel. But by now, most of the pieces of the corpse had dispersed. A few sank slowly, coming to rest on the sandy bottom, where they moved lazily in the current. A few drifted away just below the surface, floating in the surge that ended in the surf.¹

This passage conveys a very special mood because it describes the action from an underwater perspective, a biocentric perspective which is frequently taken again, from the novel's very first phrase "The great fish moved silently through the night water..." until the end when Hooper's death in the underwater shark cage is described. The reader is taken by the omniscient third-person narrator straight into the action, into the animal's mind; he feels as if he himself is suddenly swimming in the dark water, an experience and mood which can be easily and quickly understood and which is eerie and frightening. Benchley personifies the fish, and there seems to be no threshold which Benchley is not willing to pass in order to shock and magnetize his reader, as he relishes the carnage. A clear example of the fascination of the ugly, the cruel, maybe even the perverse is the fact that the woman cannot "find her foot"; instead she finds "a nub of bone and tattered flesh" and

she knows that "the warm, pulsing flow over her fingers ... was her own blood." But Benchley does not stop here, he continues to describe in detail and in length the shark's instinct-driven movements with the totally helpless and defenseless young woman in his jaws. Descriptions like these lack subtlety; they are as direct and shocking as possible and hence they satisfy the reader's great desire for the sensational, actions and events he cannot get, let alone experience, himself in everyday life. To be attacked at night in deep water, to be smashed between the jaws of a huge shark which is simply a killer and nothing else, must be a nightmare for every reader and this is exactly the point that Benchley is aiming at: the fears and the basic instincts of the average human being. This passage 'draws' the reader into the sea which is an area where s/he does not normally move, where s/he feels vulnerable and is suddenly robbed of most of his/her defensive capabilities; his/her flexibility and freedom are suddenly and severely restricted and s/he feels physically disabled. Benchley increases this effect of horror and cruelty even more when he later chooses a little boy as the shark's second victim. Most of the story is told from the view of the only survivor, Chief Brody. The other two points of view include Brody's wife, Ellen, and the above mentioned underwater perspective. Part I and II of the novel are used to build up tension; only Part III describes the hunt for the shark, for the purpose of which Chief Brody hires a professional fisherman, Quint, a character who is analysed later. The death of the animal at the very end is an extreme release of tension, signifies the end of the hunt and, with the survival of Brody and his improved relationship with his wife, provides a happy ending.

The description of Quint's first appearance as well as of his death, which happens in the same way as Ahab's, killed by the very fish he wanted to kill, bears many similarities

to the description of the corresponding scenes in *Moby-Dick*. Quint enters late into the story's plot, at the beginning of the third and final part of *Jaws* which describes only the four-day chase of three men for the shark. He is mentioned only twice before, briefly and seemingly out of context. One moment is the conversation between the professional fisherman and his guest, a conversation which does not seem to be directly related to what is happening at the moment; it seems to be placed there without any direct connection to the plot. However, it describes Quint as a man having substantial expertise with sharks of this kind. His reaction when asked by his newspaper-reading guest is cool and omniscient:

'...did you see this about the shark that killed those people?'

'I seen it,' said the captain.

'You think we'll run into that shark?'

'Nope.'

'How do you know?'

'I know.'

'Suppose we went looking for him.'

'We won't.'

'Why not?'

'We got a slick goin'. We'll stay put.'

The man shook his head and smiled. 'Boy, wouldn't that be some sport.'

'Fish like that ain't sport,' said the captain.²

With this rather ominous final statement "Fish like that ain't sport" the reader is left in no doubt that this is a very special fish of outstanding size and danger. This phrase evokes a feeling similar to the one given by Hemingway when he writes about the "truly big fish" Santiago is going to catch.

It is not until the final third part of the novel that Quint reappears, but through Chief Brody's earlier telephone conversation with him, Quint is kept in the reader's memory. The first description of his physical appearance bears many similarities to the first appearance of Captain Ahab (see Ch. 4). Quint is watched and described by Brody, who is on the deck and looks "up at the figure on the flying bridge." Like Ishmael he describes

Quint from the lower deck, and he has not seen him before. The following description reminds us in many points of Captain Ahab:

He [Quint] wore a white T-shirt, faded blue-jean trousers, white socks, and a pair of graying Top-Sidersneakers. Brody guessed Quint was about fifty, and though surely he had once been twenty and would one day be sixty, it was impossible to imagine what he would look like at either of those ages. His present age seemed the age he should always be, should always have been. He was about six feet four and very lean - perhaps 180 or 190 pounds. His head was totally bald - not shaven, for there were no telltale black specks on his scalp, but as bald as if he had never had any hair - and when, as now, the sun was high and hot, he wore a Marine Corps fatigue cap. His face, like the rest of him, was hard and sharp. It was ruled by a long straight nose. When he looked down from the flying bridge, he seemed to aim his eyes - the darkest eyes Brody had ever seen - along the nose as if it were a rifle barrel. His skin was permanently browned and creased by wind and salt and sun. He gazed off the stern, rarely blinking, his eyes fixed on the slick. A trickle of sweat running down Brody's chest made him stir. He turned his head, wincing at the sting in his neck, and tried to stare at the slick. But the reflection of the sun on the water hurt his, and he turned away. "I don't see how you do it, Quint," he said. "Don't you ever wear sunglasses?" Quint looked down and said, "Never." His tone was completely neutral, neither friendly nor unfriendly. It did not invite conversation.³

Like Ahab, Quint is "socially inaccessible", he does "not invite conversation" and is the rather reticent, wifeless, tough, determined, experienced and obsessed professional hunter, one who has killed many fish. His face is "hard and sharp" and he has "the darkest eyes Brody had ever seen." These eyes seem to give a pretty aggressive and ferocious impression since they aim "along the nose as if it were a rifle barrel." Benchley's use of a hunting simile to describe the hunter's face amplifies the impression of the tough guy. Quint, like Ahab, F. Macomber, and Jim Langdon, changes significantly during the hunt, that is the activity of hunting itself has a forming influence. First killing the shark is business as usual and he tries to squeeze as much money as possible out of Brody: "My everyday rate's two hundred a day. But this is a special. I think you'll pay double." Brody has to accept this since there is no one around willing and qualified to face the shark; Brody has to pay Quint even in advance. Hooper also manages only by offering money to Quint to get his shark cage on board the *Orca*. But the more difficult the job of killing the shark turns out to be, the more obsessed and passionate Quint becomes. It is now absolutely vital to kill

this cunning monster, he has to prove that his skills as a fisherman are sufficient not to be beaten by the shark. Hooper's death has an opposite effect on both remaining hunters: it depresses and discourages Brody but it outrages and incenses Quint.

[Brody] 'What do you mean? There's nothing we can do. The fish is too much for us. It's not real, not natural.'

'Are you beaten, man?'

'I'm beaten. All we can do is wait until God or nature or whatever the hell is doing this to us decides we've had enough. It's out of man's hands.'

'Not mine,' said Quint. 'I am going to kill that thing.'

'I'm not sure I can get any money after what happened today.'

'Keep your money. This is no longer a matter of money.'⁴

The materialistic Quint has changed completely and quickly, something has taken him over. This sudden passion, emotion and hatred, is so strong that it controls Quint completely. Killing the shark "is no longer a matter of money", it is a matter of principle, of honour and pride. Quint is greedy for satisfaction and revenge, and is the complete opposite of the fatalistic Brody. Quint feels guilt and anger about Hooper's death. He never took Hooper seriously and he should have taken better care of him, he should not have allowed Hooper to go down in his cage. This development continues until the end of the hunt. Quint becomes, like Ahab, so obsessed with the idea of killing the shark that he does not have any choice, he has to go out again the very next day, no matter if Brody wants to join him or not. Quint has become as monomaniac as Ahab, and he identifies himself totally with killing the fish. When asked by Brody about additional help from someone else Quint replies: "You know this fish as well as any man, and more hands won't make no difference now. Besides, it's nobody else's business." This obsession is noticed by Brody when observing Quint's face on the fourth and final day of the hunt:

'He [the shark] got no manners,' Quint cackled. 'Come on, you motherfucker. Come and get your due.' Brody saw fever in Quint's face - a heat that lit up his dark eyes, an intensity that drew his lips back

from his teeth in a crooked smile, an anticipation that strummed the sinews in his neck and whitened his knuckles.⁵

The animal is humiliated and reduced to a "motherfucker," and Quint shows 'shark-fever,' similar to Révoil's 'deer-fever' or Clifton's 'buck-fever' (see Ch. 5). The quotation shows also that temptations and aggressions during the hunt are increased by constant frustration.

Quint's death is another similarity to Ahab. His foot becomes entangled in a rope, he is dragged overboard and drowned by the shark, which then also manages to sink Quint's boat. The way in which Quint dies reminds the reader of Christ's crucifixion:

Brody put his face into the water and opened his eyes. Through the stinging saltwater mist he saw the fish sink in a slow and graceful spiral, trailing behind it the body of Quint - arms out to the sides, head thrown back, mouth open in mute protest. The fish faded from view. But, kept from sinking into the deep by the bobbing barrels, it stopped somewhere beyond the reach of light, and Quint's body hung suspended, a shadow twirling slowly in the twilight.⁶

Jaws is the first hunting story to include a marine biologist as one of the major characters. Being an experienced ichthyologist with sharks as his favourite field of study, Hooper introduces a new aspect into hunting, environmental (the use of the unborn and protected porpoise as a bait) as well as scientific (how best to kill a shark) considerations. His passionate argument with Quint about the killing of protected dolphins is something not hitherto found in hunting stories. It starts when Hooper discovers on deck an unborn porpoise in a can, the shock of which makes him "gasp". Being furious he immediately challenges Quint:

'You know they're protected.'

'When I fish, son, I catch what I want.'

But what about laws? Don't -'

'When people charter my boat, I don't ask questions about them. But okay, you study fish for a living.

If you had to work for a living - I mean the kind of work where the amount of money you make depends on the amount of sweat you put in - you'd know more about what laws really mean. Sure, those porpoises are protected. But that law wasn't put in to stop Quint from taking one or two for bait.

It was meant to stop big-time fishing for them, to stop nuts from shooting them for sport. So I'll tell you what, Hooper: You can bitch and moan all you want. But don't tell Quint he can't catch a few fish to help him make a living.'

'Look, Quint, the point is that these dolphins are in danger of being wiped out, extinguished. And what you are doing speeds up the process.'

'Don't give me that horseshit! Tell the tuna boats to stop snaring porpoise in their nets. Tell the Jap long-liners to stop hookin' em. They'll tell you to go take a flying fuck at the moon. They got mouths to feed. Well, so do I. Mine.'

'I get your message,' said Hooper. 'Take it while you can, and if after a while there's nothing left, why, we'll just start taking something else. It's so stupid.'

...Brody decided it was time to stop the argument. 'Let's drop it, Hooper, okay?' he said. 'We're not out here to have a debate on ecology.'

'What do you know about ecology, Brody?' said Hooper. 'I bet all it means to you is someone telling you you can't burn leaves in your back yard.'

...' We're out here to stop a fish from killing people, and if using one porpoise will help us save God knows how many lives, that seems to me a pretty good bargain.' ⁷

The last word of this quotation sums up the whole argument; sooner or later all is going to end in a bargain, even if some species then become extinct. Quint's position is close to the one of the huge fishing nations, "They got mouth to feed." This necessity is the most powerful and pressing argument not to obey international laws to protect wildlife. Benchley integrates here into the story a topic of urgency and environmental importance. Once a species will become extinct it will never be seen again, the result is irreversible. But Benchley does not stop here. Two days later, on the third day of the hunt, Hooper himself suggests using this very porpoise in order to get the shark nearer to the boat. Quint tries to provoke the shark to come closer by throwing various things into the water:

'The more we can get in the water, the better. Don't make no difference what it is, so long as it gets him interested enough to want to find it out.'

Hooper said, 'What about the porpoise?'

'Why, Mr. Hooper,' said Quint. 'I thought you didn't approve.'

'Never mind that,' Hooper said excitedly. 'I want to see that fish!' ⁸

This fast and total change of "attitude" ridicules the whole argument. Hooper speaks "excitedly. 'I want to see that fish'", even if he has to sacrifice his own credibility for it. He is willing to risk his life for valuable film material which would boost his scientific career, and he pays dearly in the end. Like Isaac in "The Old People", Hooper is fascinated,

magnetized and hypnotized by the animal's size, colour and beauty. In order to film the shark and under the pretext to kill it with a biological weapon, Hooper goes underwater, only protected by the shark cage. Again the reader follows the events from an underwater perspective, through Hooper's eyes, standing in the shark cage:

He [Hooper] glanced downward, started to look away, then snapped his eyes down again. Rising at him from the darkling blue - slowly, smoothly - was the shark. It rose with no apparent effort, an angel of death gliding toward an appointment foreordained. Hooper stared, enthralled, impelled to flee but unable to move. As the fish drew nearer, he marveled at its colors: the flat brown-grays seen on the surface had vanished. The top of the immense body was a hard ferrous gray, bluish where dappled with streaks of sun. Beneath the lateral line, all was creamy, ghostly white. Hooper wanted to raise his camera, but his arm would not obey. In a minute, he said to himself, in a minute. The fish came closer, silent as a shadow, and Hooper drew back. The head was only a few feet from the cage when the fish turned and began to pass before Hooper's eyes - casually, as if in proud display of its incalculable mass and power. The snout passed first, then the jaw, slack and smiling, armed with row upon row of serrate triangles. And then the black, fathomless eye, seemingly riveted upon him. The gills rippled-bloodless wounds in the steely skin. Tentatively, Hooper stuck a hand through the bars and touched the flank. It felt cold and hard, not clammy but smooth as vinyl. He let his fingertips caress the flesh - past the pectoral fins, the pelvic fin, the thick, firm genital claspers - until finally (the fish seemed to have no end) they were slapped away by the sweeping tail. The fish continued to move away from the cage.⁹

Again parallels can be drawn to *Moby-Dick*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, and "The Old People". As with Santiago and the marlin a personification takes place, the hunted animal, the monster shark, suddenly becomes "an angel of death gliding toward an appointment foreordained." This religious simile implies also that the shark is in this encounter as powerful as the Almighty, and Hooper only a helpless worshipper, an impression which finds its gruesome fulfillment only moments later when Hooper is crushed to death by the shark. The shark is no longer detested or ugly, instead its body is "immense", its colour "creamy", its skin feels "not clammy but smooth as vinyl", the jaw is "slack and smiling", and it passes "as if in proud display of its incalculable mass and power." It is simply admired and worshipped by Hooper, in the same way in which Jim Langdon admires Thor in Curwood's *The Bear*. (see Ch. 13) The acoustic situation is very similar to the first

encounter deep in the woods between Isaac and Old Ben as well as to the end of the deer hunt in "The Old People"; there "in the following silence the wilderness ceased to breath", in *Jaws* the shark "rose with no apparent effort", it "came closer, silent as a shadow." Silence seems to be a vital characteristic of situations where hunters are suddenly stunned or significantly influenced by an animal's outer appearance; everything seems to stop for a moment, thus showing the tremendous power of the animal over the hunters, and giving the whole situation some sort of magicness. Hooper gets so close to the shark that he can touch him with his hands, he feels its skin, the pectoral fin and the genitals. Only moments later he is killed by the ferocious shark which then suddenly shows its aggressiveness again. Both Ahab and Hooper get very close to the animal moments before their death, both have time to contemplate it and both do not shrink back, they stay and try to come even closer instead.

The shark, or "the fish" as it is described in the novel, is presented here as an emotionless and merciless killer-machine, driven only by its instinct to feed and survive. The reader never sympathizes with the fish nor do any of the characters develop any feelings for the animal except fear and hatred. The fish leaves a terrible trail of destruction, killing a total of six persons altogether, and its power and cunning seem to be tremendous and insurmountable. It seems to be of extraordinary size as is concluded by Hooper when he sees the tooth which the shark left in the side of Ben Gardener's boat. Hooper estimates the shark's weight at about five or six thousand pounds or three tons and Quint's reply when asked by Brody about the shark's length is equally discouraging:

Hard to tell. Twenty feet. Maybe more. I don't know. With them things, it don't make much difference over six feet. Once they get to six feet they're trouble. And this sonofabitch is trouble.
'God, I hope he comes back,' said Hooper.¹⁰

The shark is characterized by the fact that -like Moby Dick - it attacks the boat of its hunters. It does not seem to fear anything as Hooper explained to Brody:

'You have to understand. There's nothing in the sea this fish would fear. Other fish run from bigger things. That's their instinct. But this fish doesn't run from anything. He doesn't know fear. He might be cautious - say around an even bigger white. But fear - no way.'

'What else do they attack?'

'Anything.'

'Just like that. Anything.'

'Pretty much, yes.'¹¹

With information like this, spread throughout the novel, Benchley systematically builds up fear in the reader's subconscious, fear of a super-monster which does not even fear "a thirty-foot boat." Hooper's statement is in line with an earlier description when the shark kills the young boy:

There was no conviction that what thrashed above was food, but food was not a concept of significance. The fish was impelled to attack: if what it swallowed was digestible, that was food; if not it would later be regurgitated. The mouth opened, and with a final sweep of the sickle tail the fish struck.¹²

Here we get again the impression of an instinct-driven merciless predator, a terrible monster which swallows everything in its way. Benchley indicates earlier directly how to react to such a monster. When Brody argues with the editor of the local newspaper about whether or not a report should be published about the death of the first victim, the editor replies point-blank:

'Sharks are like ax-murderers, Martin. People react to them with their guts. There's something crazy and evil and uncontrollable about them. If we tell people there's a killer shark around here, we can kiss the summer good-bye.'¹³

Not only the tourists in Amity but the reader as well will react to the shark "with their guts", they will be hit straight into their subconscious, fears will be raised which never have been really touched upon. Clearly no one wants to meet an "ax-murderer".

Whenever the shark attacks, Benchley uses a certain literary technique. He begins each paragraph either with "The Fish" or with the name of its victim, like "The woman" or "The boy", and then alternatively spends one paragraph either describing the shark's actions or what is happening to and with the victim. The omniscient narrator takes the reader everywhere and always offers a close-up look at the action. In contrast to, for example, a writer such as Raymond Carver, Benchley leaves nothing unexplained, his main aim is to create and maintain horror. Another means to create this horror is his use of different adjectives to describe the shark:

"big bastard";

"The fish was an enemy."

"...the fish - the beast, the monster, the nightmare..."

"The mouth was open not quite halfway, a dim, dark cavern guarded by huge, triangular teeth."

"the great head reared up, mouth open in a slack, savage grin, eyes black and abysmal",¹⁴

Some of these adjectives describe only the outer appearance of the shark like size, colour, or strength, others are metaphors which associate the shark with evil or horrible things or experiences. The effect of Benchley's choice of words results in an alienation of the reader who cannot by any means associate himself with this monster. It is a narrative strategy intended to produce horror.

Benchley gives us - compared to *Moby-Dick* - a fairly small amount of general biological facts about the shark at the beginning of the novel:

The fish might have been asleep, save for the movement dictated by countless millions of years of instinctive continuity: lacking the flotation bladder common to other fish and the fluttering flaps to push oxygen-bearing water through its gills, it survived only by moving. Once stopped, it would sink to the bottom and die of anoxia.

A hundred yards offshore, the fish sensed a change in the sea's rhythm. It did not see the woman nor did it smell her. Running within the length of its body were a series of thin canals, filled with mucus and dotted with nerve endings, and these nerves detected vibrations and signaled the brain. The fish turned toward shore.¹⁵

Benchley shows with the integration of these facts into the story that he has considerable knowledge and expertise himself, and so the reader gets interesting biological knowledge while being entertained. The average reader will not know these facts, but s/he will be interested to find out how such a killer-machine works, in particular when these facts are presented in brief form and are always integrated directly into the current action. It is immediately after the explanation about the shark's "series of thin canals, filled with mucus and dotted with nerve endings", that the predator turns "toward shore," toward the young woman who is just taking a swim after having made love on the beach. Benchley uses both the scientific facts and his choice of words in order not to allow the reader to identify with the animal. An example of the opposite narrative strategy would be J. Curwood's *The Bear* where Curwood uses plenty of scientific and biological facts to make the reader identify with the bear.

As in *Moby-Dick* the first real encounter between the hunters and the animal takes place near the end of the story, on the second day of the final hunt. Like the white whale, the white shark comes partly out of the water, it surfaces and the hunters can see it for the first time:

No more than ten feet off the stern, slightly to the starboard, was the flat conical snout of the fish. It stuck out of the water perhaps two feet. The top of the head was a sooty gray, pocked with two black eyes. At each side of the end of the snout, where the gray turned to cream white, were the nostrils - deep slashes in the armored hide. The mouth was open not quite halfway, a dim dark cavern guarded by huge, triangular teeth.¹⁶

Dark colours such as a "sooty gray", "black" eyes, and a "dark" cavern, as well as enormous size, that is the snout sticking out two feet, or the "huge" teeth, are how Benchley describes the invulnerable predator with the "armored hide." This moment is the visual manifestation of the hitherto hidden monster of the deep.

Compared to the other two hunters, Amity's police chief Martin Brody plays only an ancillary role in the hunt. He is the emotional, sometimes even fearful, man and he is always in the predicament to calm his employers, the mayor and the members of Amity council, and to act according to his conviction, which means closing the beaches. In addition he is plagued by marriage problems. But Brody plays a very important role in the justification of the hunt. Like Faulkner's Old Ben the white shark leaves a terrible "trail of destruction". Old Ben threatens the farmers and swampers, while the shark threatens the whole community of Amity. This community is totally dependent on tourism and the opening of the new summer season is only weeks away. In accordance with the simple structure and diction of the novel this problem is soon indicated. Immediately after Brody gets the coroner's verdict about the first victim's cause of death he envisages the consequences:

It was the beginning of the summer season, and Brody knew that on the success or failure of those twelve brief weeks rested the fortunes of Amity for a whole year. A rich season meant prosperity enough to carry the town through the winter¹⁷

This argument is carefully built up through parts I and II of the novel, but stops in part III, where the hunt takes over completely. Benchley devotes a great part of the novel to describe in detail the economic effects the shark has on the community life in Amity.¹⁸ Property dealers (Brody's close friend Larry Vaughan), shop owners, pub and hotel owners, virtually everybody on the island is affected badly by the shark and they unanimously agree that the shark must be killed. The argument is clear and simple - and kept simple by those involved in it - and no one tries to understand the monster or to look for alternative solutions. Chief Brody is closely involved in both sides of the argument: his sense of duty tells him to keep the beaches closed and to warn the people, his employers

tell him not to do so, otherwise he will lose his job. It is worth noting that Benchley named this town Amity, another word for friendship, yet at the same time he describes its inhabitants as a bunch of greedy and nasty people who sacrifice the safety of tourists for their economic gains.

The many parallels between *Moby-Dick* and *Jaws* are surprising and one might get the impression the latter is a 'cheap copy' of Melville's masterpiece. However, there are important differences which make *Jaws* a novel in its own right: the introduction of the marine biologist, the new underwater perspective, the economic justification to kill the shark - there is no such economic argument for killing Moby Dick, the element of extreme shock and horror, and the love-affair between Brody's wife and Hooper, a point not analysed in this study. Both authors chose the most dangerous animal of its kind for their story: Melville the spermwhale bull, well known for many centuries for its aggressiveness; Benchley the great white shark or "white death" as it is called in Australia. Both the whale and the shark do not fear their hunter, they do not flee, instead they successfully attack and kill the hunter. And both hunts have only one survivor, Ishmael and Chief Brody, who in both cases are the least passionately involved persons. Both try to understand what is going on, both witness the change in the hunter's personality, both try to decode it and both fail to do so. Both hunts are dominated by one professional hunter, but although Quint dominates only the final part of *Jaws*, compared to Ahab who dominates *Moby-Dick* completely, the enmity between hunter and animal is equally intense and destructive in both novels. This enmity can only be understood from a psychological point of view because it involves hatred and blinding obsession; both seem to burn like a fever in the hunter's mind and cut him off completely from any prudent considerations. The hunter,

who has already been "socially inaccessible", becomes gradually totally unapproachable. He does not judge objectively what is happening around him, he is no longer open to any rational argument, instead he is willing to take every possible risk to get another chance to fight the fish. Both hunters die close to the fish they so much wanted to destroy.

A vital part of *Jaws* is the widespread and devastating effect the shark has on the community. One single fish is forcing the community to its knees, threatening the economic future of a whole island. This is only possible because tourism is the only source of income for most of the islanders. This oneness of the economy of Amity makes the shark's grip virtually felt in all areas of life on the island and increases the effect already created by the horror of the shark attacks alone. Part of this effect is created by the feeling of helplessness which many islanders have when confronted with the reality of the shark. They are helpless and know that if they do not succeed in killing the shark their business will go bankrupt; Chief Brody feels equally helpless after witnessing Hooper's death. Both the islanders and Chief Brody finally get the impression that this fish must have supernatural powers; he seems to be invincible. This feeling is very similar to the one created by *Moby Dick*: the longer the crew hunts the whale and the more they hear about his trail of destruction the more helpless they feel and the more Ahab has to influence and encourage them to keep hunting.

The whole conception of both stories is the same: man versus fish. After only a few pages the reader feels that there has to be a confrontation, a life-or-death struggle, although it is nowhere explicitly mentioned. This dark and mysterious threat hovers over both stories and the more horrible the trail of destruction turns out to be the more pressing and urgent it becomes to kill the fish. Both hunters, Ahab and Quint, could refrain in the

final stages of the hunt from challenging the animal again, both are advised to do so (Ahab by Starbuck, Quint by Brody) and both do not avoid the final and deadly confrontation, even the risk of dying cannot deter them from facing the fish again, they identify themselves completely with this task. This dark and ominous kind of behaviour, this total commitment to destruction, which in its totality seems rather remote and strange to the average twentieth-century reader, makes both stories fascinating; they contain an amount of passion, emotion and obsession not normally encountered in daily life but closely linked to a common and well-known activity, fishing.

Finally one difference remains to be discussed. In this novel the animal is an intruder into a peaceful and quiet world. The shark crosses a boundary, it leaves one area and comes too close to the shores of Amity, which is a no-go area for this animal. Only there is it a threat to the community. Had the shark killed somewhere in the Atlantic, nobody would have been worried about the incident. Only when the shark becomes active and attacks within this forbidden area can it provoke the hunters. This hunt is a response to a repeated and devastating threat and the hunters would rather prefer to stay safely at home instead of risking their lives. The activeness of this threat increases the effect of horror. Ordinary people are affected by the shark, people who would prefer to stay away from any confrontation with the monster shark.

Notes

- 1) Benchley, Peter *Jaws*, pp. 5-7
- 2) *ibid.*, pp. 75, 76
- 3) *ibid.*, pp. 229, 230
- 4) *ibid.*, p. 289
- 5) *ibid.*, p. 300
- 6) *ibid.*, p.309
- 7) *ibid.*, pp.240, 241
- 8) *ibid.*, pp. 273, 274
- 9) *ibid.*, pp. 285, 286
- 10) *ibid.* p. 253
- 11) *ibid.*, pp. 90, 91
- 12) *ibid.*, p. 53
- 13) *ibid.*, p.38
- 14) *ibid.*, pp. 26, 94, 232, 252, 275
- 15) *ibid.*, pp. 3, 4
- 16) *ibid.*, p.252
- 17) *ibid.*, p.27
- 18) cf. e.g. *Jaws*, pp. 32, 39, 56, 94, 97, 98, 183, 184

11. THE FEELING OF UNEASE: RAYMOND CARVER

The American short story writer and poet Raymond Carver (1939-1988) published several stories in which deer hunting, duck shooting or fishing is of major importance. My reading of his minimalistic yet powerful texts focuses on their descriptions of the hunt, the feeling of unease, the disturbing amount of aggression and frustration, and the social conclusions we can draw from it.

Reading Carver's stories is disturbing and subversive. The stories describe ordinary middle class people who are having a severe crisis. His characters are nearly always heavy smokers and drinkers; their relationships have either broken up or are at the brink of doing so. Carver's stories describe or use banal and simple things, events or experiences of everyday life to demonstrate collapse, change or the sudden, and usually deep, insight into a hitherto unsolved, unrecognized or ignored problem. A key event or experience leads the person to a new understanding of him/herself. This experience can be anything: an object loaded with personal memories or special associations; a story within a story, such as in "The Calm"; or a sudden accident or encounter which happens to the person. Carver goes straight into the emotional life of his characters, as a consequence they often come to life within the story's first paragraph. He rarely uses sophisticated thoughts or problems; instead he describes emotions linked to such things as alcoholism, unemployment or the experience of being dumped.

Carver's short story "The Cabin" was published first in 1977 in *Furious Seasons*. Its original title was "Pastoral". It describes the weekend fishing trip of a man, named Mr. Harrold. About an hour's drive away from his house he has rented a cabin in the

wilderness, close to a river with excellent fishing facilities. Mr. Harrold has been to this cabin before, with his wife Frances, but this time he comes alone, presumably due to relationship problems. But he soon misses her, thinks about what she is doing at the time in their house, and longs for someone to talk to. As in other hunting stories the fishing trip provides an escape; Mr. Harrold tries to flee from domestic problems, although he soon realises that this was a wrong decision. When he comes back from his fishing, after a terrible experience with the rude boys, he does not want to go back into the cabin because he knows the cabin will be empty and cold, there will be no one to talk to, and by then he also knows that he is missing Frances.

The area around the cabin is not only famous for fishing but also for deer-hunting, the activity for which some other hunters are now in the region because it is deer season. Mr. Harrold likes angling and is familiar with deer-hunting. During his drive to the cabin he thinks mainly about how many "hours of fishing" he could have this first afternoon, but the next morning at his first attempt to angle he critically observes what happens around him:

He moved out slowly down the packed, slippery trail toward the river. It pleased him to be up this early and to be going fishing. Somewhere in one of the valleys off behind the river he heard the pop-pop of shots and counted them. Seven. Eight. The hunters were awake. And the deer. He wondered if the shots came from the two hunters he'd seen in the lodge yesterday. Deer didn't have much of a chance in snow like this.¹

This passage describes unskilful or unprofessional hunting. The hunter, in this case one of a group of young and socially deprived boys, fires indiscriminately eight times, hence he does not seem to be a good shot. And the boys hunt deer in conditions which do not give the animal a fair chance of survival for, as Mr. Harrold immediately understands, deer "didn't have much of a chance in snow like this" because they get stuck in the deep snow

and can only move slowly. Mr. Harrold disapproves of this way of hunting, hence he has his doubts "if the shots came from the two hunters he'd seen in the lodge yesterday" because they seem to be experienced hunters, acting according to the hunting code. Fairness seems to be of great importance for Mr. Harrold. Shortly before he sees the injured deer, he hears again "a spatter of shots from somewhere in the forest across the river". This picture of bad hunting behaviour is further completed when later, shortly before the boy threatens Mr. Harrold with his gun, he "held the gun in his right hand, as if it were a pistol, and pointed the barrel up the beach". This is a very dangerous and imprudent action, one does not use a rifle as a pointer, instead the gun should always be held to the ground.

But the above quoted passage contains also the first of several oppositions in this story. Mr. Harrold is "pleased...to be going fishing" yet at the same time he hears eight shots, shots which are the death knell for the deer, thus the opposition consists of pleasure versus pain and injury, or tranquillity versus disturbance. It is also carefully planned and prepared fishing versus careless hunting. Further throughout the story Carver contrasts the warmth of the cabin and the cozyness of the fire with the freezing cold of the outside conditions, with a river, for example, which looks "impossibly cold". In the same sense in which warm and cold are contrasted, Carver also uses the sun's rays, the dazzling brightness, and contrasts it with the cabin's complete darkness. The cabin can here also be seen as something man made, of civilisation, which is in contrast to the surrounding wilderness. The cabin is also used to show that Mr. Harrold is a lonely and isolated outsider because the cabin is separated from the other houses; he is alone in there, and he finds it strange to return to it. Further the peace and tranquility of the forest and the river

are brutally contrasted with the shooting and the obnoxious, threatening and aggressive behaviour of the boys. Finally, as with so many other hunting texts, "The Cabin" contrasts good hunting with bad, skilful with unskilful or slob-hunting.

A key passage for the understanding of Mr. Harrold's volatile character is the description of his walk to the trout stream on the next morning. Carver uses the metaphor of a knight's lance when describing Mr. Harrold who "held the rod by its big reel, tucked up under his arm like a lance." Whenever he went into a remote area he would "imagine himself waiting for his opponent to ride out of the trees on a horse." How suppressed and threatened Mr. Harrold feels becomes obvious in his behaviour when hearing the jay scream: "Then he'd sing something as loud as he could. Yell defiance until his chest hurt..." It is worth noting that it is only while in the woods Mr. Harrold feels free to yell and sing loudly, in the company of persons he is incapable of communicating with anybody.

This rather primeval sounding cry, valued by Carver as "defiance", is Mr. Harrold's way to show strength and power, but when he afterwards falls deeply into a snowdrift, his first reaction is not cool and calm, instead "he panicked."² His deep fear, cowardice, and unease or, as Carver calls it with regard to Albert Camus, "dis-ease", becomes even clearer in the following conflict with the hunters.

The story's main point is this confrontation between Mr. Harrold and a group of rude and undisciplined youngsters from a nearby working camp, one of them armed with a rifle. They are chasing a female deer which they have carelessly injured at her back leg. The boys are hunting because they have nothing else to do, they have very little

opportunity to do exciting or interesting things. When Mr. Harrold sees some broken windows, his landlady immediately explains the problem to him:

'Kids have done that', Mrs. Maye said, stopping for a minute and putting her hand up to the broken window. 'They don't miss a chance to do us dirt. A whole pack of them are all the time running wild from down at the construction camp.' She shook her head. 'Poor little devils. Sorry home life for kids anyway, always on the move like that. Their daddies are building on that dam.'³

Very early in the story the reader is confronted with this well-known social problem: frustrated youths going on the rampage because they have a "sorry home life". Hunting emerges here as an activity taken up by the boys as a direct result of social deprivation, because they are "always on the move". It is likely that the boys feel neglected; they have no real home, and they express their frustration via violence, shooting, obnoxious behaviour and destruction, which is in the case of hunting directed against the deer and Mr. Harrold. The confrontation happens when the boys meet Mr. Harrold who is angling in the middle of a river. The boys are chasing the deer which Mr. Harrold has seen shortly before, and they are eager to get any information from Mr. Harrold about the animal's whereabouts. But his reaction is one of disgust, he is upset and when he sees the injured deer, he calls the hunters "Dirty Bastards". Only moments later he is threatened by one of the boys who directs his rifle at Mr. Harrold. This is the key moment of the story:

Several boys came out of the trees upriver and walked onto the beach...But only one boy had a rifle...Gaunt and thin-faced...the boy said: 'You see a deer come out up here?' The boy held the gun in his right hand, as if it were a pistol, and pointed the barrel up the beach. 'I said - Hey you deaf? I said did you see him?' 'It wasn't a him, it was a her,' Mr. Harrold said. 'And her back leg was almost shot off, for Christ's sake.' 'Where'd he go?' the boy asked, and raised the gun to his hip, half pointing it across at Mr. Harrold. 'Who wants to know?' He held the rod straight ahead, tight up under his arm and with his other hand he pulled down his hat. 'You little bastards are from that trailer camp up the river, aren't you?' 'You think you know a lot, don't you?' the boy said, looking around him at the others, nodding at them. He raised up one foot and set it down slowly, then the other. In a moment, he raised the rifle to his shoulder and pulled back the hammer. The barrel was pointed at Mr. Harrold's stomach, or else a little lower down. The water swirled and foamed around his boots. He opened and closed his mouth. But he was not able to move his tongue. He looked down into the clear water at the rocks and the little spaces of sand. He wondered what it would be if his boots tipped water and he went

down, rolling like a chunk. 'What's the matter with you?' he asked the boy. The ice water came up through his legs then and poured into his chest.... 'Don't shoot,' Mr. Harrold said. The boy held the gun at him for another minute, then he lowered it. 'Scared, wasn't you?' Mr. Harrold nodded his head dreamily. He felt as if he wanted to yawn. He kept opening and closing his mouth.... One of the boys gave him the finger, and the rest of them grinned. Then they moved together back into the trees. He watched them go. He turned and worked his way back to the shore and dropped down against the log. After a few minutes he got up and started to walk back to the cabin.⁴

Suddenly Mr. Harrold feels like (or is) the deer, paralysed, helpless and threatened. The deer is stuck in the heavy snow with an injured leg, Mr. Harrold is fixed in the middle of the river, fearing that "his boots tipped water and he went down, rolling like a chunk..." The continuation "The ice water came up through his legs then and poured into his chest" can be seen in a metaphorical sense, the icy water being a metaphor for fear which gradually creeps "into" rather than over his chest. Overcome with fear and unable to defend himself either with words or deeds, the only thing which he can do is to open and close his mouth, like the fish he wants to catch. The severity of his shock and panic is so great that, once he has reached shore, he has to sit down for several minutes, being defeated rather than provoked, having resigned rather than fought. Then he immediately returns - or flees - to the cabin, leaving even his expensive fishing rod behind. After the confrontation Mr. Harrold suffers a complete blank; the reader does not know what Mr. Harrold thinks. Presumably he feels nothing, he is just stunned and shocked. Afterwards the story ends very quickly, with no further developments.

The boy's ignorance concerning basic hunting skills is displayed twice with his inability to determine the animal's sex. The boy asks Mr. Harrold '...did you see **him**?' and later 'Where'd **he** go?' and this despite Mr. Harrold replying that "It wasn't a him, it was a her". Although both, Mr. Harrold and the group of boys, are leisure time hunters and non-professionals, there is a strong opposition between the two opinions about the way

hunting should be exercised. Mr. Harrold represents the serious and responsible type of hunter who obeys the hunting code, that is you do not shoot female animals and if you shoot you should be able to kill with one or two shots but you do not let the animal suffer unnecessarily. The boys, on the contrary, do not care about the hunting code, they have no proper training or education, hence they are not even able to recognize the animal's sex. Hunting is only an activity undertaken because the boys have nothing else to do, probably the boys do not know anything about the hunting code, and if so they do not care about it. Mr. Harrold is extremely frightened and deeply shocked by the boy threatening him with a rifle, Mr. Harrold "opened and closed his mouth", and he begs the boy not to shoot. W.L. Stull in his 1984 portrait of Carver sees this as the story's turning point, from now on Mr. Harrold's "pastoral idyll is over."⁵ Mr. Harrold seeks peace and tranquillity; instead he gets just the opposite, aggression, abuse and threats. The display of brutal and reckless hunting and the experience of being held at gunpoint have completely destroyed Mr. Harrold's weekend, his already volatile disposition is now totally unbalanced. In a certain way hunting (or fishing), originally intended by Mr. Harrold as a substitute or replacement for his relationship, turns out to mirror his broken marriage. From now on recreation is impossible; instead the only thing Mr. Harrold wants to do is to go home, back to his wife.

The story's mood is one of unease, of feeling uncomfortable and dissatisfied with what one is doing, a mood which is typical of many of Carver's stories. Carver achieves this by frequently mentioning two things: first the cold air, the frozen snow, and a river which looks "impossibly cold". Second, by placing several strange hiatuses or gaps of communication at various points of the story. Although people come together, no real talking takes place. When Mr. Harrold once took his wife into a museum in Portland "He'd

said as much to Frances, but she didn't say anything back", a sign for a kind of alienation in a marriage typical for many relationships described by Carver. When he arrives at the cabin offices, no real communication between him and the waitress or the hunters present in the room takes place. Later when Mrs. Maye takes him to his cabin, Mr. Harrold "started to say something else, but there was nothing else to say." And again, when they leave the office "The girl didn't answer". When Mrs. Maye remarks that she is sorry about the absence of his wife, Mr. Harrold "didn't answer". Later when he is in the cabin, he "wished there were somebody to talk to". When he returns to his cabin from his evening meal, he hates the kitchen girl; later in the forest he yells to the birds, then when confronted with the boys no serious communication is possible, and when he returns for the last time to the cabin it is "quiet". This absence of any real communication, or inability to talk although one wants to, is striking and conveys a somber feeling of passivity and inactivity as well as a depressing mood, a mood which Carver himself described as "a certain terrible kind of domesticity."⁶ It is very likely that Mr. Harrold will never go fishing again; "The Cabin" is hence an anti-hunting story.

"The Cabin" is an example for the postmodernist treatment of hunting. There is no guiding or intrusive commentary, as, for example, in *Moby-Dick*. Instead the narrator shows or indicates things rather than telling the reader exactly what is happening. This is not a clearly guided narration but plenty of innuendo, the reader does not know where s/he is going to end. Carver uses hunting to show the uncertainty, unreliability and unpleasantness of life, a kind of 'dirty realism' as it has been called. He does not "go behind" in order to show the true workings of Mr. Harrold's mind. Nothing is certain

anymore, we can not rely on anything, instead the outcome might - or in this case is - completely different from any kind of ending we find in nineteenth century hunting texts.

Like "The Cabin" the story "The Calm", included in the 1981 collection *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, is an example of unskillful deer hunting. The story has many similarities with "The Cabin". Both stories describe a deer/doe hunt, the deer/doe is only wounded with a single shot and then unsuccessfully tracked. The fate of the deer/doe remains unclear, presumably it suffered an agonizing death. In both cases the hunters are not absolutely determined to relieve the deer/doe from the pain caused by the bullet. Both are also examples of failed communication, of arguments which go wrong and which leave a stale, bitter impression on the reader's mind. But in contrast to "The Cabin" in which a group of youngsters hunts because of frustration and dissatisfaction, "The Calm" describes one experienced hunter and his son, keen to get the buck he has injured, but failing because it gets dark.

"The Calm" is set in a barber's shop where the narrator listens to the story of an ill-fated deer hunt while having his hair cut. It is therefore two stories in one. The first is the story of the narrator who while listening to the second (hunting) story realises that a major change is going to take place in his life. The second story is the hunting story, virtually framed into the first one, and narrated by the hunter himself who is waiting to be served. This hunter is a man named Charles who works as a guard in a bank. He despises animals and uses swear words such as "the bastards", "the sucker", and "big old son of a bitch" when he talks about the deer. He is an arrogant and aggressive man who is even proud, when his young son accompanying him on the hunt suddenly vomits and falls behind, to have "cuffed him a good one". He clearly symbolizes cruelty and brutality and is

throughout the hunting story carefully contrasted with an older man called Albert. Albert is very similar to the buck injured by Charles, old and slowly dying of emphysema. (Like in "The Cabin" we have a close similarity between a man and a deer). Albert's first remark interrupting the hunter's narration is "There's orchards down there", a positive and non-aggressive remark, trying to point out something beautiful in the valley. Later he challenges Charles on the bad hunting behaviour of having left the injured deer in the woods. He symbolizes the humane treatment of animals. The two different attitudes towards the deer clash when Albert attacks Charles with the words "You ought to be out there right now looking for that deer instead of in here getting a haircut." From that moment the mood in the shop changes completely, the whole conversation goes terribly wrong. It is a scene very similar to the one describing Mr. Harrold's encounter with the boys, suddenly a peaceful situation is turned into a nasty confrontation.

With the obnoxious and disrespectful reply "You can't talk like that...You old fart" the guard then upsets everybody and confirms the impression of primitiveness which the reader already got from the abusive way in which Charles talked about the deer. A direct confrontation is narrowly avoided but the events of the hunt and the behaviour of Charles have deeply moved the narrator who, while listening, suddenly realized what he has to do in order to change and improve his situation: leave his wife and the village.

Again we find a number of opposites in this story: good (Albert) versus bad (Charles) hunting, an old buck versus a man getting the kick out of ramming "one right in his guts", and civilisation symbolized by the barber's shop versus the wilderness. It is also worth noting that, like Mailer in *Why are we in Vietnam?*, Carver links hunting with war,

this time it is the Korean war in which Charles participated. The passage in which Charles is asked to explain what he means by stunning reveals his inner state of mind.

It was a gut shot. It just like stuns him. So he drops his head and begins this trembling. He trembles all over. The kid's still shooting. Me, I felt like I was back in Korea. So I shot again but missed. Then old Mr. Buck moves back into the bush. But now, by God, he doesn't have any oomph left in him. The kid has emptied his goddamn gun all to no purpose. But I hit solid. I rammed one right into his guts. That's what I meant by stunned him.⁷

Charles is the central and dominating character of this story, he clearly lacks the necessary vocabulary to express himself, he cannot admit his problems, instead he is prone to brutal and aggressive behaviour. Like Mailer's grizzly hunters Charles is mentally deranged, he uses a kind of "Rambo" vocabulary to describe the great satisfaction he gets out of stunning the buck with a gut shot. For him killing is satisfaction, and he thereby commits the great mistake of projecting all his anger and frustration into the animal, the buck is seen as an enemy and Charles feels as if he "was back in Korea". Hence the need for food is no longer the justification for hunting, instead it is just the thrill of gunning the buck down with as many shots as you have. This impression is further underlined by the role of children in several of Carver's stories. In "The Cabin" it is a group of young boys, shooting indiscriminately, that is eight times; in "The Calm" it is Charles' son who "emptied his goddamn gun all to no purpose"; and in "Sixty Acres" (see below) it is again two young boys this time gunning down ducks. What characterizes all these children is that they are hunting rather half-heartedly, they are emptying their guns just for the pleasure of shooting, but without really understanding or realizing what they are doing. They are not described by Carver as being mature enough to hunt.

After the confrontation between Charles and Albert everybody except the narrator leaves the barber's shop and suddenly the calm is restored. The narrator is relaxed and

touched by the tender and loving strokes of the barber's fingers, running through his hair. This is an extreme contrast to the afore described brutality and senselessness of the buck hunt, it is another final and strong opposite, love versus death, respect versus contempt and hate. Like the husband in "The ducks" (see below) the narrator wants to leave the place he is living in, and it is this moment in the barber's chair which makes him realize that he has to go. This is a very important message which the narrator can only receive because the time is right, prepared by the hunting story he realizes that he wants change, presumably a change which includes harmony, love and tranquility.

Illegal duck shooting by two young boys is at the centre of "Sixty Acres", published in the 1976 collection *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* It is the third story which involves young armed boys in a dispute with adults about game. Lee Waite, the poor owner of the sixty acres where two boys gunned down several ducks, is - like Mr. Harrold - simply scared when he receives the call telling him about the incident. He would rather prefer to "have slept awhile this afternoon." Instead he has to go and confront not for the first time unknown hunters poaching on land which he has neglected for the last four or five years. This fear continues throughout the story and is Mr. Waite's biggest problem, a problem which he cannot admit to have, for "He wasn't afraid; it wasn't that, he told himself. He just didn't want trouble." In reality Mr. Waite is a coward under tremendous pressure even from his sons to do something about the poaching, as becomes clear when he gets his shotgun:

'Aren't you going to load it, Papa?' the boy Benny asked from behind. Waite turned, saw Benny and little Jack standing in the kitchen doorway. Ever since the call they had been after him - had wanted to know if this time he was going to shoot somebody. It bothered him, kids talking like that, like they would enjoy it, and now they stood at the door, letting all the cold air in the house and looking at the large gun up under his arm.⁸

The impression is that here, as well as in the afore analysed stories, the immature kids do thoroughly enjoy shooting and violence. When Mr. Waite confronts the two boys on his land they regret having trespassed on his land, but they do not see anything wrong in shooting as many ducks as they like, regardless of any real demand.

As in "The Cabin" the confrontation between one adult and several boys is a key moment. Mr. Waite who has "an uneasy feeling ever since he woke up" and who does "not want any trouble like that", is so scared when he challenges the boys that "When he stood still, waiting, his knees unaccountably began to shake." In the end he is disturbed but still able to analyse himself: "Yet he could not understand why he felt something crucial had happened, a failure." What had happened was that he realised that he wanted to get rid of the responsibility for the land, he wanted the certainty of having never again to confront anybody trespassing his land. As a result he will lease his sixty acres to "one of the duck clubs from Toppenish" as soon as possible. As in "The Cabin" and "The Calm", a confrontation between (a) (young) hunter(s) and an adult results in a man realising that he wants to change something.

In "Everything stuck to him", published in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, the planned weekend hunting trip of the husband causes a serious argument in the young marriage. Like the wife in "The ducks" the nineteen-year-old mother of the crying baby does not want her husband to go hunting, she hates to be left alone with the baby which is presumed to be sick. Although in this story the husband does not use hunting as a means to escape from marriage problems, the story nevertheless describes the familiar constellation of the husband going out hunting at weekends and the wife left at home, with in this case a problem which she feels unable to handle on her own. Her

reaction to put him to the choice between either her and the marriage or going hunting and risking a breakup makes him think and reconsider. His giving in leads to a happy end, with both promising not to argue again. I would like to point out the eagerness of the husband, who is undoubtedly deeply in love and very happy with his wife, to go hunting. Despite this domestic idyll Carver describes the strong rather magnetizing fascination which the hunt has on the young man. He prepares carefully all the hunting gear the night before (like the husband in "The ducks"), and even after a sleepless night and a growing insecurity about the baby's health he is still determined to go hunting. Only in the very last moment does he change his mind, a clear sign for how desperate he is to hunt.

In contrast to "The Cabin" and "The Calm" the following stories are not dominated by hunting, but they give further insights into hunting and society. "How about this?", included in *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*, is Carver's third story in which deer hunting is mentioned. The story contains only one brief passage in which the killing of a deer is described:

Sunlight struck down through the split in the roof. 'Once Dad shot a deer out of season. I was about - I don't know - eight or nine, around in there.' She turned to him as he stood stopped near the door to look at an old harness that hung from a nail. 'Dad was down here in the barn with the deer when the game warden drove into the yard. It was dark. Mother sent me down here for Dad, and the game warden, a big heavysset man with a hat, followed me. Dad was carrying a lamp, just coming down from the loft. He and the game warden talked a few minutes. The deer was hanging there, but the game warden didn't say anything. He offered Dad a chew of tobacco, but Dad refused - he never liked it and wouldn't take any even then. Then the game warden pulled my ear and left. But I don't want to think about any of that' she added quickly. 'I haven't thought about things like that in years.'⁹

In this story the deer hunt is of no importance for the plot, but it is another example for the popularity of deer hunting in the United States. A deer is killed out of season, a game warden comes and sees the deer, so it must have been reported to him; but he does not take any action, instead he has a chat with the hunter before leaving again. This is just a

single incident remembered by a woman who comes back to her childhood home, thinking about moving back to this place. It could, however, be interpreted in a sense that game wardens often connived at deer hunting out of season if they were on close terms with the hunter.

"The ducks", published in *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*, is another example for how common and regular an activity hunting still is. The story shows the alienation in a marriage resulting from frequent hunting and the subsequent long absence from home. When the hunter gets his gear and his decoys ready for the next early morning hunt, his wife bitterly complains:

She went back into the kitchen and shut the door and looked at him through the window. 'I just hate to have you gone all the time. It seems like you're gone all the time,'...¹⁰

When, after the early return of her husband from work because of the sudden death of the foreman, he says that he will not go hunting the next morning, she is glad and immediately envisages one of the rare mornings where they "sleep in late, then get up and have a big breakfast". Here it seems to be the case that the husband is hunting very often and thus neglects his wife, as such their relationship is another example for the usually problematic marriages described by Carver.

In "So much water so close to home", published in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, Carver describes the extreme coldness or desensitization of four old friends who go on a fishing trip and find upon their arrival a murdered girl's body in the stretch of the river they want to fish in. Neither hunting nor fishing is of major importance here, it is the behaviour of these men alone which reveals a deep insight into the American psyche. These men do not do the obvious and report the incident immediately to the police

because this would spoil their fishing trip, instead, after long considerations they just tie the body with a line, keep fishing, enjoy their weekend as usual, and report the incident when they come back home. This is undoubtedly an extreme and exaggerated example, but it highlights the fact that these fishermen have got used to (even human) death, a young girl's dead body does not cause any major emotion let alone sorrow in them. Nothing can stop these men from enjoying their fishing trip, and as such this is a singularly nasty story. Carver increases this effect by showing the men's incapability to realize what they have done. When Stuart's wife is extremely upset once she realises what her husband had done, Stuart himself cannot understand what upsets her so much, he is still convinced of having acted properly. Again Carver uses the juxtaposition of two extremes, of two opposites, to make plain his message of desensitization: the brutal murder of a young girl versus a relaxing fishing-and-fun weekend of four cronies.

Carver acknowledged the influence of the Russian writer Anton Chekov upon him. Chekov once issued six guidelines for good short story writing, three of which are important for Carver's hunting fiction. First the taboo of "politico-economico-social effusions";¹¹ Carver himself explains very little in his stories, nearly everything is left to the reader's imagination or conclusion. The reader is not distracted by comments or extensive descriptions of political or economic events. Further, with regard to hunting, this rule means that no extensive descriptions of, for example, the animal or the hunt are given. Despite this lack of details the hunt is in "The Cabin" and "The Calm" the most important activity, the one which has the deepest impact upon either Mr. Harrold or the narrator.

Chekov's second rule is the demand for extreme brevity, subsequently Carver's stories are by far the shortest hunting texts dealt with in this study. Everything in these

stories, including the hunt and every description of either character or animal, is short, or "minimalistic". Only the necessary amount of information is given.

Chekov's third rule stresses warmheartedness. On the first glance one might not find warmheartedness in these hunting stories, but both Mr. Harrold and the man in the barber's chair are longing for warmheartedness. They cannot cope with brutal and reckless killing, or with arrogance and contempt; the experience of this brutality and coldness makes them long even harder for the "pastoral" idyll of a relationship or a new place to live. Hence both stories are anti-hunting stories; Mr. Harrold will presumably never go fishing again, and the man in the barber's chair is disgusted by the deer hunter's behaviour. In these two stories Carver's type of hunter is a man under pressure, dissatisfied, trying to get away from domesticity, and by no means happy or enthusiastic about the hunt. In "Sixty Acres", "Everything stuck to him", and in "The ducks", the husbands are also longing, and even experiencing warmth and love, a kind of emotion which they do not want to lose.

Finally the hunting described in Carver's fiction shows how vital and widespread hunting in the United States still is, it is an ordinary everyday activity. The fact that three of Carver's stories describe deer hunting reflects the number of four million deer killed annually in the United States (see Ch. 1).

Notes

- 1) Carver, Raymond "The Cabin" in *Fires*, p. 151
- 2) *ibid.*, p. 151
- 3) *ibid.*, pp. 147-148
- 4) *ibid.*, pp. 153-155
- 5) Stull, William L, "Raymond Carver", in *DLB Yearbook*, 1988, p. 235
- 6) *ibid.*, p. 235.
- 7) Carver, Raymond "The Calm", in *Stories*, p. 258
- 8) Carver, Raymond "Sixty Acres", in *Stories*, p. 56
- 9) Carver, Raymond "How about this?", in *Stories*, pp. 139-140
- 10) Carver, *Stories*, p. 131
- 11) as explained in Stull, p. 200

12. HORROR AGAIN: GODEY'S *THE SNAKE*

John Godey's horror thriller *The Snake* was published in 1978, only four years after Benchley's *Jaws*. As the following analysis tries to prove, both novels have an almost similar plot with only minor differences; and *The Snake* can hence be seen as an obvious copy of a commercially very successful story. But in the context of this study, *The Snake* can also be related to two previous literary texts dealing with snakes. One is Letter X of Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*, entitled "On Snakes; and the Humming-Bird". The second is the short story "The Man and the Snake", written by Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914). Both texts deal with the long established fear and panic caused by snakes. Godey's novel is the utmost perfection and exaggeration of this fear, a kind of fear which is the *Leitmotif* of this horror-thriller.

Crèvecoeur's Letter contains three events which are examples of "snakelore". First he describes the terrible suffering and agonising death of a man bitten by a copperhead, a snake, "for the poison of which no remedy has yet been discovered:"

The poor wretch instantly swelled in a most dreadful manner; a multitude of spots of different hues alternately appeared and vanished on different parts of his body; his eyes were filled with madness and rage; he cast them on all present with the most vindictive looks; he thrust out his tongue as the snakes do; he hissed through his teeth with inconceivable strength and became an object of terror to all bystanders. To the lividness of a corpse he united the desperate force of a maniac; they hardly were able to fasten him so as to guard themselves from his attacks, when in the space of two hours death relieved the poor wretch from his struggle and the spectators from their apprehensions. (Letter X)

The description bears many similarities to the ones of dying victims given by Godey in his novel. The death is slow, agonizing, and like torture.

Next Crèvecoeur describes the famous story of "The Living Fang" which got stuck in a farmer's boots and which killed three men in a row, all of whom were wearing this pair

of boots. The story tries to prove the long established fear that even after they have been destroyed, rattlesnakes are still dangerous, they can still kill. Finally, he describes the long and ferocious fight between two snakes, another example for the viciousness, the aggression and the deadliness of snakes. Although the accuracy of these observations has been doubted, for example, James R. Masterson in his article "The Tale of the Living Fang" has shown the many variants and the long history of Crèvecoeur's rattlesnake story, they remain nevertheless a clear proof for the very old and longlasting fears and horrorvisions which many people associate with snakes (see Ch.2).

Ambrose Bierce in his short story "The Man and the Snake" takes the case to the extreme: a man suddenly mistakes a stuffed snake for a real one and dies in a fit of terror, panic, fear and horror. As in Crèvecoeur's above quoted description of a dying man, the face of the snake's victim is also filled with madness and rage, it was "daubed with blood and froth, the eyes were wide open, staring - a dreadful sight!". But besides being another extreme example for "snakeparanoia", the text is also another example for the importance of visual impressions in animal related stories as well as for the fascinating and hypnotizing power of the eyes of the snake.

When Harker Brayton first spots the snake under his bed in an "obscure corner of the room", he sees "two small points of light", compared to Torres in *The Snake* who first sees "two points of gleaming light" (see below). Then Bierce gives us the first description of the snake, a description which comes back to the eyes.

It disclosed, almost directly under the foot-rail of the bed, the coils of a large serpent - the points of light were its eyes! Its horrible head, thrust flatly forth from the innermost coil and resting upon the outermost, was directed straight toward him, the definition of the wide, brutal jaw and the idiot-like forehead serving to show the direction of its malevolent gaze. The eyes were no longer merely luminous points; they looked into his own with a meaning, a malign significance.¹

Again this description is very similar to the ones given by Godey (see below). Expressions like "brutal jaw", "malevolent gaze" and "malign significance" direct the reader to a feeling of fear and continue to establish an image of the snake as something horrible. Bierce then continues by giving us the social implications of a snake in a city, for "a snake in a bedroom of a modern city dwelling of the better sort is, happily, not so common a phenomenon...". In both texts *The Snake* and "The Man and the Snake", the snake is not in its natural environment, it is "at least offensive. It was *de trop* - 'matter out of place' - an impertinence", and the sudden surprise of its totally unexpected appearance adds significantly to the sudden horror and panic.

Throughout the story Bierce uses descriptions of the snake's eyes to show its increasing power and domination of the victim. First "the snake's eyes burned with a more pitiless malevolence than before", then "its eyes were now electric sparks, radiating an infinity of luminous needles", which represents again, as in *The Snake* the "active" image of radiating light; then:

the snake made neither sound nor motion, but its eyes were two dazzling suns. The reptile itself was wholly concealed by them. They gave off enlarging rings of rich and vivid colours, which at their greatest expansion successively vanished like soap-bubbles; they seemed to approach his very face, and anon were an immeasurable distance away.²

Here the snake's hypnotizing powers come to light, it virtually pins its victim down, and this only by the power of its "two dazzling suns". Bierce describes also the rapid development of fear within the victims mind, Brayton has frequent horrorvisions of what could happen, such as "the thought of the serpent within a few feet of his head, yet unseen - perhaps in the very act of springing upon him and throwing its coils about his throat - was too horrible". Here the active horror of an active, aggressive and attacking snake,

"throwing" itself upon its victim, comes to light and is totally in line with the kind of image of the black mamba, produced in *The Snake*.

In *The Snake* the location of the whole story is transferred from the tourist enclave of Amity to the equally popular Central Park in New York, and in order to increase the significance of Central Park, New York's biggest park and recreation area, the whole city is suffering from a heat wave with no end in sight. This heat wave is the parallel to Benchley's forthcoming opening of the beaches at the beginning of the tourist season, with the possibility of closing Central Park being the exact equivalent to closing the beaches of Amity. Godey maintains this pressurizing effect, which creates a sense of urgency, by describing time and again sweating people as well as other effects of heat such as exhaustion or dehydration. The citizens of New York are virtually forced out of their homes, and into the habitat of the snake. First, several people are killed and the threat of an unspecified danger in Central Park is built up. It takes sometime until it becomes clear that an animal has caused these deaths; there is insecurity about the reason for each victim's death, and it takes several doctors and several days to establish the exact cause of the death. Pressure, tension and even panic are created and increased by the use of the media who put the police and the politicians in particular under severe pressure to catch the snake. As a result a real threat to a community is established, and gradually one single snake dominates and paralyzes life in New York. The story develops rapidly and takes place within little more than a week. It is, like *Jaws*, told by an omniscient narrator using similar stylistic devices.

Both *Jaws* and *The Snake* are set in a restricted and clearly limited area, an area into which the animal intrudes, although the snake rather passively for it is transported into

Central Park; both shark and snake are crossing a boundary and only within this area are they suddenly a horrifying threat to ordinary citizens. It is not until more people have been killed that a united effort is undertaken to find and kill either the shark or the snake. The death of the snake, caused in a killing frenzy by religious fanatics, is, as in *Jaws*, the climax and final solution of the real-life drama. In addition Godey uses the hunt for an animal as an ideal opportunity to give us a deep insight into the everyday life in New York as well as into the way in which Americans cope with a disaster like this. First he describes the sudden appearance and selling of all kinds of artificial toy snakes and snake stickers:

Manufacturers of novelties, famous for their opportunism and dazzling speed of production, succeeded by late afternoon in flooding the city with snake buttons, snake decals for auto bumpers, stuffed snakes of many lengths, designs and colors. Not long afterward, strikingly realistic, battery-powered snakes of great technical sophistication were to appear. There was a run on canned rattlesnake fillets in gourmet specialty stores, and the brave people who ate them inevitably compared their taste to that of chicken, only better.³

This is the quick way in which sly American businessmen react to a new niche in order to make a fast buck out of everything. They have no feeling for tact, let alone respect for the victims and their relatives; instead they rapaciously seize another opportunity to make money. They speculate upon the pride of New York's citizens to be special, and to live in a city which shows its difference also by attracting "different" kinds of disasters, compared to other American cities. Second, Godey lists several accidents which result out of snake paranoia and mass hysteria, suddenly panicing citizens see snakes everywhere. Third, he describes the idiotic attempt of hundreds of dog fanatics to search for the snake with their pet dogs. This, as well as the many snake-paranoia related accidents, stretches the already limited resources of the police to the limits and causes unnecessary problems. All this together with the tactics and influence of the media, Godey frequently describes

newspaper and TV-reports, gives us the American way to respond to such an event. The whole story is, on one level, a social study of New York, turned into a madhouse by just a single snake. The first step is when "the city turned a corner. It became euphoric". Then, the city changes again:

Within thirty-six hours after Jeff's well-publicized death, the mood of the public had taken a sour turn - from ruefully amused acceptance of the snake as an appropriate symbol of their city's magnetic genius for attracting disaster to something approaching mass neurosis. Much of it was hysterical and self-hypnotic. People began to talk about 'that crawly feeling in the legs'. Some, before sitting down in a restaurant would lift a tablecloth to look under the table; others would leave a play or concert or film before it was finished because they kept imagining snakes crawling around their feet in the darkness. The worst were those who began to suspect their own apartments, hesitating to enter a dark room for fear a snake might be lurking there, looking under their beds, shaking out their blankets. Some conjured up snakes curled up on the floorboards under their feet when they drove their cars. Some went so far as to check their pockets or handbags before venturing in for a handkerchief or a coin. All over the city, people took to sitting in chairs with their feet tucked under them.⁴

These rapid and unpredictable developments and the gut-reaction of New York's citizens towards the snake show how easy it is to manipulate people, in particular with the help of effective mass media. Gradually panic, or "snakephobia", is created and maintained by the media's continuing reports, the results of which reflect also the people's gullibility and how prone they are to exaggerate or to be easily affected by any kind of danger, however remote it might be. Although much in this text might be exaggerated, it shows nevertheless what has gradually become evident in this study: hunting stories often play with people's inner fears or prejudices to create tension, and sometimes fascination, often with the help of mysticism.

As in *Jaws*, a biologist is brought in to help catching the snake. This time it is a herpetologist, and, as in *Jaws*, the scientist is young and male, and he is having a love affair and sexual encounters. Both scientists admire the animal they are hunting and are fascinated by its outer appearance; they consider it to be extremely beautiful:

Converse [the herpetologist] had spotted the picture and brushed by him. He bent over the table and let out a low whistle. 'You recognize it?' Eastman said. 'It's a black mamba.' Converse leaned over the picture for another look. He straightened up and said, almost reverently, 'God, it's beautiful.'⁵

Reverence and admiration is what characterizes Hooper's and Converse's attitude towards the hunted animal. Both want to preserve it, either on film or alive, in order to boost their career. Both do respect the animal, but do not really fear it, at least they do not hesitate to approach it. Both undertake extremely risky actions to find the animal, such as either going down in a shark-cage or going into the park only armed with a pair of tongs.

Whereas in *Jaws* it is immediately clear that the shark must be killed, the herpetologist in *The Snake* tries to do just the opposite of what the police wants him to do: he wants to save the snake and give it to a zoo. From the beginning everything he does is intended to save the snake from being killed. As in Matt Hooper's passionate defence of the porpoises, the herpetologist tries twice to raise awareness for the terrible situation of the snake. First he explains to a reporter why he likes snakes:

They're seriously disadvantaged animals. No limbs. No hearing. No true voice. No teeth for chewing, so that they're obliged to swallow their food whole. No lids or nictitating membrane - can't shut their eyes. Coldblooded, meaning they're at the mercy of the environment for survival. No charm. The number-one villain of myth and legend, from the Bible onward. Underdogs, right?... Snakes don't bite people, people get bitten.... They have three defensive attitudes, and they use them in this order when they're threatened: One, they try to hide. Two, if they can't hide they try to run away. Three, if it's impossible to hide or run away, they defend themselves by biting. It's a last resort. Snakes are shy of people. They don't hunt them, don't hate them, don't eat them. It's the other way around.⁶

The herpetologist does what no one else does, he attempts to understand the snake and imagines how it is to be "seriously disadvantaged". He wants to look at it from the snake's perspective; he wants to get into its mind and even tries, obviously in vain, to raise compassion by disqualifying snakes as "underdogs". His empathy, however, is nowhere rewarded, let alone understood, for everybody else just fears and later hates the snake. Further, by stressing the snake's defensive character, the herpetologist puts the blame on

the victims or on humankind in general, for if they had simply stayed away from the snake they would not have been bitten. As such it is also an attack on humankind's behaviour towards animals in general, for no one admits that the snake is not in its natural habitat, and that this is one reason why the snake causes problems. Converse develops this point further in an argument with a cop:

'It's [the snake] a murderer,' Eastman said, 'and I believe in capital punishment.' Converse shook his head. 'It has to be caught before somebody else is hurt, but it's a fact that a snake doesn't attack out of malice. Whenever it bites something it can't eat it's because it felt threatened.' Eastman smiled, but his eyes were blue ice. 'Whose side are you on - ours or the snake's?' ⁷

It is the well known argument again: blind hate (eyes like "blue ice", cold and merciless) and the desire to kill versus love and admiration for the animal, with a total ignorance of the majority of people about the real circumstances of animal life. Later, at a news conference, Converse widens his argument into an environmental discussion. It is because of his still friendly attitude towards the snake that he gets into trouble with the police who finally fire him. His failure, first at the news conference when he tries to convince the press and the police that the snake could be captured and "put [...] in a zoo", and later when he arrives too late to prevent the snake from being torn apart by religious fanatics, symbolizes also the failure of the citizens of New York to deal with the snake in any other way but to massacre it.

This text proves once more that the snake is on land what the shark is in the water, probably the most feared and hated animal at all, causing nothing but disgust and horror. Ramona and Desmond Morris in their extensive analysis *Men and Snakes* present two surveys among children and adults which both prove that the snake outstrips all other animals in being the most disliked and feared animal. They argue that more than twenty-

five per cent of children and still more than twenty per cent of over fourteen-year olds fear the snake more than any other animal.⁸ Hence both novels *Jaws* and *The Snake* play with long established subconscious fears of the average reader.

In both texts the animal is only used to create and sustain fear and horror. The authors achieve this partly by choosing the most dangerous kind of its species. As explained the great white shark is a killer, and nothing else; equally the black mamba is not only one of the most venomous but also one of the most aggressive snakes in the world, feared in Africa and well renowned for its deadly poison; it is even reported to give chase to its victims at an amazing speed, facts which are explained in the text. These facts are in line with what the renowned biologist Dr B. Grzimek writes about the black mamba:

The Mambas (*Dendroaspis*) are much more feared and ill-famed in Africa than are the resident cobras....The most familiar is perhaps the black mamba (*D. polylepis*; L 4 m), the largest venomous snake in Africa. It is characterised by lightning-quick, elegant movements in branches and the vigour of its reactions....Black mambas often move back after striking their prey and make a series of bites in rapid succession....The black mamba, which is the one which comes to the ground most often, is actually olive-brown or gray brown. Contrary to their reputation, mambas do not make wild attacks on harmless travelers. They are shy, and will flee into the foliage when people approach. Only the black mamba has been known to attack; bus drivers in mamba country halt when one of these large snakes is crossing the street....Excited mambas lift their head and neck and open their mouth threateningly....They have also been unfortunate accidents with these deadly snakes, and their bite has killed a human within twenty minutes.⁹

The accuracy of biological facts in both novels underlines the authority and credibility of each text, and hence increases the intensity of the horror created. Both animals emerge here as instinct driven predators, shark and snake are "ill-famed" and there "have also been unfortunate accidents". They do not think, they do not seem to have emotions, and if so, we do not get to know them; their only function is to kill and ingest. The white shark and the black mamba are animals of extremes within their species. As with all other hunting stories the animal's first description is of special importance:

The snake was eleven feet, two inches long, and slender. Its head was coffin-sided and comparatively small for the length of its body. Its eyes, dark brown and round were wide open. It was unable to shut its eyes because it had neither eyelids nor nictitating membrane.¹⁰

Godey begins with the length of the snake's body, "eleven feet, two inches long", an information which he repeats again later in the text when he describes the snake lying "on the surface of a large black rock a short distance from the tree it had sheltered in, its eleven-foot length spread out to the sun". Next he describes the eyes, eyes which are always watching because the snake "was unable to shut its eyes". Many of the snake's victims as well as the reader feel being under constant observation by the snake, again an effect which Godey repeats throughout the text. Godey increases these effects by focusing extensively on the snake's smelling and touching senses; odoriferous observations as well as reverberations are the only feelings reported about the snake. The reader realizes that the smelling sense is the snake's only means to detect and locate prey, hence the horrifying effect of the continuing descriptions of whatever the snake smells. The snake's most frequently described activities are smelling and biting. Biting is what makes the snake dangerous; it constitutes hence its power and creates fear and horror, for Godey frequently describes the terrible consequences for the victims of being bitten: your mouth gets choked with saliva, you feel increasingly tired, you cannot walk anymore and suddenly you know you have to die.

The snake is also able to "hypnotize" her human victims, with strong and "tough guys" like the mugger Torres being either stunned or suddenly paralysed when they see the snake. Even the brutal killer Torres, the snake's first victim, cannot help being somehow controlled by the snake:

Torres started toward the sailor, and his eye was caught by something moving in the box. He saw two points of gleaming light and a dark shape moving slowly from side to side. The dark shape moved upward on a long column, and Torres, staring, realized that it was the head and neck of a snake. As he watched, frozen, the snake started to slide out of the box. It slithered over the rim, pouring out in a continuous motion. It kept coming, slow and smooth, no end to it, and Torres thought he must have been dreaming. '*Madre de Dios!*' He looked on in fascination as the snake poured out of the box, drawing itself into a loose coil until finally a thin tail flipped out. Then the snake raised its head up high on its stiffened neck and stared at Torres. Its head was small and flattened and its eyes were bright and shining in the darkness. Some of the coils were practically touching the sailor's body. The snake was flicking its long tongue in and out, and its head swayed over the sailor's body, like, Torres thought wildly, it was guarding it...The snake kept looking at him with its gleaming eyes, and the tongue kept sliding in and out. It was like they were both hypnotized, Torres thought, staring at each other across the sailor's body. (Godey's emphasis)¹¹

The first thing Torres notices are the snake's eyes, "two points of gleaming light", eyes which then "stared at Torres". Godey uses here the "active" image of shining light, suddenly the reader feels observed, if not penetrated by the eyes of a potential killer. You are "frozen", pinned down and fixed, and the snake starts to control you. The whole passage conveys an overwhelming impression of being paralysed and helpless, unprotected and defenseless, as well as totally dependant upon the snake. Passivity emerges here as a vital ingredient of horror.

In contrast to *Jaws*, the animal appears regularly within the story. Godey repeatedly explains the movements of the snake as well as biological processes, such as molting, killing and ingesting prey, how a snake moves, or the replacement of old fangs. In total *The Snake* contains a much greater amount of herpetological knowledge and facts, compared to the marine-biological data given in *Jaws*; this might be due to the fact that only very little research had been done about great white sharks in the 1970s.

Godey carefully uses and sustains fear throughout the whole text, a kind of fear which is gripping because it is so real. As in *Jaws*, everything which happens in this text is highly unlikely to happen in this exact constellation, but everything what happens is nevertheless possible, nothing which is unrealistic or impossible takes place, it is just

ordinary everyday life suddenly struck by deadly terror. However, none of the fear created in either *Jaws* or *The Snake* is complex or intricately; on the contrary, it is extremely simple and plain. Without conveying this fear quickly and effectively the text would lose its fascination; it would simply be reduced to a biological and chronological report. This fear creates in addition the strong desire to get to know what happens to the snake, how is the problem solved, how are the citizens of New York going to be relieved from this Damocles' sword; only the knowledge of the death of the snake will provide the desired relief from this fear. This effect is partly created by describing events which nearly everybody fears and which are very easy and quick to enter into, such as the common fear of stepping suddenly on a snake. This is what happens when the snake's second victim encounters the snake while walking at night through Central Park:

He walked alertly, his eyes moving actively from left to right and behind him - only a fool took anything for granted - but he still saw it an instant before he stepped on it. He saw it but didn't quite believe it, which was perhaps why, with his right foot on the way down to meet the pavement, his reflexes didn't react to compel the foot to step clear over it instead of coming down flatly on its tail. The tail rolled under his foot (he felt its steely firmness through the thin leather of his sandal) and he no longer questioned the snake's reality. Revulsion ran through his body from his foot to his brain, and in an effort to step free - though perhaps the writhing of the snake had something to do with it - he lost his balance and fell on it. The snake whipped back on itself, coiling and twisting to free itself of the man's weight. Its head curved back, mouth wide, and it struck. Its fangs sank into flesh. It bit again. It launched a third strike, but the man was rolling away from it, so that, although one of its fangs penetrated, the other only grazed the target. The snake lost its balance and fell toward the man. Writhing, its light underside visible, it forced its coils back against the man, and pushed itself away. Quickly, with powerful surging curves, it slithered off the walkway and into the grass.¹²

This is the perfect horror vision; walking alone at night in a park and then suddenly stepping on a vicious monster which does nothing but bite. Part of this scene includes an everyday experience, for everybody has stepped on something and felt it through thin sandals. In addition the man gets bitten in a state of complete helplessness, after he has lost balance and has fallen to the ground, he has no means at all to defend or protect himself. Another means used to create fear is the herpetological hard fact that black

mambas occasionally pursue their victims at a speed of up to ten miles per hour. The description of the snake's very first attack contains two details which trigger off the process of rapidly growing fear and horror:

His [Torres] fingertips had just touched the wallet when the snake's head shot forward, so fast that it was a blur, and he felt a sharp stinging pain in his thigh. Before Torres could move, the snake struck again, launching itself over the sailor's dead body, and he felt it hit in almost the same place. Torres shouted hoarsely and jumped back. The snake was erect again, hissing, its mouth gaped open. Torres retreated half a dozen paces and looked at his thigh. His beige pants were slightly reddened by a few tiny spots of blood. It didn't hurt there, just a feeling like pins and needles. When he looked up again the snake's body was in motion, curling forward over the sailor's body, moving toward him¹³

The lightning speed of the two bites as well as the "sharp stinging pain" make the reader shiver, but the threatening erect posture of the "hissing" snake plus the snake "curling forward...moving toward him" turn the reader into the hunted victim, fearing for his/her life. Suddenly, completely unexpected, the animal turns round and attacks, the onlooker becomes the prey. Later, the fact of black mambas giving chase is backed up by the herpetologist with confirmed reports from Africa.

In another passage Godey describes how the snake kills:

The olive-slate color of the snake's top blended with the shadowed leaves of the tree, and the starling, lighting on a bough, did not see it. The snake's vision was highly developed, with particular acuity to perception of movement, and, because of the placement of the eyes at the side of the head, commanding a large field of view. It had picked up the starling in flight and watched it flutter to its perch. The bird was four feet from the snake's head and facing outward from the tree. The snake's darting tongue picked up the odor of prey. Unmoving, alert, tensed, the snake stared at the bird. Then anchoring itself by its prehensile tail, mouth wide open, it shot forward in a blur of speed, and sank its fangs into the bird's body. The bird squawked and flew off. But before it had gone twenty feet its wings began to flutter erratically and it dropped to the ground. The snake did not pursue. It stretched out on the tree, its head hanging downward, its eyes focused on the movements of the bird. Even when the bird struggled feebly into a patch of undergrowth and out of range of the snake's vision, the snake did not follow. It waited patiently for perhaps five more minutes before it circled down the tree. On the ground it trailed the bird unerringly by means of the special scent left by an injected prey. The snake's poison organ was a digestive juice in the form of a highly specialized proteinacious saliva. Thus, the snake's venom, in addition to killing the prey, had at the same time begun the process of digesting it. The starling was dead when the snake found it in the brush. The snake maneuvered its length until the bird's head lay directly in front of its mouth. The bones supporting the snake's lower jaws moved in the skull, the elastic ligaments between the halves of the jaw stretched, and the mouth opened to an astounding width which would accommodate the swallowing of a prey far bigger than the starling, and even larger than the diameter of the snake itself. The snake hooked the teeth of one side of its mouth

into the bird's head. Using this purchase as a fulcrum, it pushed the other side of the mouth forward a short distance, engaged the teeth (which were useless for chewing and hence required the snake to swallow its prey whole), then repeated the ratcheting process, opposite side after opposite side. The recurved shape of the teeth, acting as hooks, would have prevented a struggling prey from escaping once it had been engaged by the teeth. The snake gradually ingested the starling, not so much swallowing it as drawing itself over it.¹⁴

This passage is very similar to the beginning of *Jaws*, quoted in chapter 10. They are both placed within the first three chapters of the narration and their function is to make the reader shiver and to set him on a track which will continue until the end of the text. Both passages describe the killing and devouring of an innocent being, either a young girl or a starling, for both of which the reader immediately feels sympathy and compassion. What is so frightening is the emotionless, inexorable, rather mechanical process of killing and then ingesting the prey. The victim is in a state of complete innocence or relaxation; neither the girl nor the bird have the slightest idea of any danger, nor do they have any chance of escape or survival, for the snake pursues its prey "unerringly". The animal kills by complete surprise, out of the blue. In both passages the work of the animal's jaws is described extensively, that is how the animal actually "eats" its prey. Altogether it sounds like a scientific, neutral and emotionless report, hence reflecting just what the animal does, instinct-driven killing without any emotion.

Finally Godey finishes his text with a final paragraph which secures perpetual horror, and this not only for superstitious readers suffering from triskaidekaphobia:

[the snake] had mated in the spring at the breeding grounds near Elizabethville, and laid her eggs in the burrow three days ago. If they survived hunting animals and the winter cold, they would hatch out in the spring. Each egg that came to term would produce a twelve-inch-long black mamba, resembling the full grown snake in every particular except color. Each would be light green on top, and pure white on the underside. Each would be highly aggressive, in the way of young snakes, and its venom, from the very instant of birth, would kill a large rat. The snakes would grow very rapidly toward their mature size of ten or eleven feet. But, long before then, their venom would be potent enough to kill a man or a horse. The eggs were approximately the size of a hen's eggs, oval in shape, and white in color. There were thirteen of them.¹⁵

By summarizing the danger of each young snake, its aggression and its potent venom, plus the meaningful number of thirteen, Godey neatly accomplishes his aim: to create and maintain horror and fear.

Notes

- 1) Bierce, Ambrose *The Eyes of the Panther*, p. 66
- 2) *ibid.*, p. 71
- 3) Godey, John *The Snake*, p. 141
- 4) *ibid.*, p. 155
- 5) *ibid.*, pp. 124, 125
- 6) *ibid.*, pp. 83, 84
- 7) *ibid.*, p. 86
- 8) Morris, R. and D. *Men and Snakes*, pp. 96-97
- 9) Grzimek, Bernhard, (ed) *Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6, pp. 425, 426
- 10) Godey, p. 22
- 11) Godey, pp. 16, 17
- 12) *ibid.*, p. 45
- 13) *ibid.* pp. 17, 18
- 14) *ibid.*, pp. 36, 37
- 15) *ibid.*, p. 223

13. SAVING THE BEAR: CURWOOD'S *THE GRIZZLY KING*

The hunter turned conservationist James O. Curwood (1878-1927) is one of America's most prolific nature writers. His novel *The Grizzly King* was published in 1916 and is analysed here vicariously for the many other books by American nature writers such as Ernest Seton Thompson and Charles Major. *The Grizzly King* was republished in 1992 under the title *The Bear* as a response to the growing demand created by the hugely successful filming of the story by the French director Jean-Jacques Annaud in 1988. As with *Jaws* the filming of the hunt for a single animal triggered off a great public interest in the original novel.

The story describes how a huge male grizzly, named Thor, and a young bear cub, named Muskwa, meet in the mountainous wilderness of northern British Columbia. Thor adopts the helpless cub, which has lost his mother, and the two then travel together. They are mercilessly pursued by two trappers, Bruce Otto and Jim Langdon, with the latter also being a nature writer. As soon as the hunters realize the grizzly's exceptional size they are both obsessed with killing the bear who twice succeeds in escaping the hunters. Finally Jim Langdon is, after having accidentally broken his rifle, cornered and threatened by the bear, but the bear withdraws without killing him once he realizes that a single unarmed man is no danger to him. This leads to a change of mind in this hunter and as a result they stop chasing the bear.

The text describes the events from two different perspectives, one is the animal's point of view, the second is the hunters' perspective. Most of the twenty chapters, however, deal with the events from the bear's perspective, a perspective not used before

(1916) in American hunting fiction. Further, in moments of confrontation, Curwood employs the same narrative technique as Peter Benchley does about sixty years later in *Jaws* by using alternating paragraphs jumping from the bear to the hunter and back again in order to make the description livelier, thus creating suspense. In both novels the omniscient third-person narrator begins by taking the reader directly into the animal; he describes the animal's sense of detection. Benchley writes that the senses "transmitted nothing extraordinary to the small, primitive brain"¹ and Curwood begins:

It was the sense of smell that held him still and motionless now. Up out of the valley a scent had come to his nostrils that he had never smelled before. It was something that did not belong there, and it stirred him strangely.²

This smell is the "man-smell", the smell of the hunters as the reader gets to know shortly afterwards. Both narrators continue to return frequently to describing the sensual experiences of either the shark or the bear. By excluding the sense of vision and substituting it with the sense of vibration or smelling the reader is forced to follow the narrator's path because both senses are not as highly developed in humans as is the sense of vision; the reader can not rely on his/her own experiences to judge the story.

The cast in this novel is extremely parsimonious, two bears against two men, and only two of them are real antagonists: Jim Langdon versus Thor. In addition women or civilisation are nowhere mentioned. Again, this is a hunting text full of opposites. The hunt takes place in the first weeks of July, at a time when life is flourishing, when the grizzlies mate, and when new life is created. The beauty, bliss and tranquillity of the grizzly's home are contrasted with the invasion of the two trappers, interested only in getting the biggest grizzly ever killed in British Columbia. Thus it is *mating* versus *killing*, or *creation* versus *destruction*. Another contrast can be found between the two bears, with one being a rather

gargantuan grizzly versus, or juxtaposed with, the tiny little bear cub, just a few weeks old. Here it is *young* and *old*, *weak* and *strong*, *inexperienced* and *experienced*, suddenly brought together. Thirdly, it is the two hunters against the two bears, a pair of opposites which symbolizes here not so much the creatures itself rather than their attitude towards killing. The hunters kill indiscriminately, they hunt for profit and they even kill a bear cub just to get dog food. In contrast Thor kills only for personal need. The grizzly is, as Curwood writes:

the greatest of nature's conservators. With him nothing went to waste that was good to eat, and at the present moment [just having killed] if the old bull caribou had deliberately walked within his reach Thor in all probability would not have killed him.³

Curwood reminds us here about Natty Bumppo's attitude "Use, but don't waste", which at the turn of the century had become even more important than at Cooper's times. Thus it is *responsible* versus *irresponsible* killing or harvesting, but this can also be seen in the sense of *merciful* versus *merciless*, in particular with regard to a confrontation later in the text in which Thor allows an old and weak grizzly to eat from his prey.

As in so many other above discussed hunting stories it is the bear's exceptional size which makes it so desirable as a trophy; he would "made a fine rug in [the hunter's] den." When the huge size is further combined with slyness and cunning tricks to escape, the hunters get even more determined and obsessed with killing Thor. Again, one animal is unduly singled out, obsession and hatred enters into the hunt, and an extreme polarization takes place. Curwood increases the impact of this polarisation by describing Thor's reaction towards the new smell of the puny creature, the "strange white-faced thing" that had hurt him. He simply hates it and growls frequently at it. Thor's reaction is as instinct-

driven as the one of the white shark or the one of the black mamba, all are simply predators.

Integrated into this story is a change of attitudes towards killing which happens in the mind of one of the hunters, the naturalist Jim Langdon. After the first encounter between the hunters and Thor Curwood describes the fanatic enthusiasm and determination of the hunters:

'Bruce, that's the biggest grizzly in the Rocky Mountains!' 'He'd 'a' made a fine rug in your den...' 'And I'm going to have him in my den before I finish...I've made up my mind. We'll make a permanent camp here. I'm going to get that grizzly if it takes all summer. I'd rather have him than any other ten bears in the Firepan Range. He was a nine-footer if an inch. His head was as big as a bushel basket, and the hair on his shoulders was four inches long. I don't know that I'm sorry I didn't kill him. He's hit, and he'll surely fight shy. There'll be a lot of fun in getting him.'

'There will that,' agreed Bruce, "specially if you meet 'im again during the next week or so, while he's still sore from the bullets....The harder you hit a grizzly the madder he gets, an' if you keep hittin' 'im he keeps on getting madder, until he drops dead. If you want that bear bad enough we can surely get him.'

'I do,' Langdon reiterated with emphasis. 'He'll smash record measurements or I miss my guess. I want him, and I want him bad, Bruce. Do you think we'll be able to trail him in the morning.'⁴

Again hunting and killing is "fun", and it is even more fun the wilder and aggressive the grizzly is. The hunter's desire to get this very bear is so strong that - as with Ahab whenever he hears about Moby Dick , or as with other hunters like Quint or Rusty - the hunter wants the bear "bad" and changes immediately all his plans once he realizes how outstanding the prey is. Both hunters also hope to break the record for the biggest grizzly ever killed in British Columbia once they realize that the bear's footprints are an inch bigger than all previously recorded ones.

At another campfire discussion the first doubts in Langdon's mind come to light:

'One has to hunt and kill and hunt and kill for years before he discovers the real pleasure in big game stalking,' he said slowly, looking into the fire. 'And when he comes down to that real pleasure, the part of it that absorbs him heart and soul, he finds that after all the big thrill isn't in killing but in letting live. I want this grizzly, and I'm going to have him. I won't leave the mountains until I kill him. But,

on the other hand, we could have killed two other bears today, and I didn't take a shot. I'm learning the game, Bruce - I'm beginning to taste the real pleasure of hunting.'⁵

This is a rather dubious statement which lacks credibility, for "letting live" is just the very thing the hunters do **not** want to do, for them the "big thrill" is only in killing. In fact, Langdon contradicts himself within this single statement, for he praises himself for having spared two bears but is still absolutely determined to get "this grizzly." It also becomes clear that for him a vital part of the "game" is that he is in charge; he can choose which bear to kill and which to spare, a rather arrogant attitude which again shows how dependent he is upon killing. He is clearly and heavily infected with "bear-fever." The passage is, however, an important parallel with Faulkner's section two of "The Old People", in both passages "the big thrill isn't in killing but in letting live."

A significant change in Langdon's attitude takes place when Bruce tells him about a fellow hunter who used to tame bears and who kept a bear as a pet. Langdon is deeply touched and has more and more doubts about the legitimacy of hunting. When talking to Bruce at the camp fire he reveals his thoughts:

'And I'm beginning to love them, Bruce. I don't know just why, but there's something about bears that makes you love them. I'm not going to shoot many more - perhaps none after we got this dog-killer we're after. I almost believe he will be my last bear.' Suddenly he clenched his hands, and added angrily: 'And to think there isn't a province in the Dominion or a state south of the border that has a 'closed season' for bear! It's an outrage, Bruce. They're classed with vermin, and can be exterminated at all seasons. They can even be dug out of their dens with their young - and - so help me heaven! - I've helped to dig them out! We're beasts, Bruce. Sometimes I almost think it's a crime for a man to carry a gun. And yet - I go on killing.' 'It's in your blood,' laughed Bruce, unmoved. 'Did you ever know a man, Jimmy, that didn't like to see things die? Wouldn't every mother's soul of 'em go to a hanging if they had the chance? Won't they crowd like buzzards round a dead horse to get a look at a man crushed to a pulp under a rock or a locomotive engine? Why, Jimmie, if there weren't no law to be afraid of, we humans'd be killing one another for the fun of it! We would. It's born in us to want to kill.'⁶

In this conversation the two hunters symbolize two very different positions. Langdon's increasing doubts about hunting and his fear for the future of the bears are contrasted with

the position that man is born with a drive or instinct to kill, that hunting is a perfectly natural thing which goes together with humankind's general curiosity to witness death. This argument of man being an innate hunter has been put forward and discussed extensively by, for example, Robert Ardrey in his important study *The Hunting Hypothesis*.

Langdon is in a dilemma; he starts to appreciate the beauty of the wilderness and the wildlife in a different way; his determination to kill the bear is increasingly undermined by doubts, and these doubts succeed after his final decisive encounter with the bear, this time alone and unarmed, cornered in a place where he cannot escape. The shock of this confrontation leads to a complete U-turn in Langdon's plans, he refrains from hunting and killing Thor. Similar to the biologists in *Jaws* and *The Snake*, Langdon, although deeply scared, is also fascinated by the bear's beauty when he is close to the bear for the first time:

Thor advanced - just one step; and then, in that slow, graceful movement, reared himself to full height. Langdon, even then, thought that he was magnificent⁷

Langdon is virtually pinned down, not only by fear but by awe as well, he is stunned and overcome by the beauty of the grizzly king. Curwood then continues with a description of Thor's movements:

And a great, slow doubt swept through Thor's massive head...And then, slowly again, Thor came down to all fours. Steadily he looked at the man...As it was, Thor disappeared slowly in the direction from which he had come, his great head hung low, his long claws click, click, clicking like ivory castanets as he went...Three hundred yards away Thor was ambling slowly over the crest of the dip toward the eastward valley.⁸

The frequent use of the word "slow" shows how the bear acts, like a king, majestically and dignified, very similar to Faulkner's Old Ben, with the full conscience that he does not

have to fear "this shrinking, harmless, terrified thing that had hurt him."⁹ What Curwood describes here is the usual situation turned round; the hunter becomes the hunted, with the bear being in absolute control during this encounter; he is in no hurry and he alone decides what to do next. Langdon, in contrast, experiences simply helplessness, or, as Curwood wrote, "[Langdon's] first thought was that he was powerless - utterly powerless."¹⁰ He lacks the very thing which makes hunting fascinating for many, the possibility to exercise power. The whole encounter is very similar to the one between Hooper and the shark, with Hooper being helplessly suspended in his shark cage.

This encounter is the last in the series of events and conversations which make the reader realize that s/he is reading an anti-hunting novel. Curwood uses the animal with probably the worst reputation in America of being a killer to lead trophy hunting ad absurdum; to make the reader understand how it feels for the animal when it is threatened with unnecessary death. Yet in all his rage and hurt the bear spares Langdon's life, and with this merciful gesture achieves a complete change of attitude. Thor gets more by letting live than the hunters do by attempting to kill him. Man in contrast is described as the intruder into this hitherto untouched wilderness, as someone who suddenly tries to impose his laws upon the wilderness. Curwood uses Thor as a symbol to show that this imposition is wrong.

Finally, two points remain to be discussed. *The Bear* is the first hunting text in which the sense of smell is of importance. The grizzly's vision is very limited, he is extremely myopic, but his smelling sense is very well developed. Frequently when the narrator changes to Thor, he describes what the bear smells, and he usually employs the expression "man-smell" whenever Thor smells the hunters. This expression is also used by

Felix Salten eight years later in his anti-hunting story about the life of a young buck, entitled *Bambi*. Secondly, Curwood does not only want to raise the reader's awareness for the problems of wildlife, he also points out the beneficial effects of outdoor life upon human health:

Langdon frequently reminded himself that such mornings as this had made him disappoint the doctors and rob the grave. Just eight years ago this June he had come into the North for the first time, thin-chested and with a bad lung. "You can go if you insist, young man," one of the doctors had told him, "but you're going to your own funeral." And now he had a five-inch expansion and was as tough as a knot. The first rose tints of the sun were creeping over the mountaintops; the air was filled with the sweetness of flowers, and dew, and growing things, and his lungs drew in deep breaths of oxygen laden with the tonic and perfume of balsam. He was more demonstrative than his companion in the joyousness of this wild life. It made him want to shout and sing and whistle. He restrained himself this morning. The thrill of the hunt was in his blood.¹¹

Curwood highlights here the medicinal value of the wilderness, something which was done for the first time by the Reverend William H.H. Murray in his 1869 hunting book *Adventures In The Wilderness*. This book has the same theme as the above cited passage; the beneficial effect for weak or ill people of simply spending time in the woods. Life in the woods makes you strong, it has healing powers which succeed those of traditional medicine.

Notes

- 1) Benchley, *Peter Jaws*, p. 3
- 2) Curwood, James O. *The Bear*, p. 7
- 3) *ibid.*, p. 56
- 4) *ibid.*, pp. 31, 32
- 5) *ibid.*, p. 60
- 6) *ibid.*, pp. 151, 152
- 7) *ibid.*, p. 166
- 8) *ibid.*, pp. 166, 167
- 9) *ibid.*, p. 166
- 10) *ibid.*, p. 165
- 11) *ibid.*, pp. 33, 34

14. CONCLUSION

One result of this study is the discovery of a large group of hunting texts ranging from the late eighteenth century to the 1990s which describe hunting and killing in a certain way. The size of this representative but by no means complete group underlines the significance of the hunting motif in American literature. American writers liked and used hunting stories for a variety of purposes. The texts belong not only to different genres such as the novel, the hunting diary or the short story, but also link a wide variety of subjects with hunting, a point which shows the versatility of the hunting motif.

For the texts analysed in this study a tripartite structure can be established: they are either political, pro-hunting or anti-hunting texts. Political texts by Crèvecoeur, Roosevelt and Mailer use hunting in order to promote a social or agricultural idea or a particular virtue or vice of the human character in relation to society. Pro-hunting texts by Révoil, Roosevelt and Hemingway simply glorify hunting and virtually 'relish' killing. Anti-hunting texts by Cooper, Curwood, Salten and Carver try to raise environmental awareness and describe often senseless or unnecessary killing and suffering. Pro-hunting texts tend to have a first-person singular narrator who is determined, decisive, straightforward and purports to be always in control of the situation. They avoid extensive descriptions of death or killing and rarely use the animal's perspective. Anti-hunting texts have usually a third-person singular narrator who sometimes provides less firm guidance and is far more interested in emotional issues. These texts often include a change of perspective; instead of describing the action from the hunter's or narrator's

anthropocentric point of view they choose the animal's biocentric perspective, usually to describe the animal's suffering when hunted down.

Several writers employ opposites to reveal polarisations or conflicts during the hunt. In them the hunt is full of opposites, of things which often confront each other or are juxtaposed in the most direct way possible. Many of these opposites are constructed and used by the hunter to legitimize and defend hunting. The first major opposition in hunting texts is probably *life* versus *death*, with the death of the animal as the ultimate fulfillment of man's oldest activity. *Death* changes - or terminates - everything, but with regard to hunting it means usually the sudden metamorphosis of the antagonists involved. The animal, usually great, beautiful, cunning (according to the hunter) and often dangerous, is irrevocably changed into a poor, maimed or crippled creature, a creature without any of its former grace or dignity. The hunter feels relief, calm, maybe relaxation, sometimes even post-coital satisfaction or the pride of having had it his way.

One the other hand, *life* can here be seen in a double sense, first in relation to the living animal, often a monarch in his kingdom unchallenged by anyone except the heavily equipped hunter. Next, we have *life* as symbolised by the hunter who is not only himself alive but who is also the one in charge of *life* and *death*. Thus we have *life* versus *death*, or *hunter* versus *hunted*, or *man* versus *animal*, or *alive* equalling beauty and dignity versus *dying* signifying being poor, crippled and humiliated.

The animal takes us to the next opposition. The *animal* as a free, wild and living creature versus parts of the animal stuffed as, or reduced to, a *trophy*, with this trophy functioning as a visible and commonly accepted proof of the hunter's deed. The degree of

bravery or prowess with which some people - often fellow hunters - associate the hunter once he has killed the animal depends on its size or ferocity. Thus the *fear* every hunter has to overcome is in opposition to *bravery*, *strength* and *determination*, or *obsession*, to kill. The hunter constructs his adversary as what he wants to find in himself, an animal with qualities such as wildness or ferocity. M.F. Ashley Montagu in his 1968 study *Man and Aggression* analyses this process and concludes:

The myth of the ferocity of "wild animals" constitutes one of Western man's supreme rationalisations, for it not only has served to "explain" to him the origins of his own aggressiveness, but also to relieve him of the responsibility for it - for since it is "innate," derived from his early apelike ancestors, he can hardly, so he rationalizes, be blamed for it! And some have gone so far as to add that nothing can be done about it, and that therefore wars and juvenile delinquents...will always be with us!¹

The animal's supposed ferocity is the point from which anti-hunting texts such as Cooper's *The Pioneers* or Curwood's *The Bear* start in trying to portray a different, non-aggressive and often humanized animal.

Hunting takes place in *natural settings*, in the *woods*, the open *fields* or the *sea*. These areas are contrasted with where most of the modern hunters originate, *civilisation*. But *civilisation* versus *wilderness* suggests more than just geographically different places; with regard to hunting it implies, on the one hand, civil and organized or controlled against brutal, disorganized and wild. Again, it implies the opposition of *innocent nature* versus *greedy civilisation*. Robert Clark argues in his introduction to the 1993 Everyman-edition of Cooper's *The Deerslayer* (1841) that

the Leather-Stocking figure grew in importance until he came to personify all that is noble about a life lived in harmony with nature and diametrically opposed to the greed and moral duplicity that characterizes life in society. The opposition of natural innocence to civilized cupidity is a recurrent theme in Western literature..., but it achieves special emphasis in the eighteenth century when Enlightenment philosophers foreground the idea of human perfectibility.²

In the case of *The Deerslayer* this means the conflict between the hunting culture of the Indians against the hunting culture of the white settlers who with their cultivation of the land destroyed the wildlife. The large number of hunting stories and their diversity shows that the hunting motif is not only a part of this recurrent theme but that it describes a complex conflict with many different variations, the diversity of which is underlined by the many different oppositions surfacing in them.

These oppositions also include *civilisation* in the sense of the hunter's home, normally implying the presence of women, versus the *womanless woods* or *sea*. The historical experience that women do not hunt in North America goes together with the apparently paradoxical personification of nature as being feminine, a personification undertaken by the hunter to justify 'male' mastery. There is a double sense in which women are involved; on the one hand they remain at home, ready to receive the returning hunter, on the other hand their presence is evoked in the very place to which the hunter escapes. But hunters do not only feminize nature, for as Merrit Clifton argues in his "Killing The Female: The Psychology of the Hunt," this affects even the use of language:

Subliminal confusion of hunting with sexual pursuit and achievement of manhood gushes through hunting terminology, from the ritual of "first blood" to technical discussions, of the penetration power of ammunition to the frequent, casual, unconscious use of "her" (as in "I shot her right there") to describe male animals.³

The area where the Nimrod acts provides us with another opposition, the seeming *peace, harmony* and *tranquility* of forest or sea against the *intrusion, shooting, aggression,* and *killing* which suddenly disturbs and unbalances nature's last sanctuary. Whichever position one supports depends on individual choice in a final opposition, *pro-* versus *anti-hunting*, a choice which is left to everyone, except the animal. It is striking that

hunting includes so many binary oppositions; in no text do we meet three or more opposites, attitudes or opinions confronting each other. This dualism facilitates or clarifies the actual confrontation and increases the pressure each part can exercise upon the other. Simple opposition implies quick satisfaction, that there is a clear way ahead, not too many distractions on the way towards the trophy.

With these American hunting texts in mind we can now attempt a definition of the chase. The term 'hunting' signifies here the chase for one or several animals by one or several hunters, with the killing of the animal as the purpose and climax or fulfillment of the hunt. In each of the texts analysed the hunt has at least one of three functions. It can be a detailed description of the struggle between man and animal in which the man tries to kill the animal to get food for himself or other people, to sell products such as fur or meat, or to redeem people from an often long lasting and dangerous threat. This hunt is hence a 'natural' part of man's daily life to secure food and thus survival. Secondly, the hunt can also be seen as a direct reflection of the author's personal experiences, made through journeys or hunting expeditions. They in turn often provide the source for the hunt's basic pattern and are the basis for minute technical descriptions of hunting. Thirdly, the hunt can be a symbol or metaphor for something of greater importance and significance, such as man's struggle against the forces of nature or the vicissitudes of life. In these cases the hunt provides the hunter with an ideal opportunity to prove his bravery or to overcome his fears. The search for something completely different from the actual hunt, such as an explanation for an abnormal behaviour or a desire for revenge can be a further motivation. Here the hunter is on a quest either for the understanding, or the finding, of some inner

truth, a truth which is often difficult to understand or to assess. There is often a close relation between this internal and external hunt in these cases.

The hunted animal is nearly always in its natural habitat (the sea, the woods) where it feels safe and has the advantage of knowing the area. The hunter has to leave his habitat (civilisation, settlements, whaling vessel) and must intrude into the animal's terrain, hence he often has to accept disadvantages, such as the loss of protection or restrictions to his movements. This is for the hunter part of the fascination or challenge of hunting. Like many other activities hunting is often exercised according to a strict code. The young hunter is taught or introduced by an elderly and more experienced hunter who is usually well accepted within his community. As soon as the young hunter has killed his first animal in the proper way, he is initiated in a certain ceremony, sometimes by being marked with the animal's blood. The hunting code demands that the animal has to be killed as quickly as possible and that the hunter should always try to avoid unnecessary suffering.

I want now to move to a psychological assessment of American hunting texts. For more than two hundred years American writers have described hunting in texts which demonstrate an enormous amount of violence, a readiness and inclination to kill, and a disregard for the plight of animals. Although a great number of animals are hunted and killed in these texts the actual process of killing and the exact circumstances of the precise moment of killing remain unclear. Neither in reality nor in literature are they ever extensively discussed or criticized, let alone questioned, even though this is a relatively common activity. There seems to be a blindness in hunting texts towards the moment of killing. But the killing of an animal usually by a male individual at the end of an often

exhausting and dangerous outdoor hunt is a complex process which reveals important details of the hunter's character and of his society.

The superficial motivation for hunting, for killing, for pulling the trigger or throwing the harpoon, can be threefold: hunting for personal need, for profit or trading, and for pleasure or relaxation. All three kinds are described in the fiction of the United States. Of them all the final one, hunting for pleasure or sport, remains the most difficult to understand, particularly when it happens repeatedly. In stark contrast to nearly every other regularly pursued activity, hunting and the moment of killing was and still is inadequately analysed in literary criticism; in particular a psychoanalytical approach is still missing. The emotions of killing seem to be guarded with an iron fence, inaccessible to an outsider. And whoever kills for pleasure seems to be rather reluctant to talk about it. An experienced hunter does not invite conversation about the crucial moment, which, once completely uncovered, might endanger any future hunting or killing.

For the hunter in seventeenth and eighteenth-century North America survival was the main reason for hunting. Hunting was simply an absolute economic necessity, with meat being the main source of food. This was particularly the case with the pioneer and trapper, for whom there was no alternative to animal meat. Even as late as 1834 the trapper Osborne Russell in his famous *Journal of a Trapper* reports several times that with some areas "being entirely destitue of game we had to live chiefly upon roots for ten days." ⁴ The possibility of proving your bravery and virility while hunting was at that time only of minor importance compared to the economic justifications.

Hunting for pleasure, a phenomenon known in Europe for centuries due to the hunting privileges of the rich, surfaced in the United States only from the nineteenth century onwards when hunting ceased to be one of man's primary activities. It is this form of hunting which leaves room for further discussion. Why do men still hunt when there is no need to do so? One justification is that it is an ideal opportunity to develop, improve, or reveal willpower, determination, dexterity and certain skills. Another reason is the opportunity to escape from narrow restrictions such as domestic or relationship problems, with the possibility of experiencing nature and the outdoor life. Here hunting is another form of male bonding, with campfire talk as an important ingredient. The question why men hunt is among various aspects of modern hunting discussed in M. Knox's article "In the heat of the hunt."⁵ In this article several men, two hunters and a director of an environmental organisation, give their views for and against hunting. The writer Dan Sisson justifies hunting by listing the many things which fascinate him about it, such as the "genuine challenge" and competitiveness, the "uncertainty" of whether or not to kill, the "aesthetic appreciation of nature" and the chance to "simplify" his life "away from the noise and the pollution of urban environments" , hunting for food, the deepening of his relationship with his son during many campfire talks, and the significant contribution to conservation of raising 5,000 valley quail of which he himself killed only forty-nine. The "indulgence of the instinct to kill" is not important for him. However, he skilfully derives a genuine right to hunt and kill from dividing every species into either prey or predator. The belief that all animals have an "equal right to life" is a "fallacy" for him and an artificial construct of civilisation. Sisson is further supported by another writer, Humberto Fontova,

who in his defence of hunting admits point-blank that hunters "take delight" in killing, they "get a thrill out of killing animals". He thinks too that man is a predator, and argues that because this has been the case for "tens of thousands of years" killing is a long established natural urge.⁶ Knox continues with an important observation concerning the most recent development of the character of the hunter:

The old fair-chase laws against shooting from a vehicle, using spotlights after dark, and leaving salt licks or bait are increasingly ignored, believes Joel Scrafford, a senior agent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "A lot of hunters now are into the macho image and equate success with whether or not they kill," Scrafford says. "We're seeing fewer and fewer hunters raised in a rural environment where they grew up with an appreciation of just being outdoors among wildlife."⁷

Like Norman Mailer in his novel *Why Are We In Vietnam?* Scrafford envisages hunting as just another amusement park activity, with killing as its greatest attraction. The consequences are terrible, with more and more animals being slaughtered with no regard at all to the hunting code, and hunting degenerating into high-tech entertainment.

Closely linked to an assessment of any of these reasons for hunting is the function of killing. The actual killing of the animal is for many the most cruel and repulsive part of hunting. It leads to the question: what happens in the hunter's mind when he is killing? What do men feel when they are pulling the trigger, throwing the harpoon, or smashing a seal's head with a club? Literature dealing with these questions is scarce, although within the last twenty years a few books and articles, usually initiated by conservation clubs or groups, have emerged which try to analyse this activity. Historically, the act of killing seems to connote power, bravery, manliness and strength. Simone de Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex* that "it is not in giving life but in risking life that man is raised above the animal: that is why superiority has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings

forth but to that which kills".⁸ There is also a very early link between killing and sexuality. Keith Thomas in his study *Man and the Natural World Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* quotes the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne:

In all cases [of 17th century hunting] the climax of the hunt was the death of the hunted animal, for, as Montaigne observed, to hunt without killing was like having sexual intercourse without orgasm.⁹

According to Thomas the thrill of sexual excitement is what makes hunting so fascinating for Montaigne. Taking into account that seventeenth-century hunting was exclusively exercised by the nobility, who had plenty of opportunities for sexual satisfaction, this link is even more surprising.

One of the few detailed descriptions of actually killing animals can be found in the article "Life and Habits of the American Fur-Seal" by Wilfried H. Osgood:

The actual killing is done with long ash clubs shaped like long baseball bats and weighing about five pounds each. These are wielded by experienced men hardened to the nature of such work. It is stern business and obviously not a task for the soft-hearted, but, although as described it may appear brutal, no one so regards it who has seen it in operation and who understands the nature of fur-seals. Although the method is primitive, it is exceedingly effective and quite as humane as the best methods used in killing domestic animals. Small groups of "pods" of seals are successively cut off from the main herd and driven up to the clubbers until the whole drive is disposed of. Each seal of proper size is stunned by a sharp blow on the head and while still unconscious a knife is easily thrust to its heart. It is not subjected even to a struggle but appears to die without pain, so the process cannot be regarded as cruel. Unlike many animals, it is wholly indifferent to the smell and sight of blood, since so much is spilled in the daily life of the rookeries, so it is scarcely more terrified during the final stages of the drive than at the beginning. After the seals desired from each small pod have been killed, the remainder, consisting of those that are too large or too small, are driven to the sea at the most convenient point. They swim off somewhat hurriedly but only to the nearest hauling ground, where they may be found within a few hours peacefully sleeping and ready to be driven again. Since this process has gone on season after season for over a hundred years without any change in the habits of the seals it is quite evident that they are neither sensitive nor intelligent.¹⁰

Osgood's Cartesian view, that seals "are neither sensitive nor intelligent", displays and combines shocking biological ignorance with the idea that killing seals is a rather innocuous activity and the most gentle way of treating them. The underlying arrogance with which Osgood tries to convince the reader of the benefits of "clubbing", for which it

nevertheless takes "men hardened to the nature of such work" (the macho image of the hunter again, his work is "no task for the soft-hearted") is in line with the other articles dealing with game management. Such literature is used to show that killing can be scientifically justified, and hopefully the reader is going to be manipulated in favour of hunting.

A similar attempt to influence the reader is Ortega y Gasset's chapter in his 1942 *Meditations On Hunting*, called "The Ethics Of Hunting", which also discusses the function of killing.

All this leads up to that final scene of the hunt in which the fine skin of the animal appears stained with blood, and that body, once pure agility, lies transformed into the absolute paralysis that is death. Was it all only for this, we ask ourselves. More than once, the sportsman, within shooting range of a splendid animal, hesitates in pulling the trigger. The idea that such a slender life is going to be annulled surprises him for an instant. *Every good hunter is uneasy in the depths of his conscience when faced with the death he is about to inflict on the enchanting animal.* He does not have the final and firm conviction that his conduct is correct. But neither, it should be understood, is he certain of the opposite. Finding himself in an ambivalent situation which he has often wanted to clear up, he thinks about this issue without ever obtaining the sought-after evidence. I believe that this has always happened to man, with varying degrees of intensity according to the nature of the prey - ferocious or harmless - and with one or another variation in the aspect of uneasiness. This says nothing against hunting, but only that the generally problematic, equivocal nature of man's relationship with animals shines through that uneasiness. (Ortega's emphasis)¹¹

Ortega y Gasset talks about "the enchanting animal" and the subsequent ambiguity, but, however magical the animal, the hunter still wants to kill it. The word Ortega y Gasset chooses to describe the mood of killing, "uneasiness", is indeed appropriate for not only this moment but the mood of other hunting stories, such as the ones by Raymond Carver, as well. No hunter rejoices when having killed, even someone as passionate as Hemingway feels afterwards "a little quiet inside" (see Ch. 7). Death and joy do normally not go together.

Ortega y Gasset's statement that the hunter lacks the "firm conviction that his conduct is correct" is surprising not least of all because firm determination is what characterizes many hunters in, for example, American hunting fiction. Certainty and clear orientation towards the kill is what many hunters want to display. Instead Ortega y Gasset presents the hunter in this passage as a thoughtful man who will never obtain "the sought-after evidence." With this Ortega y Gasset tries indirectly to raise understanding and support for the hunter's case, a man on a quest for his inner self rather than a brutal 'mentally disturbed' animal butcher.

One of the very few texts which tries to uncover the emotions surrounding the act of killing in recent U.S. hunting is John G. Mitchell's 1980 analysis *The Hunt*. He describes his extensive journeys through various parts of the United States such as Texas, Wyoming and Alaska. A former hunter turned naturalist he accompanied passionate longtime hunters on their search for deer, elk, bear and birds. He too asks "Is killing fun?" and he also links killing with sex. Amongst others, Mitchell questions the New York neurologist and hunter Mortimer Shapiro about his feelings when killing animals:

He is the neurologist who tells me that squeezing the trigger is like putting a period at the end of a sentence, that what counts is not so much the death of the animal as everything that comes before. "There is a wild romanticism about Africa," he is saying. "Almost always you see game around you and the panorama is superb. Hunting, there, you are living with the moving finger of time. There is only the present. You see the tracks. You see the animal and it becomes a love object. There is a tremendous sexuality in this. I don't mean the parlor sexuality of the psychoanalyst who sees the gun as a phallic symbol, but sexuality in the sense of wanting something deeply, in the sense of eros. All quests, all desires are ultimately the same, don't you think. And as you close in on the animal, all the cold fat of your being is cut away. All the wheels are turning and greased. And as the animal moves into your sights, you are most thoroughly alive. Of course, there must be handicaps....In shooting elephant, it's getting close enough - mere yards away - to place the bullet into its brain. One shot. You lessen your odds considerably doing that, because at that range the elephant can kill you."¹²

Here hunting is described as a physical and mental peak, with all your wheels being "turned and greased." Further it is sexual desire ("eros") or even love for the animal he is killing that characterizes Shapiro's feelings while hunting. Like Montaigne he sees a clear sexual link between the act of killing and the hunter. This would also explain the admiration for the animal and its rather 'female' attributes of grace and beauty, so often felt and expressed by hunters. This love could either be the sheer admiration for record size within its species, and the subsequent record trophy, or a genuine love for the animal. Both kinds of emotion surface frequently in hunting texts by Melville, Révoil, Curwood and Faulkner.

However strange these emotions appear, it is at least to a certain degree understandable if a man goes into the woods to kill and dress an edible animal, provided he consumes it afterwards. If, however, he only guns the animal down, leaves it - maybe injured - and then goes on to kill another animal, things are different. Deliberate random killing, a rapidly increasing phenomenon in the United States, is worth a closer look. In order to decode this outlet for sadistic aggression or killing for fun as it is frequently called, I shall draw on Sigmund Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*, published in 1930, and on his essay "The Uncanny".

The book's main theme is the irremediable conflict between the demands of a destructive instinct and the restrictions of civilisation. In the process of analysing this conflict Freud makes a number of observations which can be directly applied to American hunting. The first such rule says that satisfying a wild instinctual impulse, as, for example, hunting and killing, yields extreme pleasure, is in fact much more than satisfying a tame or

less destructive one.¹³ Two points included in this statement have often been put forward or admitted by defenders of hunting. First, that hunting is an instinct and, second, that it yields pleasure. Instinct implies the active image of an innate impulse, and this plus the thrill, excitement and satisfaction are, as this thesis tries to prove, clearly palpable in the hunting texts of, for example, Révoil, Roosevelt and Hemingway. What characterizes these texts is that they use a vocabulary of words such as fun, joy, challenge, thrilling, or going wild, to indicate that killing animals is fun, and that every hunter can be sure of having a satisfying time while out hunting.

A second rule says that civilisation works **against** the satisfaction of powerful instincts and that civilisation has to use its utmost efforts in order to set limits to man's aggressive instincts and to hold the manifestations of them in check.¹⁴ This explains what I would call the "escape function" of hunting, a function which surfaces in texts by Cooper, Faulkner, Mailer and Carver. Hunting takes place **outside** the boundaries of civilisation, the restrictions of which are strongly disliked by hunters. Of course, hunting takes place outside the settlements because the game is in the woods, but that does not diminish the importance of hunting as one of the few opportunities to get away from overcrowded societies and their restrictions. If hunting were to take place in cities or settlements it would clearly lose its fascination for all those hunters who stress the outdoor experience of hunting, which they can only appreciate with a rifle. I would also like to use Freud's observations to help us draw conclusions about American society, conclusions which become clearer to us through analysing hunting. If Freud's observation is correct, than surely can one interpret the increasing problems of hunters and hunting in America as

described above as an indication that American society's "utmost efforts in order to set limits to man's aggressive instincts" ¹⁵ are not working, or result in an even bigger potential and inclination to kill; they may also allow us to conclude that the aggressive instincts of modern young Americans in particular are still very much alive. Writers like Mailer and Carver dealt with this phenomenon in their hunting stories.

Thirdly, Freud observes that the temptations of aggressive instincts are increased by constant frustration ¹⁶, a point which can again be applied directly to hunting because in many of the texts discussed in this study it can be seen that the hunter gets angry and even more determined when frustrated or unsuccessful; that is, when the animal manages to escape. Examples of this can be found in the novels of Melville, Curwood, Hemingway, Mailer and Benchley. Here hunting shows the ugly consequences when the "wild instinctual impulse" cannot be satisfied. In these cases the hunt ends in humiliation if not death, the return without any trophy equals failure and is a lost opportunity to prove masculinity.

A fourth point concerns the "compulsion to repeat and the conservative character of instinctual life", two points which Freud first discussed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in 1920. ¹⁷ The compulsion to repeat and the hunter's anxiety to conserve hunting conditions, such as sufficient opportunities to kill, are both widespread and typical of American hunting. The tenaciousness, sometimes even slyness, with which hunters cling to their rights, documented in studies like Cleveland Amory's *Man Kind? Our incredible War on Wildlife* and in Lewis Regenstein's *The Politics of Extinction*, shows the addiction of the hunter and his inability to envisage a different way of satisfying this instinct.

Finally, Freud links the sadistic instinct to the "instincts of mastery" ¹⁸ and argues that the impulse of cruelty arises from the desire to dominate. Again, a direct transfer is possible because the hunter wants to be in charge, he is the one pulling the trigger, and even if he lets the animal go he feels he is dominating the confrontation. This sense of mastery is palpable in some of the narrators who try to glorify hunting, such as Révoil, Roosevelt, and in particular Hemingway. It may also be possible to link the recent constant refusal of hunters to accept that hunting is cruel to Freud's statement, for if hunters accept that hunting is cruel they are likely to be drawn into a debate about instincts and psychological problems. Instead, hunters prefer to describe their sport, as Amory and Regenstein have sufficiently demonstrated, as a clean and healthy outdoor recreation.

In his essay "The Uncanny" Sigmund Freud provides sundry definitions for the phenomenon some of which allow us further insights into the psychology of hunting texts. Freud argues that "one of the most successful devices for easily creating uncanny effects is to leave the reader in uncertainty whether a particular figure in the story is a human being or an automaton".¹⁹ In several texts (Révoil, Roosevelt, Mailer) the reader gets the impression of a hunter acting like "an automaton", killing time and again and acting as if under some mysterious inner compulsion. This 'detachedness' of the hunter, his inaccessibility to rational arguments, is what alienates or disturbs the reader. Closely linked to this is the iterability or constant recurrence of hunting and killing, a phenomenon described by Freud in his essay as "the dominance in the unconscious mind of a 'compulsion to repeat' proceeding from the instinctual impulses."²⁰ During the hunt

something surfaces which “ought to have remained secret and hidden”, such as the desire to kill or maim, and subsequently the reader is bewildered or upset by this constant display and inclination to kill. Another reason why some hunting texts have an uncanny effect is revealed by Freud’s statement that “the better orientated the less likely you are to experience anything uncanny”.²¹ It seems in particular that modern readers are increasingly disorientated while reading hunting texts, increasingly incapable of understanding hunting or following the hunter into his terrain, the woods or the sea. Part of this is due to rapidly increasing environmental awareness. Freud writes further about “the uncanny effect of silence, darkness and solitude”, an effect which he relates to the “infantile anxieties from which humans have never become free.”²² The forest, for example, is silent and dark, so is the act of killing, and in addition the hunter is often a deliberate solitary. The absence of real communication or emotional exchange in hunting texts increases this effect.

Finally, I want to suggest a connection between animal killing and homicide, in particular if committed by serial killers. This link was prompted by the recently published research in serial killing, undertaken by the Behavioural Science Unit of the FBI in Quantico, Virginia. In a certain sense the regular hunter is a serial killer who goes out time and again trying to chase and kill either a single, or various animals. It could be argued that what Colin Wilson and Donald Seaman state for serial killers in their 1992 report *The Serial Killers A Study in the Psychology of Violence* can be transferred to some animal hunters:

For this kind of killer, murder becomes a habit and an addiction. Henry Lee Lucas [a convicted serial killer] told the police: 'I was bitter at the world...Killing someone is just like walking outdoors.' It also became clear that such killers murder out of some fierce inner compulsion, and that after the crime, experience a sense of relief and a 'cooling-off period'. Then, like the craving for a drug, the compulsion builds up again, until it is time to go in search of another victim.²³

Hunters like Billy Kirby and Mr. Jones in *The Pioneers*, Ahab in *Moby-Dick*, Hemingway's Francis Macomber, Rusty and M.A.Pete in *Why are we in Vietnam?*, or Quint in *Jaws*, often seem to be "bitter at the world", and to act under "some fierce inner compulsion" to get revenge, or to prove their superiority or dominance over the animal, instead of over a woman.

But this is not the only parallel. Another concerns the reasons or motivations for killing. Again a look at Wilson's and Seaman's report is revealing:

In our own time ...serial killers have been members of the working class or lower middle class, struggling with a sense of alienation and frustration. For them, murder is a form of class assertion. There is certainly some truth in this notion; so far there have been no upper-class - or even upper-middle-class - serial killers. The reason for this may be the one suggested in Chapter Seven; that serial murder may be a human expression of the 'overcrowded rat syndrome', and that upper- and middle-class children are unlikely to suffer from overcrowding.²⁴

The "overcrowded rat syndrome" and its related increased pressure are exactly the same as what Crèvecoeur (see Ch. 2) and the critic Thomas Philbrick suggest as reasons for killing, such as overcrowding in Europe, or in the settlements over a long hard winter. Killing emerges here as an activity to release tremendous pressure and aggression, built up over long periods of suppression. Hence contemporaneous descriptions of hunting would allow us to draw conclusions about American society; for example that there must have been problems in community life which produced a substantial amount of violence.

The animals this hunter is going to kill can be categorized in two groups. The first group consists of animals which are weaker than the hunter, as for instance a buck, a deer, a marlin, a fox, a bird, a coon or a rabbit. Although no direct threat to the hunter himself some of these animals are rather difficult to kill because they are either very fast and flexible, difficult to find, or very cunning. Here the hunter is trying to kill his own

weakness because he is stronger, clearly dominating, and feels safe and superior because his gun or harpoon protects him from any danger. The second group contains animals that are bigger, stronger and very dangerous to hunt, such as a whale, a lion, a bear or a shark. Here the hunter nearly always risks his life while hunting and the animal often has a fair chance to escape or to win this fight. This includes the possibility of injuring or even killing the hunter, who then suddenly becomes the hunted instead of the hunter. In these cases the hunter tries to kill or at least to temporarily overcome his own fears, fears with which he seems to be incapable of coping otherwise. Defeating one's own fears through killing emerges here as a form of therapy, killing as a remedy which temporarily, until the next killing, provides relief. This hunt becomes very similar to a bullfight or a *corrida* and, as the American critic James Hart observed, it becomes "a kind of microcosmic tragedy, in which the death of the bull is inevitable, but must be achieved by the observance of ritual, which gives the animal a maximum chance to destroy the matador."²⁵ Hart's terse statement, originally intended to explain Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon*, shows how tight the rules of hunting are, the narrow guidelines for a "ritual" which have to be observed and which are explained in the hunting code. It is also worth noting that in many American hunting texts the hunted animal is an extreme within its species, that is it is of exceptional size, beauty or strength. One effect of the animal being so exceptional is a stronger polarisation between hunter and hunted, and perhaps an increased fascination for the reader.

From all this it is possible to draw a psychological profile of the American hunter, a profile which is matched by descriptions in hunting fiction. The hunter is a man with an

unusually high potential of aggression and frustration, an insatiable urge to hunt, a man with a strong desire if not addiction to kill various kinds of animals, and thereby to release pressure. The actual kill is the most vital part of the hunt, the hunter thus achieving recreation through destruction. He seems to act under a fierce compulsion to repeat, each killing resulting in a form of calmness which provides only temporary relief. Killing emerges here as a therapy, as a way of overcoming frustration or personal emotional problems. Closely linked to this is a certain social behaviour. The hunter is on average a lonely man, somebody who is deliberately searching for solitude and who is not dependent upon human company. He often escapes from domestic or marriage problems and seems to be a "wifeless" man, or a man with severe problems of communicating with his wife/partner. Women are not only excluded, they must not interfere in any way with the hunter's life. Subsequently there is an absence, or at least a restriction of dialogue in hunting stories, an inability to communicate with or about women. Conversations are restricted to hunting or hunting related topics, the hunter seems to be inaccessible to rational or critical arguments about his life. He is incapable or unwilling to discuss or question anything related to hunting or killing, probably because he does not want to endanger his only left outlet for aggression. The American hunter can also be categorized according to his (in)flexibility. Some hunters, notably Ahab, are inflexible, stubborn, fanatical and incapable of undergoing change or learning. Others, for example, Natty Bumppo, Isaac McCaslin, Santiago or Jim Langdon are willing to learn or change their mind.

Summing up it can be said that the hunting motif is widespread and complex, and hence an important part of American literature. Hunting texts allow us a new and deep insight into American society, as well as into the psyche of one of America's most important heroes - the hunter.

Notes

- 1) Ashley Montagu, M.F. *Man and Aggression*, pp. 4, 5
- 2) Clark, Robert in Cooper, J.F. *The Deerslayer*, Everyman 1993, p.ix
- 3) Clifton, Merrit "Killing The Female The Psychology of the Hunt," in *The Animals' Agenda*, p. 29
- 4) Russell, Osborne *Journal of a Trapper*, p.9
- 5) Knox, M.L. "In the Heat of the Hunt", in *Sierra*, November/December 1990
- 6) Knox, pp. 51-55
- 7) *ibid.*, p. 58
- 8) de Beauvoir, Simone *The Second Sex*, p.28
- 9) as quoted in Thomas, Keith *Man and Nature Changing Attitudes In England, 1500-1800*, p. 146
- 10) Osgood, pp. 125-127
- 11) Ortega y Gasset, José *Meditations On Hunting*, translated by Howard B. Westcott, p. 88
- 12) Mitchell, John G. *The Hunt*, pp. 140, 141
- 13) Freud, Sigmund *Civilisation and its Discontents*, p. 16
- 14) *ibid.*, p. 49
- 15) *ibid.*, pp. 34, 49
- 16) *ibid.*, p. 63
- 17) *ibid.*, p. 55
- 18) *ibid.*, p. 55
- 19) Freud, Sigmund "The Uncanny", in *Art and Literature*, pp. 339-376
- 20) *ibid.*, p. 360
- 21) *ibid.*, p. 341
- 22) *ibid.*, pp. 369, 376
- 23) Wilson, Colin and Seaman, Donald *The Serial Killers A Study in the Psychology of Violence*, p. 2
- 24) *ibid.*, p. 297
- 25) Hart, James D. *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*, p.211

15 CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF AMERICAN HUNTING TEXTS

(This list is by no means complete. For bibliographical details see the bibliography 16.1)

- 1782 - J. Hector St John de Crèvecoeur: *Letters from an American Farmer*
- 1823 - James Fenimore Cooper: *The Pioneers*
- 1835 - Washington Irving: *A Tour on the Prairies*
- 1836 - W. Irving: *Astoria: Or Anecdotes of an Enterprise beyond the Rocky Mountains*
- 1837 - W. Irving: *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A.*
- 1851 - Herman Melville *Moby-Dick*
- 1854 - Henry David Thoreau: *Walden*
- 1855 - Alexander Ross: *The Fur Hunters Of The Far West*
- 1869 - William Murray: *Adventures in the Wilderness*
- 1875 - Benedict Révoil: *The Hunter and the Trapper*
- 1880 - (ca) Achille Daunt: *In The Land Of The Moose, The Bear, And The Beaver*
- 1893 - Theodore Roosevelt: *The Wilderness Hunter and Hunting Trips Of A Ranchman*
- 1901 - Charles Major: *The Bears Of Blue River* and Ernest S. Thompson: *Lives of the Hunted*
- 1904 - Jack London: *The Sea Wolf*
- 1914 - Osborne Russell: *Journal of a Trapper, or, Nine Years in the Rocky Mountains, 1834-1843*
- 1916 - James Curwood: *The Grizzly King*
- 1924 - Felix Salten: *Bambi*
- 1935 - Ernest Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa*
- 1936 - E. Hemingway: "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber"
- 1942/1955 - William Faulkner: "The Bear" and *Big Woods*
- 1952 - E. Hemingway: *The Old Man and the Sea*
- 1967 - Norman Mailer: *Why are we in Vietnam?*
- 1970 - James Dickey: *Deliverance*

1973 E. Peper and J Rikhoff: *Hunting Moments Of Truth*

1974 -Peter Benchley: *Jaws*

1976 - Norman Maclean: *A RiverRuns Through It*

1976 - 1981 - Raymond Carver's short hunting stories

1978 - John Godey: *The Snake*

1990 - Lloyd Abbey: *The Last Whales*

1992 - republishing of Curwood's *The Grizzly King*, under the title *The Bear*

1993 - Tom Lowenstein: *Ancient Land-Sacred Whale*

1993 - Todd Strasser: *Free Willy*

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