

THE LANDSCAPE OF SPORTING EXPERIENCE

Hunting as Sport and Ritual

Thomas R. Dunlap

Virginia Tech

Analysis of hunting as a sport must deal with its ritual aspects. The hunt provides the setting for “sportsmanlike” conduct, but advocates of sport hunting have always stressed the satisfaction of psychological drives and the re-creation of the virtues of pioneer America. The ideology of sport hunting is rooted in the psychological and cultural theories of the late nineteenth century, the class and gender roles of industrializing America, and the technological interests of American society. It is best regarded as the ritual behavioral component of the myth of the American frontier past, a myth created in late nineteenth century American society by “old-stock” Anglo-Saxon Americans as an expression of their dominance and as an attempt to perpetuate and transmit its values. Their vehicle was popular literature, and an analysis of this material shows the evolution of sport and ritual in American hunting.