



TRIGGER FINGER: A NARRATIVE EXPLORATION OF WOMEN AND TROPHY HUNTING IN DAVID CHANCELLOR'S SAFARI CLUB

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Abstract

In photographer David Chancellor's *Safari Club* (2012), hunters are captured with their kills in overstuffed trophy rooms of the hunters' designed spaces. One photograph from the series is of a woman hunter and her trophies (see Figure 1). This photograph sparked my investigation of women hunters and, in this article, I compare Chancellor's image of a woman hunter to other depictions of women hunters in popular culture. I specifically question my own positionality as a woman who has never hunted through self-reflexive narrative, ecofeminism and pro-hunting feminist theories. This article raises questions around women, trophy hunting, and how these are understood in different contexts: in my current home in Texas, by a world-wide network of readers to the *New York Times*, and by me.

Keywords: Hunting, Trophy Rooms, Narrative, Ecofeminism, Pro-hunting Feminism



Figure 1: David Chancellor/INSTITUTE. 2012. Used with permission.

Introduction to Chancellor's Safari Club

There are approximately 17 million women in the United States who own guns (Oyster & Stange, 2000) and I am not one of them. I have never fired a gun, nor even held a gun, so the heft and weight and feel of such an instrument is foreign to me. I wouldn't know how to carry it, where to put it, or what to do once it was in place. Similarly, I don't know what to do with the image of a female trophy hunter in David Chancellor's series *Safari Club*. I expect to dislike the woman in Chancellor's photograph (see Figure 1) but instead I find myself compelled to keep looking at her, waffling between respect and distaste, trying to understand why this woman hunts for sport. I am disturbed, yet intrigued.

For *Safari Club* (2012), Chancellor, a British-born photographer of a documentary reportage lineage, captured predators, and their once-living prey, in their trophy rooms in a series of photographs he took in Texas between 2004 and 2012 (Ryan, 2012). Chancellor's *Safari Club* photographs remind me of mammalian wunderkammers; cabinets of curiosities where the rooms are spilling over with dead animals. The hunters sit, dwarfed by their kills, surrounded by their glazed-eyed victories.

Chancellor deliberately sought out hunters in the “twilight” of their hunting lives (Bosman, 2012). He was interested in subjects who had participated in trophy hunting for more than three decades so that their trophy rooms would be at their maximum capacity (Bosman, 2012). All of the hunters in Chancellor’s *Safari Club* photographic series live in Texas and are recipients of hunting awards that honor their prowess and the abundance of their kills (Ryan, 2012). They have devoted their lives to collecting—a goal I find worthy when what is being collected are works of art but struggle with, in this situation, because the collection involves killing.

All of the images in *Safari Club* are of male hunters, save for one. This one photograph, out of Chancellor’s many, is a boomerang that I keep returning to, circling it, hunting it, as it were, to try to understand the mixed emotions I have when viewing it. As a White, upper middle class, educated woman raised in urban settings, I have been trying to make sense of this image; as a woman, as a feminist, but also as a new Texan where I have met many people I respect who have told me they hunt for pleasure. Even my mother, now 59 years of age and living in the low-crime suburbs of Chicago, asked for shooting lessons for her birthday this year. It all hits, pardoning the pun, close to home.

As a thread in this article, I chose to weave a self-reflexive narrative throughout because it allows me to confront myself, dominant forms of representation and power (Bochner, 2000), and to question myself, admittedly a person who is completely unaware of the world of hunting. Like Errante (2000), I believe that an individual narrative is a valid and worthy way to communicate personal and shared experiences with political, social, and cultural awareness. I am interested in the gender paradox in these images and how I might investigate their presence outside of the canonical discourse (Bochner, 2000).

In this article, I compare Chancellor’s image of a woman hunter to other depictions of women hunters in popular culture. These representations inspire a drastically different response. I also examine feminist theory, both pro-hunting and ecofeminism, related to women and hunting, as a way to situate my experience and to better understand the conflicting feelings society has constructed around women who hunt. Lastly, I analyze viewers’ comments to *Safari Club* when it was published in the

New York Times Magazine (Bosman, 2012) to gauge public opinion on Chancellor’s images. Their narrative responses, layered with my own and with feminist theory, provide another context for thinking about Chancellor’s photograph of a woman surrounded by the animals she has hunted.

My Bias and Limitations to the Inquiry

I am an educated, White, upper middle class woman who was raised in suburban Chicago and has lived in urban areas since. I have no experience with guns or with hunting. While growing up in the cookie-cutter suburbs, I never met one person who hunted for sport or for sustenance, nor in any of the places I lived afterwards. It was only after I moved to Texas that I realized hunting was such an important pastime for so many people. In the last two years, I have had many discussions with women hunters in Texas as I try to learn more about this culture and what it means to those women who hunt wildlife, to shoot with guns as a sport.

I am deeply troubled by gun violence and though I think this issue deserves attention and research, it is not the focus of this article. I address popular culture renderings of women hunters to situate Chancellor’s photograph in a contemporary context but gun violence, specifically, is not part of this discussion. Using a conversational writing style allows me to be expressive, honest, and forthcoming, in speaking to you. I hope you will talk back, and bring yourself into the reading.

The Image and the Exploration

The image that challenges me in *Safari Club* is of a woman, tiny in comparison to her surroundings (see Figure 1). She is wearing blue jeans, a suede jacket, and a wide-brimmed hat that is striped with a swath of zebra print (see Figure 2). Surrounding her are animals, upon animals—bears, bison, deers, wolves, turkeys, lynxes, moose, and animals for which I do not know the names. The animals are stuffed, mounted, and posed to look alive for posterity and pride. They crowd around her and she sits, composed and calm, hands on knees, legs crossed, in the middle of this animalian chaos.

It is a “Where’s Waldo?” scene and as my eyes adjust to the sheer



Figure 2: Detail of Image 1.
David Chancellor/INSTITUTE.
2012. Used with permission.

amount of animals in the image, I find *her* instead of Waldo. I don't know her name as she has chosen to be anonymous, only agreeing to Chancellor's photographs if her identity would remain hidden. She is no stranger to hate mail, mostly threats from animal-rights groups who are aware of her hunting prowess (Bosman, 2012). Reading about her request for anonymity, it suddenly strikes me that she killed these animals. All of them.

And, therein lie my muddled feelings that are hard to separate from inbred cultural and gender expectations. Do I feel disgust for this woman? Am I troubled by her cavalier attitude towards the life and death of these animals and the way she has chosen to show them off in her trophy room? Am I repelled by the sheer amount of money she must have paid to have the opportunity to hunt game in far-away places, to have them mounted, and hung in such

opulence? Hunting in the way that she hunts costs money, a lot of money. According to the Simpson Taxidermy Studio in Winneconne, Wisconsin, to have a taxidermist prepare a bear (of which, this woman has many), initial costs start at \$3,000. "Skull cleaning" for your kill will run you about \$135. Did you want the bear's mouth open in a ferocious roar for perpetuity? That will be an extra \$150 (Simpson Taxidermy, 2013).

The above costs are just to preserve your trophy. To hunt one, is a far more expensive endeavor. The Dallas Safari Club prices a 10-day Canadian hunting expedition for black bear and grizzly (there is at least one in this photograph that I can see) at \$10,000 (Dallas Safari Club, 2013). This level of expense strikes me as immense, perplexing, and disturbing. Why would people spend so much money to add an animal to their collection? Just as I wonder about the economic and personal capital of killing and preserving animals, I have been in many discussions with oth-

ers who are perplexed in the same ways about people who spend several millions of dollars for one painting. I acknowledge my own bias in this as I follow art auction records with fascination and enjoyment, yet am troubled by the money spent on hunting.

In spite of what I deem to be a frivolous use of money based on my own upbringing as a penny-pincher and as an urbanite who has not been taught to value game trophies, I am also intrigued by this woman, by what I assume to be her comfort with hunting, a sport associated with men. The sheer number of dead animals in her presence implies that this is a woman who is not afraid to look down the barrel of a gun and pull the trigger, even though she appears demure and docile in her poised and posed stance in the photograph. I am curious about the ways she has upended the Western gender binaries where women are traditionally seen as passive, domestic, gentle, and docile, as the gatherers rather than the hunters.

Yet, I am also intrigued by the inherent contradiction in what we see in this image; how she appears to be entrenched in gender expectations, that is, passive, dainty, and delicate in her personal appearance. We do not have a glimpse into the aggressive, physical act of killing that would have taken place with each of these animals. Instead, we see her in a very feminine pose; legs crossed, hands on knees, a hint of a smile tugging at her lips. I wonder about how this photo was taken and who decided what she would wear, how she would sit, what sort of expression she would convey and if this was done to balance the traditionally masculine sport of hunting with her femininity. Would I feel differently about this image if it showed her in the heat of the kill or in her hunting gear rather than as a Southern belle in the comfort of her home?

As an exercise in one of my classes, I showed Chancellor's photograph to a group of undergraduate students at the Texas university where I teach. The class was composed of 23 women and only 2 men. What emerged from the discussion was a rift in the class. One of the male students was outspokenly upset over the killing signified by this woman and her trophies. He raged and railed at her. When I asked for an alternative opinion to the animal right's activist in class, many more students began to speak about their own experiences with hunting and their attachment to it. All of the students who spoke up about their passions for hunting

were young women. One of these students, a quiet, thoughtful, bright young woman shared that she had been raised to hunt and that it was a great source of pride for her. It was something she did to be in touch with nature, to connect to her family, and to feed herself, both physically and emotionally.

I respected this student for speaking out with passion when she described what hunting meant to her. Up to then she had been quiet in class. Even the adamant animal rights activist of the class quieted as she described how careful and reverent she was of the animals she felled, of the symbiosis that she was intensely aware of as she hunted. She spoke about the skill and technique that the woman in Chancellor's image would have used in hunting the large-scale game that she did. Though I had assumed an expensive safari would be set up to fell animals as easily as shooting fish in a barrel, my student assured us this was not the case, that it would require great expertise, patience, and competence.

Using Chancellor's photo as a starting point for a discussion between two sides that often don't see eye to eye, I hope that we all expanded our understanding of others on that day. By the end of our time with Chancellor's image, the adamant male student and the female hunters had reached a point of understanding, though I doubt that either was convinced to adopt the other's belief system. Pedagogically, I strive to create a safe and comfortable space for controversial discussions and I work on setting this tone from the first day of class by nurturing mutual respect and value for diversity. I felt proud of the class, which had talked about such a divisive issue in a respectful way, learning more about a world that they had not inhabited. The male student who had so vehemently struggled with the image had grown up with no exposure to hunting, like myself, and he considers himself to be a pacifist as well as a vegetarian who couldn't even imagine killing for food. After hearing his fellow classmates speak about their very different upbringings that involved hunting for sustenance, commune with nature, and family, he seemed willing to consider that hunting was not as evil as he had thought before our discussion.

Even after this expansive conversation in class, I am still fascinated by Chancellor's female hunter and repelled by her. I do not get the impression that she is hunting for sustenance, as my student was, and this

point sticks with me as I look at her. As a whole, the class was unified in that they too found the image disturbing in the paradox of this woman who is clearly a proud hunter and killer, yet is depicted as passive and docile in Chancellor's photograph. In this way, the photograph portrays complex, competing systems of power, stereotypes, and expectations for women. In my confusion over this, I feel that it is important for me to examine other depictions of women as hunters and to compare them to Chancellor's image.

Woman as Hunter: Comparisons in Current and Historical Popular Culture

The depiction of woman as hunter has deep roots in history with Diana, the Roman goddess of the hunt, being one of the more familiar. The female hunter as a symbol is making a popular comeback in contemporary culture with such characters as Katniss Everdeen of the immensely loved *Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) trilogy. As a point of comparison to Chancellor's image, I will narratively discuss these two versions of women hunters as I examine what they represent about women as hunters.

As a child, I remember identifying with the spirited Diana who roamed the wilds with her band of female followers and her trusty dogs. Obsessed with mythology when I was younger, I often imagined that I would have pledged myself to Diana's service had I lived at that time. Often shown in a short tunic, with a quiver of arrows and a bow at the ready, Diana was a huntress of unparalleled prowess. She was a goddess who could fend for herself. I was proud knowing that the Romans hadn't chosen a man to be the god of the hunt: they chose a woman.

While working at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., I had many occasions to contemplate the Paul Manship bronze statue, "Diana."¹ In her sleek, Art Deco shape, she is pulsing with energy, resilience, and self-sufficiency. With her hunting dog at her feet, she runs forward while shooting an arrow behind her, an act that she makes look graceful and effortless. I have no doubt that it is not nearly so easy.

1. See image at <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.56352.html> (Diana (National Gallery of Art), n.d.)

Whenever I walked past her, on the way to a meeting or with a group in the gallery, I was always cheered to see her, a strong woman, recognized for being exceptional.

Diana may have fallen out of fashion as a deity of worship but her name and image still invoke the thrill and victory of the hunt. “Europe’s largest hunting agency” (Diana Hunting Tours, n.d.) is aptly named, “Diana Hunting Tours,” and caters to men and women alike. More in keeping with Diana and her exclusive tribe of women followers, Diana Hunts, Ltd., is a Hungarian agency that arranges hunting tours specifically for sportswomen with a motto of, “It’s quality, not quantity” (Diana Hunts, n.d.). Diana’s legacy lives on in the hunting world.

There are many other heroines of lore that were famous for their hunting capabilities: Calamity Jane, Laura Buillion, Lillian Smith, and most popular of all, Annie Oakley, who wasn’t considered exceptional in her day because she was a woman who hunted but because of her exceptional marksmanship (Kasper, 1992). Photographs of Annie Oakley typically show her dressed in a functional-looking, calf-length dress, her long hair in plaits or hanging down her back, and a wide-brimmed hat perched on her head.² I have never seen a photo of Oakley with an animal, dead or otherwise in the frame, though she is sometimes shown at the ready, pointing her gun at some imagined target outside of the photograph. Annie is depicted as active, with her gun at her side, even though there is no evidence around her that indicates how she uses her weapon. Oakley looks completely comfortable with her gun though perhaps less comfortable in her dress. Annie is usually shown wearing a chest full of medals, no doubt awarded for her shooting prowess. Chancellor’s woman has also won countless hunting awards for her “work” (Ryan, 2012), yet we see her with a very different kind of medal: her kills.

In similar fashion, the contemporary version of Oakley is the fictional, Katniss Everdeen, a character that has captured the imaginations of countless readers. Katniss, the main character of the dystopian *The Hunger Games* trilogy (Collins, 2008), is also a sure-shot of a huntress. She hunts to feed her family, using a bow and arrow and a clean shot. In the book, on screen, and in images, Katniss is portrayed as tough, ac-

2. See images at <http://www.annieoakleyfestival.com/about-annie-oakley.aspx> (Annie Oakley Festival, n.d.)

tive, and unconcerned about her appearance, a “tomboy” who hunts for survival rather than pleasure.³ Unlike Chancellor’s image, it would be hard to imagine Katniss posing demurely for the camera, surrounded by the animals she has shot. Katniss would never have kept kills as trophies, instead using all parts of them for practical purposes. She resisted having to appear feminine in order to appease others’ expectations for her, as evidenced in her behavior as a tribute for the fictional country of Panem in *The Hunger Games*⁴ (Collins, 2008).

Katniss has become a rallying cry for other women and girls who hope to elevate the concept of women as hunters. In an interview, Savannah Rogers, a 15-year old hunter and fan of *The Hunger Games*, who killed her first deer at age 8, said:

Katniss is a very independent young woman like me, who enjoys the outdoor environment. We both like the peace and tranquility offered by the cover of the trees. Hunting offers an escape for the both of us so that we can forget our troubling lives outside of our territory. (LeTrent, 2012, para. 10)

Like Diana, Katniss has become a character that women hunters can identify with and emulate. Katniss hunts for self-provision, something we cannot be sure about in the Chancellor image. The tie that binds is that these are all women who hunt, who know how to use a weapon, and to what effect. Pellegrini, author of the book, *Girl Hunter*, encourages women to assert their femininity in the field, saying, “Own the fact that you’re a woman. Women are wonderful shots. They’re very meticulous, patient and they’re very careful” (LeTrent, 2012, para. 22). Fifteen-year old Mikayla Lewis, agrees with Pellegrini:

The stereotypical hunter is expected to be a fat, drunk dude, and

3. See images at <http://www.thehungergamesmovie.com/index.html?section=photos&item=1> (Hunger Games Photos, n.d.)

4. Panem, the fictional country at the heart of Collins’ *The Hunger Games*, is made up of the Capitol and twelve outlying districts. Each year, the Capitol requires each district to send a boy and a girl, between the ages of twelve and eighteen, to compete in the Hunger Games, a battle of survival with only one living victor (Collins, 2008).

the stereotypical girl is expected to be squeamish and delicate. I feel like girls who are hunters are in the special position to punch both stereotypes in the face. (LeTrent, 2012, para. 23)

I find it laudable that Katniss Everdeen and the goddess, Diana, encourage women to embrace hunting and combat stereotypes.

I understand the pleasure that someone might receive from hunting for sustenance, to feel self-sufficient and useful. But, unlike Katniss or Diana, the woman in Chancellor's image does not seem to be hunting for self-sustenance, though we do not know for certain because of her anonymity. One can assume that for Chancellor's woman to undertake the act of hunting as many times as she has for purposes other than self-sufficiency, she receives a considerable amount of pleasure from this sport. Does this pleasure come from the challenge of the hunt, the pride of her prowess, the ability to assert herself as a predator? Does any of her pleasure come from being such a successful woman in a sport most typically linked to men? Asking what it means to be a woman who does not hunt for sustenance is a question with considerable implications. To help me better understand how to approach this question, I turn to two divergent theories on hunting: ecofeminism and pro-hunting feminism.

Feminism and Hunting

When I look around at all of the animals on the walls of this trophy room in Chancellor's photograph, I expect to see a cross between Theodore Roosevelt and Ernest Hemingway sitting amongst them, a gun slung over his lap and swilling rum out of a carved and hollowed rhinoceros tusk. I imagine the human subject of the photograph will wear khakis with a safari hat sitting rakishly on his head. I do not expect to see a woman sitting in the middle of these prizes and this disconnect is a source of curiosity for me.

To better understand the undercurrents of my personal debate around the image of the female trophy hunter in Chancellor's photograph, I turned to feminist theory. Here I found a conflict very similar to my own. As with debates around gun control, feminists have diametrically opposed views on women and hunting, specifically around women

who hunt for sport. Though not an exhaustive examination of feminist thoughts on hunting for pleasure, I present two of the most dissimilar strains: ecofeminism and pro-hunting feminism.

Most ecofeminists believe that hunting for sport is wrong. According to Marti Kheel (2007) in *The Killing Game: An Ecofeminist Critique of Hunting*, ecofeminist philosophers have called for an ethic that affirms human interconnection with the natural world and believes that hunting is not a good way to accomplish these goals. Ecofeminists, such as Kheel, define ecofeminism as, "A loosely-knit philosophical and practical orientation that examines and critiques the historical, mutually-reinforcing devaluation of women and nature," one that hopes to subvert "the ideological substructures that thwart the growth of an alternative orientation and consciousness toward nature" (2007, p. 8).

This is an inclusive and caring-based ethic where "the mere involvement of any woman in such male-identified activities as hunting and shooting is enough to qualify her as a creature of the patriarchal system: part of the problem, not the solution" (Stange, 1997, p. 76). In this way, a woman who hunts is a product of and reifies patriarchy and male-dominated structures and institutions.

On the other side of the argument are those feminists who believe in guns and hunting as a signifier of women's equality (Charles, 2011; Larish, 1996; Oyster & Stange, 2000; Stange, 1997). Almost one in ten women in the United States is a hunter and women account for almost 10% of the total hunting population (Oyster & Stange, 2000). It is almost impossible to determine the exact numbers of women who hunt, but estimated numbers continue to rise. Mary Stange (1997), author of *Woman as Hunter*, is proudly both a feminist and a hunter. She supports hunting because the concept of woman as hunter interrupts the dualism of Western thinking: male/female, aggressive/passive, dominator/victim, wild/domestic. Stange writes that the female hunter is, "a figure contemporary feminism needs to seriously reckon with" (1997 p. 9). She posits that when women choose to hunt:

They may or may not identify themselves as feminists, but whether or not they do, they have in common the fact that in taking up weapons for the explicit purpose of killing, they are

shattering one of Western culture's oldest and most firmly entrenched taboos. (1997, p. 6)

In this feminist viewpoint, we should celebrate women hunters because we are metaphorically shooting through the glass ceiling. Women, who take up hunting as adults, contend with serious negative peer pressure and sexism, barriers that come with the territory of infiltrating "what might be, in the popular mind, the most male-identified cultural pursuit" (Stange, 1997, p. 1). On this side of the feminist coin, hunting by women is championed for its equality and reversal of ages-old gender binaries and stereotypes.

It seems that pro-hunting feminism and ecofeminism view woman as hunter as very different things. She is both a hero and a wrongdoer in these opposed views. I try to imagine the different responses that an ecofeminist and a pro-hunting feminist might form when viewing this image of Chancellor's woman hunter. It doesn't take much imagination, as I feel somewhat representative of both strains. When the *New York Times* published part of Chancellor's *Safari Club* series (Bosman, 2012), I looked to viewer comments to see if both ecofeminist and pro-hunting feminist responses were represented by the *Times* reading public, and found each embodied in viewer's responses.

Viewers Responses to *Safari Club*

Looking into two very different feminist theories on women and hunting did not provide a unified view for me to turn to in my confusion over Chancellor's image of the woman trophy hunter. Similarly, when the *New York Times* featured Chancellor's images in a spread in the Sunday magazine (Bosman, 2012), the comments, which people wrote on the *NY Times* blog, mirror these feminist debates (Ryan, 2012). The majority of responses were negative, ranging from "Disgusting ... to say the least" (Michael, 2012), to, "What a profound waste of an individual's life and of nature" (Burlingame, 2012), and, "pretty much sums up everything wrong with the human race in one picture, doesn't it? Greed, vanity, selfishness, insensitivity, disrespect, anti-life, gluttony... arrogance" (Hallin, 2012).

Perhaps an ecofeminist wrote in with his/her thoughts, "[I would] rather collect art works and tread gently on the earth. Live people sitting in rooms full of dead animals are ridiculous. Where is the accomplishment? Unless your dietetic requirements include massive amounts of bear meat" (Jirriith, 2012). One of the anti-hunting commentators even felt inspired to put down his or her thoughts in a poem:

I loathe these despoilers of Life,
Blood stains with which their hands are rife,
Psychopaths on the loose
With killings profuse,
And obsessed with slaughter and strife. (Eisenberg, 2012)

While another anti-hunting contributor writes, "There must be some type of 12-step group for these people," suggesting that collecting animals is an addiction akin to alcoholism (Dusty, 2012).

Slate also featured Chancellor's work on trophy hunters in a photo blog (Rosenberg, 2013). At the time of this writing (June, 2013), there were 483 comments written over the period of four days in response to the article on Chancellor's photos. Viewer's responses can best be summed up by one online visitor's thoughts:

Wrap-up:
Trophy Hunters - 3
People Who Hate Them - 460
and the crowd goes wild (Fundog, 2013)

As in *Slate*, in response to the *New York Times* article (Bosman, 2012), there were many more anti-hunting comments than there were pro-hunting, but a few wrote in to say, "Your anti-hunting opinions are luxuriant ruminations based upon an uninformed and baseless revulsion of hunting" (Gunlvr, 2012). And, the conspiratorial:

Why do you select the tiny minority of super rich trophy hunters and ignore the vast numbers of ordinary sportsmen and women who may get a deer once in a while and eat the whole thing as

well? ... It is unfair to tar us all with the same brush. The Times, however, has an agenda. (Walsh, 2012)

In all of these comments, I found one that somewhat mirrored my own feelings of appreciation and apprehension, “It was very disturbing to see these pictures—I am not a hunter—but also intriguing to view. How people can live in or create a space like that is beyond me, but I’m glad I had a chance to see the photographs” (Dg, 2012).

Chancellor Emma Thompson is also finding strong push-back from her image of hunters and their kills (Taylor, 2013). Thompson, an Australian photographer, focuses specifically on women hunters from the Dubbo region of Australia, their kills, their guns, and their hunting dogs.⁵ She intends for her work to challenge the images she encountered in hunting magazines, ones that were mostly of men. She realized, while living in Dubbo, that there are a vast number of women hunters whose images we do not see. Thompson’s stated goals for her photographs are to, “challenge the male-dominated sport and seek out willing female shooters to pose with their kill” (Taylor, 2013, para. 8). Thompson’s photos have been received with outrage by animal and women’s right’s groups in Australia who feel that she is both objectifying women and participating in animal cruelty. Both Chancellor and Thompson have certainly upset people with their images of hunters and their kills, but I find this to be a productive space that could provoke further dialogue and questioning.

It seems that Chancellor recognizes his role in provoking this debate and encouraging viewers to question what is happening in his images and the greater implications of these photographs. Chancellor tries to remain neutral as he hunts his hunters, not commenting on whether or not the act is right or wrong, citing that all of the trophies seen in his photographs were killed legally (Ryan, 2012). For Chancellor:

The whole idea of the project is not to say whether it’s right or wrong. It happens. That’s what they do. It’s legal. It’s not to try to pull the curtain back and expose it because it’s completely legal

The idea is to produce a set of images, which make people question the logic. (Ryan, 2012, para. 7)

Chancellor, who has never hunted, also says that he never felt repulsed when looking at these trophy rooms. These animals will someday end up in prestigious natural history museums (Ryan, 2012). Often, as is the case with big time trophy hunters, the US government will visit a hunter’s collection to assess the estate taxes upon their passing (Ryan, 2012). In response, many trophy hunters have taken to donating their collections to museums when they die to avoid those taxes (Ryan, 2012). These animals will become the stars of the dioramas that students gawk at and learn from on class field trips.

Conclusions and Further Questions

I struggle with this image. I struggle with her, a trophy hunter, a woman, and I wonder what this says about me and about my ingrained expectations. Chancellor wanted his viewers to ponder the logic of his photographs and I find myself contemplating right and wrong, while also trying to frame my own ways for understanding it. This image has forced me to think and imagine in an uncomfortable space about what I don’t understand and might like to. Like the previously living animals, I feel hunted as I try to pin down a meaning for this photo.

When I look at this image there is something lurking behind my disdain for what she does, for the waste of life that lines her walls. What is it? What is that feeling that is hiding? I think it is respect; respect for her passion and her pursuit of it. Respect for her flying in the face of cultural norms, as a woman who hunts. I am baffled by how contradictory these feelings are. Disdain and disapproval, mixed with a strong dose of admiration for being a woman unlike one I have ever met before but who make up 10% of this population (Charles, 2011). It leaves me frustrated to not find a clear meaning in this image. However, through my research I find some consolation in knowing that I am not alone. Feminist scholars are widely divided and have been unable to reach consensus on the woman as hunter, and viewers of the images in the *New York Times* echo the divide as detailed in their comments and reactions (Bosman, 2012;

5. See images at (<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/outcry-over-hunting-arts-project-20130316-2g77c.html>) (Taylor, 2013)

Ryan, 2012).

What disturbs me the most is that I have complete disregard for Chancellor's other photographs in this series: those of male trophy hunters and their kills. I look at them and feel immediate contempt. I have no respect for what they do. If the photograph that is the central point of this article depicted a man, rather than a woman, I would dismiss it angrily. But, because it is a woman, I look at it in a different way, acknowledging that the woman in the photograph and I share something. I recognize that she is doing a thing that I would never have the courage to do and she is bucking a number of female stereotypes. I feel ashamed to say that I still admire this, even when what is at stake is such a great loss of animal life. Though still feeling confused about this photograph, I am grateful to it for forcing me to question my assumptions about what it means to be a woman and a hunter. Why haven't I picked up a gun and tried hunting before? In agreement with Mary Stange (2000), there is a deep-seated part of me, buried, which is afraid I might like it.

My mother who has been wishing for gun lessons? Her birthday was in August. For her present? I bought her shooting lessons.

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