Journal of Rural Studies 62 (2018) 164–173

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Rural Studies

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jrurstud

"He likes playing the hero – I let her have fun shooting". Gender games in the Italian forest during the hunting season

Stefano Giacomelli*, Michael Gibbert

USI Università della Svizzera italiana, Via G. Buffi 13, 6900, Lugano, Switzerland

1. Introduction

Based on both rural studies and consumer culture theory, the present article aims to describe attitudes and acts of men and women during a prototypically male activity that takes place in the rural setting – i.e. leisure hunting – in order to capture a modern evolution of patriarchy, a social system in which men exert domination over women. Gender performance and masculinity/femininity construction in rural settings have been a focus of modern rural studies, especially those involving northern European countries (Brandth, 1995, 2016; Bye, 2003, 2009; Follo, 2002; Pini and Conway, 2017; Trell et al., 2014). Some literature depicts rural men as "marginalized losers" (Trell et al., 2014: 15), with women asked to accommodate the masculine culture both at work (Follo, 2002) and during leisure activities (Bye, 2009) if they want to enter male-dominated environments. Other scholars view rural areas as idyllic places (Chueh and Lu, 2017) where a Smallville boy Clark Kent – Superman – runs an attractive farm, waiting for his perfect mate – whether hetero (Little and Panelli, 2007) or homosexual (Bell, 2000). The dramaturgical idea of 'social performance' in which people perform, redefine and negotiate their identities in relation to circumstances (Butler, 1990) and challenge previous social categories (Butler, 1994), along with the idea of men's hegemony and domination over women (Connell, 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel et al., 2005) are common in both streams.

In a similar vein (though largely independently of rural studies) consumer culture theory (a subfield of marketing) has devoted attention to gender performances during a variety of consumptive activities and developed the concept of 'compensatory consumptions' for both men and women. Whereas historians mark the Industrial Revolution as the moment in which manhood became linked to paid-work and womanhood to domestic life (Griswold, 1993; Kimmel, 1987), today women, who have acquired economic independence and public visibility, challenge the 'separation of sphere doctrine'. As argued by some scholars, men's reaction is to carve out (and protect) places of men's 'preserve' such as ESPN zones – i.e. themed restaurant and entertainment centers – (Sherry et al., 2001) and leisure activities such as mountain men gatherings (Belk and Costa, 1998), where they can, through consumption, nurture their masculinity that they otherwise perceive at peril. Hence, for example, a pub in New Zealand is a 'preserve' for men where 'conversational cockfighting' and the 'disciplines of drinking' are socially performed (Campbell, 2000). Women, on the other hand, lament their oppression in such male-dominated societies (Brandth and Haugen, 2000; DeKeseredy, 2015) and via demanding social freedom claim more equality through challenging the *status quo* in activities that historically are perceived as masculine (Brace-Govan, 2010).

Combining these insights underscores the non-static structure of gender performativity (Butler, 1990) as well as gender resignification through consumption processes (e.g. in Thompson and Üstüner, 2015), arriving at a kind of skirmish in which there is the apparent perception that men need to defend their last hide-aways where they can nurture their masculinity and women blindly attack modern social structures through discovering and 'invading' prototypically male domains. For example, according to Campbell, men ignore women during men-only conversations in pubs, in an attempt to defend this space from intrusions while women sit and wait "in the car with the kids for a couple of hours" (Campbell, 2000: 569). On the other hand, women manage to enter work places that are men dominated, such as the extracting natural resources sector (O'Shaughnessy and Krogman, 2011) and challenge prototypically male activities (e.g., riding a Harley Davidson: Martin et al., 2006) and sports (e.g. roller derby: Thompson and Üstüner, 2015) as forays into social gender equality. Leisure hunting represents a telling example of such a consumptive activity (Holt and Thompson, 2004) and a traditional 'preserve' for masculinity construction, through increasingly 'invaded' by women (Stedman and Heberlein, 2001; Lowassa et al., 2012). Whereas in Northern European countries or in the United States the percentages of hunting women are already quite high and close to 20% (http://www.face.eu/about-us/members/european-huntershttps://www.nssf.org/research/women-gun-owners), in Italy, female hunters represent only an estimated 3% of the entire national hunting community, although this percentage is growing (http://www.cncn.it/it/news/id/146.aspx, 2016 estimation), therefore providing an ideal context to study this phenomenon in real-time as it displays '*gendered processes*' when women enter a prototypical male context.

The main question we want to tackle is if leisure hunting represents

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: stefano.giacomelli@usi.ch (S. Giacomelli).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.08.005
Received 5 January 2018; Received in revised form 3 August 2018; Accepted 5 August 2018
0743-0167/ © 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

a tentative breaching act of a men's 'preserve' by women, or if, indeed, the 'invasion' by women is reshaped by men as an instrument to further cement the resilience of patriarchy. We employ the concept of 'hybrid masculinities' (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014) as a theoretical underpinning of the idea that men need women to practice their 'heroic male project' (Whithead, 2002). Therefore, we ask why men accept women in the hunting experience: Could this be a means to remold their domination over females? And so, why do women accept to go hunting with men: Could this constitute an irrational acceptance of patriarchy? To start the investigation, we begin with a first sub-question asking what is the role of "Tradition" in the hunting culture, and how it implies a different experience for men and women when in the forest. We set out to observe behaviors of men and women when hunting together, their attitudes toward leisure hunting as a cultural and consumptive activity and the rationale of men to share the hunting knowledge with women. We move then to a second sub-question, about how the keynote of "Division of roles" during hunting is capable to hide true motivations of why women continue to escort males (rather than hunting on their own or with other women) even after having gained years of hunting experience themselves. We also observe how men make subtle use of the "Division of roles" concept to restate their domination over women through certain acts of body politics.

2. Literature review

2.1. Hunting

We conceptualize hunting as a subculture of consumption – a "distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular … consumption activity" (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995: 43) – typical of the rural environment (von Essen et al., 2015) and rich in symbolic rituals and traditions (Belk, 2010; Littlefield and Ozanne, 2011). Hunters are said to play a key role in managing wildlife (Conover, 2001), to the extent that "for many … the ideas of hunting and stewardship go hand in hand" (Holsman, 2000: 808). The necessity of hunters' intervention in the management of ecosystems can be found both in philosophical and practical argumentations (Varner, 1998). The 'ecocentrism' approach promotes hunting whenever useful for the "integrity, stability and beauty of the biosphere" (Wade, 1990: 22) and "since we have killed off most of predators, we must now manage certain species, or they will cause irreparable damage" (Cohn, 1999: 14). Likewise, the 'domination logic' (White, 2003) allows mankind to intervene in nature to satisfy basic human physiological and self-actualization needs and to cure modern societies' alienation from the biotic system (Dizard, 2003; Swan, 1995). 'Neo-Darwinian' proponents identify the human body as a "remnant of a hunting and killing species-being" (Franklin, 2001: 63) and hunting as a means to return to nature and satisfy an ancestral blood lust. Hunting is then considered a practical necessity for alleviating damage in farmlands (Bieber and Ruf, 2005; Geisser and Reyer, 2004) as well as a source of tourism and income for local communities (Baker, 1997; Lovelock, 2003), to the extent that the decline in hunters' numbers constitutes a problem in some areas (Massei et al., 2015). Even though these logics are not unanimously accepted to justify the existence of 'sport' hunting (Cohn, 1999; Humphreys, 2010; Kheel, 1996; Nurse, 2016), where hunting becomes a kind of "consumer culture" (McGuigan, 2016: 2) and consumers' attitudes towards hunting have a subsequent influence on their preferences for wild game meat (Demartini et al., 2018), it is undisputed that hunting is "culturally significant, a 'way of life' in rural areas, much like other behaviors considered stereotypically rural" (Stedman and Heberlein, 2001: 599).

Various motivations spur a person to go hunting. Today, people hunt to satisfy subsistence necessities primarily in isolated and non-developed places – as the Nayaka community in South India (Bird-David, 2005) or the Matsigenka people in the Peruvian Amazonia (Ohl-Schacherer et al., 2007). More commonly, people go leisure hunting to spend a day with friends, escape from stress of daily activities and feel a connection with nature, traditions and heritage (Decker et al., 1980; Radder et al., 2013). Achievement-oriented, affiliation-motivated and appreciation-oriented individuals are some of the broad categories that describe most recreational hunters' orientations and beliefs (Pinet, 1995; Radder and Bech-Larsen, 2008).

Hunting is also a form of 'authentic' consumption or 'self-production' defined as a production of "goods and services using tools such as input products and devices" (Troye and Supphellen, 2012: 33). Consumer culture theory studies have extensively considered activities of co-production of both products and services (Lusch and Vargo, 2006), giving them different labels (Campbell, 2005; Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010), but always with the "idea that some form of consumption enlists consumer labor that creates rather than depletes value" (Moisio et al., 2013: 300). Examples of co-production are community-supported agriculture programs in the United States (Hunt et al., 2012) or social enterprises in rural areas where people contribute to the creation of products and services. For example, just as 'Sandra' is happy to eat veggies that she helped cultivate (Press and Arnould, 2011: 657) or 'Charlie' promotes himself as a chef who uses ready-to-be-mixed seafood products (Troye and Supphellen, 2012: 33), hunters buy guns and gadgets as devices to 'extend their selves' (Belk, 1988; Littlefield and Ozanne, 2011) in order to 'consume' not only wildlife, but also the experience of wilderness.

Hunting, as a practice that involves the use of weapons and affects the environment, is generally regulated by law, including in Italy, where hunting has received its modern codification from many sources: the roman age, the renaissance and the fascist period (Manfredini, 2006). As in other countries, Italian hunting policies and traditions are very diverse, changing from region to region depending on the species present in the local area, with a commensurately wide variety of cooking recipes for the harvested game (Hearn et al., 2014; Viganò et al., 2017). The rural environment along with family traditions play a fundamental role in the propensity to hunt (Stedman and Heberlein, 2001). Ultimately, inner motivations for hunting differ by gender.

2.2. A gendered perspective about hunting

Power is a key component of modern understanding of gender relations (Demetriou, 2001). The concept of hegemonic masculinity – a set of values, behaviors and practices that legitimize and justify the subordination of women and marginalized masculinities to men (Connell, 2000, 2005) and that work as a set of normative constraints (Coston and Kimmel, 2012) – points to a society that has created models of embodied virility that 'true men' must embrace (Messner, 2007). Scholars have argued that "no man … hunting wild game … is above suspicious that he is on a quest to compensate for insecurities about his masculinity" (Holt and Thompson, 2004: 425) with hunting working "as an antidote to … domesticity and the new factory system" (Fine, 2000: 812). Literature has investigated ways in which men are able to carve spheres of masculinity at home – "islands of untainted masculinity and purified pockets of virility" (Kimmel, 1987: 262) – through activities like barbecuing, 'do it yourself' home improvements and male dens or cave spaces (Matthews, 2009; Moisio et al., 2013; Moisio and Beruchashvili, 2014). "As possibilities to achieve breadwinner masculinity at work have shrunk, men invested more and more of their identity work into consumption" (Holt and Thompson, 2004: 426) and into activities in which they can prove and show their virility. Such compensatory consumption outside of home has seen the most prolific scholarly attention: riding a Harley Davidson becomes the essence of rebellious freedom (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), week-end camping in the mountains constitutes a form of fleeing civilization and immersing oneself in wilderness (Belk and Costa, 1998), pubs become fantasy places away from routine life and home constraints (Campbell, 2000; Sherry et al., 2001). Nature and wilderness in particular represent a uniquely well-suited 'arena' where a man can show his ability

Download English Version:

https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6545231

Download Persian Version:

https://daneshyari.com/article/6545231

Daneshyari.com