Antimodernism and the American Sportsman: Protest, Accommodation, and Hegemony in the Late 19th Century

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*Section I: Introduction*

In 1877, *Godey’s Ladies Magazine* published a short play entitled “The Fortune Hunter”. The play follows Miss Amy Stanton, a city woman whose father has recently died and left a fortune for his daughter in stocks of the “Elephant silver mines”. In the beginning, Miss Stanton is romantically pursued by a city-slick upstart businessman named Mr. Montmerency. But Miss Stanton’s silver mine stocks plummet and, upon hearing the news, Mr. Montmerency backs down on his quest for Miss Stanton’s hand (and fortune) in marriage. After the stock crash, Miss Stanton moves out west, to “Snaketown, Wisconsin” to live with her uncle and meets a new man there, a “Western hunter”, named Lawrence Gordon. Mr. Gordon secretly comes from old money, but lost out when his grandfather, “one of the richest men in Boston”, donated his money to a public library. While in Wisconsin, Mr. Gordon heroically saves Miss Stanton’s uncle from a crazed bull, which certainly would have killed him if not for Mr. Gordon’s “strength, courage, and quickness.” Predictably, Miss Stanton falls for the hunter Mr. Gordon and becomes intent on marrying him. But Mr. Montmerency learns that the Elephant silver stock has returned to its old value and steals off to Wisconsin to once again court Miss Stanton. In the end, Miss Stanton pushes away the pathetic, pleading “city fop” Mr. Montmerency and marries Mr. Gordon in a happily ever after affair.

What is most striking about this short play--dubbed an “acting charade”--is not the predictable outcome. Rather, it is the cast of characters and setting. The urban-dwelling businessman is painted as a gold digger, a “fortune hunter”, by the author S. Annie Frost. The character description at the beginning of the play dubs him “a city fop”--a dandy, who cares way too much about his appearance and possessions.[[1]](#endnote-1) Mr. Montmerency is a liar who tells Miss Stanton that he has old family land in France, when in reality he is poor and in debt. He is a portrayed as a scoundrel seeking not love, but money. On the flip side, Mr. Gordon is cast as a gentleman hunter, “one of Nature’s noblemen”, who, instead of living in the city to pursue a career in law, moves out to rural Wisconsin to take up “farming and hunting like a man.” He is poised, modest, and masculine--all traits that he owes to his “hunter’s training”. He comes from old money, but is unconcerned with luxury or wealth. Miss Stanton’s choice in the end makes the picture clear: Lawrence Gordon is the standard against which men should measure themselves. What’s more, all of this occurs in a rural setting on a simple farm, removed from the luxury and “richly furnished” house in the city where Miss Stanton previously lived. When asked by her uncle how she likes the Western way of life, Miss Stanton responds, “I never was so happy.”[[2]](#endnote-2)

The publication in which this story appears, *Godey’s Ladies Magazine*, speaks to the author’s intended audience. *Godey’s* was a prominent woman’s magazine in the 19th century, publishing on items such as high-class fashion and British royal family news. The three-dollar cover price of the magazine was expensive. Given the rate of inflation, it would cost around sixty dollars today.[[3]](#endnote-3) *Godey’s* marketed to high society women who could afford the luxury of such an expensive magazine. What does it say then, that this story of the heroic hunter overcoming the city fop appears in *Godey’s* pages?

The story of the “Fortune Hunter” reveals a trend toward the idealization of the “sportsman” in middle and upper class American society in the late 19th century. During this time, there was an outpouring of magazines devoted to hunting, fishing, and the outdoor life. *Forest and Stream* began publication in 1873 and *Field and Stream* was first published in 1874. *American Sportsman* started even earlier in 1871.[[4]](#endnote-4)Sportsman’s clubs sprouted up all over the country. In the winter of 1874-1875 alone almost one hundred clubs were organized.[[5]](#endnote-5) Railroad lines began offering brochures highlighting the various hunting spots along their routes, pandering to the growing ranks of the sportsman.[[6]](#endnote-6) Prominent sportsmen, like Theodore Roosevelt, lauded the virtues of the sport and the ranks of the hunter and fisherman swelled to include not just the elite, but also the middle class consisting of doctors, lawyers, businessmen, and the like.[[7]](#endnote-7) These changes accompanied vast shifts in American culture during the same time period.

Industrialization rapidly changed the fabric of American society. Railroad lines now stretched across the country. The First Continental Railroad began running in 1869 and opened the West to further exploration and exploitation, offering quick transportation for people and products. The proliferation of factories led to a shift in labor from agricultural work to factory work. In 1870, nonfarm jobs made up forty-eight percent of all jobs. By 1900, those jobs constituted sixty percent.[[8]](#endnote-8) Workers moved from the rural countryside to work in the city. The domestic economy boomed, allowing disposable income for a growing middle and upper class. Society shifted from a producer to consumer culture. This newfound money that could be spent on consumables would have a large impact on the growth of the sportsman.[[9]](#endnote-9) .

As a result of industrialization, the bulk of America’s population shifted to the cities. Small towns doubled in size and urban metropolises such as New York City grew to over a million residents. The number of areas that could be considered urban (having more than 2,500 residents) grew by 343 percent between 1860 and 1900.[[10]](#endnote-10) Immigration to the United States boomed as well, helping to fuel the urban growth. This had a profound impact on class and race relations. .

While many political and business leaders lauded in utopian terms the advance of industry and “progress”, others were skeptical of the solutions promised by modernization. Groups of intellectuals, journalists, academics, and others from secure financial positions were critical of the urban, modern life and its promises. They generally longed to go back to a simpler life, modeled on medieval society, which gloried primitive feeling and real experience. These attitudes were often ambivalent, however, and the similarity between various people was often unnoticed. This subtle, disjointed sentiment has been termed antimodernism by historian T.J. Jackson Lears. It pervaded many elements of American society at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries but was particularly prevalent among the wealthy, educated, “old-stock” East coasters.[[11]](#endnote-11)

The opening scene between the hunter Mr. Gordon and the urbanite “fortune hunter” demonstrates the antagonism and contrast between the urbanite and the hunter. The urbanite is sleazy and driven by material possessions. The hunter is physically strong, saving the uncle from the crazed bull. Miss Stanton loves the “simple life” of rural Wisconsin more than her lavish city home. Mr. Gordon is noble and comes from established money; the urbanite Mr. Montmerency is a poor poser. These qualities parallel sentiments found in the antimodernism beginning to emerge at the time. Are these two movements tied? Do the hunter and sportsman display antimodern qualities? Is there a link between the growth of the sportsman and antimodernism? And if these two movements are somehow tied together, are their goals the same?

This paper will argue that the sportsman’s movement that emerged and grew throughout the late 19th century in America was an outcropping of antimodernist sentiment among the upper and middle classes. In its tenets of restraint, a return to primitive ways, focus on intense physical experience, enthusiasm for neo-medieval values, and grand appreciation of rural nature, the sportsman’s movement formed an antimodern critique of the nations overcivilization, rationalization, and market forces. Influenced and driven by educated Eastern men like newsman Charles Hallock, prominent conservationist George Bird Grinnell, and Theodore Roosevelt, the sportsman’s movement served as a tool of social control; one devoted to securing influence over the American bourgeoisie. Sections IV and V will examine two of the most prominent manifestations of antimodernism in the code of the sportsman: noble, physical masculinity and anti-economic rationalization. These two characteristics of the sportsman will be used in Section VII illustrate ironically how the results of the antimodern sportsman’s critique were absorbed by modern culture and instead of revitalizing an old way of life apart from rationalization and urban life, the elements served to smooth the transition to a new modern existence.

In general, historical scholarship on hunting and fishing is lacking. British imperial historian John MacKenzie notes the “certain amount of scholarly silence” on the subject and states that there are a “number of problems” in breaking this gap. One such problem is that secondary sources are “almost non-existent” while primary sources are “legion”.[[12]](#endnote-12) Another problem may be the attitude towards guns and hunting in academic circles. As a consequence, scholarship on antimodernism makes no mention of the sportsman’s movement during the late 19th century. And what little scholarship is available on the sportsman during the time likewise makes no mention of the movement as a facet of antimodernism. But these two movements certainly overlap. This paper seeks to correct the void between the two bodies of work by viewing the sportsman’s movement in the context of emerging feelings towards modernity. This paper will situate itself in that gap and explain how the sportsman’s movement was an outgrowth of antimodernism.

For the purposes of this paper, the definition of a sportsman, as stated by historian John Reigers, will be used. Reigers classified the sportsman as a hunter or angler who had a scientific knowledge of the game or fish he pursued, shot or killed only what he needed, adhered to fair chase standards of the hunt, and who “only ‘pursues his game for pleasure’ and ‘makes no profit for his success’”.[[13]](#endnote-13) The American definition of the sportsman descended from the earlier, elite British version of the gentleman hunter. In Section II, work by John MacKenzie on imperial British “sportsmen” will be used to examine how the American tradition borrowed and adapted the concept of the Anglo-Saxon sportsman. Studying the emergence of the American title “sportsman” will allow a closer look at the attitudes embedded in the American code of the sportsman, including class biases, disdain for market and subsistence hunters, and racial connotations. These biases will be subsequently examined in conjunction with the concepts of power and class control.

The term antimodernity, used extensively by T.J. Jackson Lears in his study of late 19th and early 20th century American culture, will be used in Section III to refer to the reaction against “overcivilization” found among upper-class educated Eastern United States society. Its dimensions, ambiguous nature, and results will be examined. A Gramscian analysis of hegemonic effects, also employed by Lears, will be used in Section VII to explain the underlying, sometimes unconscious motivations of the antimodernists.

A tenet of antimodernism that will be examined extensively in Section IV is the late 19th century concept of physical masculinity, with a particular emphasis on the importance of exercise and physical activity in this emerging idea of manhood. E. Anthony Rotundo details these middle and upper class societal views of physical fitness in American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era. Rotundo notes the new importance of strengthening the male body, starting in the 1860’s. Rotundo also highlights the prominence of physical violence, manifest in a positive view of fistfights and the propagation of more physical sports like football. Also highlighted is the move towards honoring the “primitive” man who behaved like a Native and relied on their “animal instincts”.[[14]](#endnote-14) This concept will be especially important in the realm of the sportsman where much time is spent in the woods performing such “primitive” acts as hunting and fishing. These ideas will be measured and viewed against the Social Darwainism of the era.

Section V will analyze the idea of anti-economic rationalization, another issue critical to this study of the Eastern elite and the sportsman. This idea will be used specifically in reference to market hunters and those who sought economic benefit from sporting activities such as hunting and fishing. Going back to Regier’s definition, sporting was to be enjoyed solely for the “pleasure” of the chase and not for the economic gain that could be found in selling the animals. The reaction of sportsmen to those who profited financially from the large-scale slaughter of prey will be considered in terms of how it functioned to criticize the prominent economic sentiments of production and maximization. The emergence of a sportsman’s consumer culture will also be noted. The significance of social class and marketization of elements of the sportsman will factor in the analysis in Sections VII and VIII.

*Section II: The Roots and Emergence of the Sportsman*

The traditions and practices of the American sportsman, whose image began to evolve after the Civil War, have their roots in British sporting culture. Hunting in Britain has a long aristocratic history dating far into the Middle Ages. As early as the year 1000, kings reserved game parks exclusively for themselves and for their nobility. In the medieval “Hunt”, game was killed not for meat but for the glory and joy of the chase. Rules and social norms, created by aristocrats and royalty, were established to govern who could take game, where, and in what manner. These rules often made the process harder, adding to the ritualization of the hunt. Falconry, for example, was the proper way to take waterfowl, rather than nets, for those of high social standing even though nets and traps were much easier to use.[[15]](#endnote-15) The notion of a “sportsman” emerged around the 16th century in Great Britain through the work of Izaak Walton, a prominent promoter of fly-fishing. The sportsman incorporated ideas of the “Hunt”, but rights were extended to only landowners.[[16]](#endnote-16) The British sportsmen chased game not for its economic value or food, but for the love of the pursuit. The hunter or angler was knowledgeable in their trade and knew the habits of the game they were chasing. Above all, they adhered to a code of “do’s and don’ts” that governed how game should be properly taken.[[17]](#endnote-17)

During the 19th century, hunting became increasingly prominent in British culture as the nation pursued imperialistic policies. Aristocratic men displayed a new enthusiasm for the sport and integrated other social classes, such as the “professional middle class” into its ranks.[[18]](#endnote-18) A fascination with animal trophies from all parts of the world developed during this time period as well, invoking the decorating from the Middle Ages. Trophies hung in the home toward the end of the 19th century became symbols of upper-class tourism and soon the bourgeois sought to emulate the upper class tastes.[[19]](#endnote-19) Given that popular American magazines such as *Godey’s*, *Harpers,* and the sportsman’s magazine *Forest and Stream* reported on British culture and republished British articles, it is easy to see how the popularity and British ideals of the sportsman diffused across the Atlantic and influenced upper class American tastes.

The persona of the American sportsman evolved rather slowly at the beginning of the 19th century. Western explorers, such as Lewis and Clark and George Catlin, published some of the first American accounts of chasing game for sport, but in many cases ordinary citizens hunted and went fishing primarily for sustenance.[[20]](#endnote-20) As the West became more settled into the 1850’s, a growing number of American sportsmen set out to hunt the vast western expanse. Increasingly, these people came from wealthy, city backgrounds. European aristocrats also took to the West in search of trophies and scientific information to bring back to their respective countries. [[21]](#endnote-21)

The code of acceptable sportsman’s practices and techniques also gained traction rather slowly. An article on deer hunting in an 1858 issue of *Harper’s Weekly* lists a variety of techniques for taking deer, one of which includes “fire-hunting”--the practice of carrying a torch through the woods at night and watching for the gleaming eyes of deer in the dark to try to shoot. Although the article admits that the practice is one “of the least legitimate, and is seldom resorted to by the conscientious sportsman”, it does claim that sportsmen resort to the practice “when game is scarce”.[[22]](#endnote-22) Over thirty years later, in Theodore Roosevelt’s memoir *The Wilderness Hunter*, there is an obvious shift in ideals in his discussion of deer hunting. He declares fire hunting to be the work of a “butcher, pure and simple” and declares that it “has no business in the company of true sportsmen.”[[23]](#endnote-23) These technical disagreements could be considered petty, however, in comparison to the major emerging target of the sportsman’s code: market hunting.

The growth of market hunting, or the mass killing of game for profit, largely spurred the evolution of the sportsman’s code. The great locomotion of the railroads westward beginning in the late 1860’s created a way for products to make their way back to metropolitan areas. Market hunters set out after the great western herds of buffalo, elk, antelope, and deer and killed recklessly and relentlessly. One British sportsman estimated that a market hunting party he accompanied in the late 1860’s killed 230 elk and 80 deer in two weeks. William “Buffalo Bill” Cody reportedly killed 4,280 buffalo during his eight-month contract with Kansas Pacific Railroad in 1867.[[24]](#endnote-24) Not only did market hunters systematically slaughter, but they also wasted much of what they shot. William Hornaday, a prominent conservationist at the time, observed that many market hunters would bring buffalo tongues into stores with them to sell and no meat from the rest of the carcass. They apparently had shot the buffalo, cut out the tongue, and left the rest of the carcass “to the wolves”. Another author estimates that at least fifty thousand buffalo had been taken this way.[[25]](#endnote-25) As more hunters and anglers ventured out and witnessed the destruction of their beloved game, criticism of the practice of wasteful slaughter for profit grew. A code of rules began to form among the committed sportsmen and some of these rules eventually made it into state statutes.

Magazines dedicated to the sportsmen propagated this code of ethics and argued in favor of stronger hunting and fishing regulations. Many of these regulations were aimed at market hunters and those who sold their game for profit. *Forest and Stream* was once such journal. “The few trout or deer killed out of season by persons living in the woods amount to nothing beside those slaughtered by the market shooter,” opines an 1880 article.[[26]](#endnote-26) The markets themselves were targeted too. Many sportsmen argued that outlawing the sale of game provided the best way of conserving wildlife. “Destroy his chance of profit and his desire to shoot or net illegally is gone,” argued another *Forest and Stream* article from 1880.[[27]](#endnote-27) A number of pieces in *Forest and Stream*, including one in almost every issue, argued for tighter game laws, abolishing tactics deemed unfair and establishing limits and seasons for quarry.

These magazines also promoted the notion that the sportsmen and their code lay embedded in knowledge, noble action, and physical strength. “It is not sufficient that a man should be able to knock over his birds dexterously right and left, or cast an inimitable fly. He must learn by study and experience the haunts and habits of the game he seeks,” wrote Charles Hallock, initial editor of *Forest and Stream*, in 1873.[[28]](#endnote-28) A hunter needed to have knowledge of their prey in order to be considered a sportsman. Merely catching or shooting the creature wasn’t enough; one needed to have intimate experience with the quarry, understanding how it lived in its environment. Also, the journals described the way of the sportsman as noble, much like the British conception. Hallock again, this time in his book, *The Sportsman’s Gazetteer*, proclaimed the “chivalric deeds” of the foxhunt.[[29]](#endnote-29) One proponent of “field sports” such as hunting and fishing, claimed in an 1877 issues of the magazine *Rod and Gun* that the sportsmen of Britain “are, in fact, the only nobility in existence, which have been enabled to resist the deteriorating influences of wealth, luxury…that have corrupted and effeminated the nobility of all other lands; they are the only nobility in existence which equals and excels in physical stature and strength the peasantry and laborious classes of their own country.”[[30]](#endnote-30) The American upper class, he argues, should follow their British counterparts to the field or risk their power by becoming weak and ineffective in the face of money. This kind of emphasis on physical prowess and the accompanying class tensions are important and will be discussed later in the paper.

*Forest and Stream* and other journals opened a line through which sportsmen across the nation could communicate with each other about various issues concerning their pastime. Early issues of the journal published pages of correspondences in which anglers and hunters could ask questions and give feedback to the journal and each other. Other sportsmen or the magazine editors would respond with answers, creating a literary bulletin board for sportsmen to communicate through. This new media form allowed the code of the sportsman to quickly evolve because it increased the speed of the dissemination of ideas and practices. The publishing company also brought the words of a few prominent sportsmen, such as George Bird Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt, into a growing number of upper and middle class homes. These prominent sportsmen, founders of the Boone and Crockett Club in 1889, set the tone for the movement. Their old money, upper-class Eastern backgrounds are emblematic of the sportsmen promoters as a whole.

*Section III: A Sampling of Sportsmen Proponents*

George Bird Grinnell came from a prominent American family with a rich and storied history. His father was a United States Congressman, presidential elector in 1840, Amherst trustee, a president of a small railroad, and direct descendent of a Mayflower passenger. Grinnell graduated from Yale and attended an Episcopal church, the staple religion of White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) wealth. Grinnell furnished a number of business endeavors and shared of his money charitably.[[31]](#endnote-31) Grinnell lamented the “progress” of the country and the nations obsession with material wealth. For Grinnell, following the proper forms of hunting and fishing were ways of distinguishing the true gentleman.[[32]](#endnote-32)

Born in 1843 in New York City, Charles Hallock, founder of *Forest and Stream* enjoyed a lineage stretching back to the first pilgrims as well.[[33]](#endnote-33) Hallock’s descendants include a Governor of Rhode Island (on his mother’s side), “distinguished” Revolutionary army members, and a Union Major-General during the Civil War.[[34]](#endnote-34) In both his published family genealogy and autobiography, Hallock goes to great length to demonstrate his WASP credentials and high family regard in the East. In his autobiography, Hallock described himself as “socially inclined” and as being “born in affluence, with abundant opportunity for travel.”[[35]](#endnote-35) As a child, Hallock spent a significant amount of time at his Uncle’s wilderness retreat in the Green Mountains where he learned a “taste for outdoor sports and adventure”. Hallock attended Yale for a year and then switched to Amherst where he started a journalistic venture called “The Scorpion”. Upon graduation, Hallock launched into a literary career publishing newspaper and magazine articles, pausing once in the 1860’s to quit business after the death of his father and his inheritance of a “large” estate. He went on to spend much time hunting and fishing before he launched *Forest and Stream* in 1873.[[36]](#endnote-36) Like Grinnell, Hallock’s pause in business emphasized, in accordance with Eastern wealthy tradition, that the accumulation of wealth was not his primary interest or concern although he certainly had an interest in business affairs.

Theodore Roosevelt came from a wealthy, eastern family as well. Descended from Dutch settlers of New Amsterdam and having built a fortune in a variety of enterprises, the Roosevelt family name carried sway in the state of New York. Roosevelt was born in New York City in 1858 to a father who was a wealthy philanthropist, having inherited his money from the family, and to a mother who came from Southern wealth as well. Roosevelt spent his sickly childhood playing outside at the family estate and enjoying European vacations.[[37]](#endnote-37) Roosevelt graduated from Harvard in 1880 and soon after moved into his career in politics.[[38]](#endnote-38) Roosevelt spent time hunting on his ranch in the Dakota badlands and traveled throughout the western United States chasing big game animals. In the public arena, Roosevelt became a large supporter of the outdoors and field sports and attributed much of his success to the time he spent with rifle in hand.[[39]](#endnote-39)

The roots of these three main propagators of the movement are anchored in old East Coast wealth. Separately, these men worked to shape the sportsman’s movement, two through literature and magazines, the other through politics and writing. Together, Grinnell and Roosevelt founded Boone and Crockett Club in 1887, an organization whose principles promoted “manly sport with the rifle” and bringing “interchange of opinions and ideas on hunting, travel, and exploration”.[[40]](#endnote-40) All three of these men had an incalculable impact on attitudes, tactics, and perceptions of the sportsmen of the late 19th century. The fact that they were descended from old eastern stock points to the roots of the movement: respected, elite, white, and well off. Initially, the American sportsman came from the upper-strata of society. What does it say about the movement that these elites were the ones crafting and promoting the image of the sportsmen at a time when their established power faced a challenge? The answer will be explored more deeply in the analysis section. For now, an explanation of how the sportsman’s movement fits in the category of antimodernism is needed.

*Section IV: The Antimodern Sportsman*

Harvard historian T.J. Jackson Lears describes antimodernism as a sentiment that “pervaded” the educated middle and upper classes in American during the late 19th century. This sentiment expressed a desire to spring back from the “overcivilized” modern existence because modernity could no longer provide meaning in life. Instead, truth and life’s significance could be found in intense physical or spiritual experience. Antimodernists looked to and idolized aspects of medieval society because they believed that people in these societies had been able to find “intense” experience in their pre-modern ways of life.[[41]](#endnote-41) Fear of the vices of urbanization and unchecked progress lay at the heart of the antimodern sentiment and antimodernists glorified the merits of rural living and farm life.[[42]](#endnote-42) Rural life promised to toughen leaders and many saw it as “a path to moral regeneration.”[[43]](#endnote-43) The rural countryside became a necessary place to refresh the city-dwelling elite, the landscape and nature somehow able to flush away the built up toxins of city life.[[44]](#endnote-44) Antimodernists also thought that industrial life had weakened, morally and physically, those involved in it. Critics of modernity extolled the benefits of intense, physical action, such as sports, to fight the “effeminate” effects of modern life.[[45]](#endnote-45)

Antimodernism in the late 19th century, however, was not an organized movement with highly identifiable parts. Instead, antimodernism took the form of a sentiment with “richness and variety”.[[46]](#endnote-46) Antimodernism was “ambivalent, often coexisting with enthusiasm for material progress,” notes Lears.[[47]](#endnote-47) There were various places to find antimodernism, such as in the Arts and Crafts movement, literature, and religious institutions. In short, there was not one set definition of an antimodernist. That is why the sportsman’s movement, although not identified by Lears, fits into the antimodern mold.

Indeed, the sportsman’s movement demonstrates all of the general features of antimodernism. In many written examples, there is a reluctance to fully embrace modernity and an unwillingness to leave the old ways of life behind. Charles Hallock makes clear his distaste for overcivilization in his opening “Announcement” in the inaugural issue of *Forest and Stream*. After praising the way that the Native Americans familiarized themselves with the land and learned how to live off of it, Hallock calls the sportsmen to action:

Let us go back to first principles. Out of these our civilization grew, but of the principles themselves we are ignorant. Remove temporarily our modern appliances and we

are helpless. Let us acquire the rudiments anew.[[48]](#endnote-48)

Society had become too enamored with the modern way of life and Hallock argued that these basic principles could be needed sometime in the future. Instead of relying on gadgets and technology, man should rely foremost on his knowledge of the natural land and intuition that has been fostered by experience outside of civilization.

The main propagators of the sportsman’s movement, like Grinnell, Hallock, and Roosevelt, came from well-established middle to upper class families on the East Coast. That tendency was also evident among those who advocated antimodern views. The central themes and language of the sportsman’s movement also match up with antimodernism. Writers such as Theodore Roosevelt highlighted the intensity of the experience during their sportsman’s outings. In *The Wilderness Hunter*, he vividly described scenes during his hunts; moments ranging from the “splashing in the water, and rustling of the moose’s body against the frozen twigs” to a September evening on a grizzly bear hunt, air “still with the silence of primeval desolation.”[[49]](#endnote-49) These moments in nature were intimate for Roosevelt, moments that could only come about through real experience in the outdoors.

The glorification of rural living was another tenet of antimodernism that can be found in sportsmen’s writings. We need look no farther than the play from *Godey’s* to see how the sportsman is equated with a wholesome rural environment, far from the reaches of the problematic city. Charles Hallock also pointed to the merits of rural rather than city living when he asserted that the labor and busy lifestyle of the rural populace made alcohol a much lesser vice and problem than for those who lived in the city. He urged those in the city to:

Let him become farmer, trapper, hunter, bullwhacker, surveyor, chopper, anything that will keep his muscles in constant exercise, and send the stagnant and polluted blood through his veins and out of the system; cause all the secretory organs to resume their healthy functions, and perspiration to ooze from his dry and feverish skin. Thus will the system be cleansed. Once clean, it will crave no alcoholic stimulant, and manhood and self- respect will again assert themselves. Oh, the luxury of feeling oneself a man![[50]](#endnote-50)

Hallock’s “stagnant and polluted blood” not only pertains to the effects of alcohol; it also represents the ills of sedentary city life as a whole.

Hunting and fishing articles during this period also exhibited an admiration of the medieval knight and concepts such as chivalry that are found in antimodernism. The general public imagined that the English knight and landed gentry of old spent their time “feasting, hunting, and hacking each other to pieces”, following a code that was “ferocity partly restrained by etiquette.”[[51]](#endnote-51) Sportsmen capitalized on this public conception of the knight, modeling and describing their game and themselves along the lines of these images. Hallock gives the “royal family” of the salmon and all “their noble line” the “heraldic device” of “Salmo the Leaper”.[[52]](#endnote-52) He also calls elk “royal game” and “the antlered monarch”.[[53]](#endnote-53) Sportsmen themselves described their actions in heroic, knightly terms. “The chivalrous, gallant spirit; the free, open speech: the high soul, made up of all honor, the simple-minded, straightforwardness of thought and action, which go together in thee to make up that noblest of God’s work--a real man,” reads one remembrance of an older sportsman, “Bill”.[[54]](#endnote-54) Not only did this description of Bill utilize the medieval notions of chivalry and gallantry, but it also plays on the 19th century antimodern idealization of the “simpleminded” knight--wonderfully ignorant, passionate and childish in his thoughts. For a group rebelling against what they perceived as the emotionless, overly logical order of 19th century life, the fantasized image of the knight and his simple religious worldview proved highly attractive.[[55]](#endnote-55)

Two of the more prominent antimodern sentiments in the sportsmen’s movement were manhood and anti-utilitarian feeling. Looking closely at both of these elements will provide insights about the idea of cultural hegemony and how the sportsman’s movement played a role in facilitating the wider dissemination, absorption, and domination of bourgeois values in the late 19th and early 20th centuries during a time when modernity’s advance on society threatened to loosen bourgeois control.

*Section V: Noble, Physical Masculinity*

Prior to the late 19th century, competition and physical strength were not essential elements to masculinity. An 1853 correspondence in the *New York Times* gives instructions on taking an adventure in the New Jersey woods and mountains. The author writes as if the audience is following him, shooting off instructions as he goes: “put on a thick pair of cowhide boots” and don’t stop to “sketch the beautiful island on which we are standing”. At one point, while climbing up a precipice, he advises his followers “Come on--not too fast or you will be tired before you reach the top.” Upon reaching the destination, the author points to a clear lake in the valley and remarks that the audience will go there because he trusts our “physical education has not been neglected.” Throughout the entire piece, there is no mention of manly activities, masculine accomplishments, or deeds of danger and courage. The journey is simply a hike through the New Jersey mountains.[[56]](#endnote-56)

If written thirty years later, this article would almost certainly read differently. During the late 19th century, the definition of what it meant to be a man was changing as industrialization and modernization redefined social class and lifestyle. No longer were gentlemanly qualities of high honor and character the main qualities for defining manhood. Antimodernism rejected the previous conception of the civilized man and looked to tap man’s animal nature, strength, competition, and physical challenge. These became the standard characteristics for male masculinity. Roosevelt’s “doctrine of the strenuous life”, urged men to physically challenge themselves to fight the weakening effects of office work and city life. This doctrine rose to prominence as a way to achieve manhood.[[57]](#endnote-57) Amateur collegiate sports such as football, boxing, and rowing became popular as well at places such as Harvard. These activities provided a way for young, affluent men to develop a “scholarly manliness”[[58]](#endnote-58) and was even seen a way to prepare them for war.[[59]](#endnote-59) It also fostered another important facet of manhood in the modernizing world: competition.

An account of a climb through the New Jersey mountains written thirty years later would not advise readers to “not move too fast” and, instead, would probably urge hikers to move faster and win the race to the top of the mountain. While competition had always been a large part of the American economic and political landscape, the growth of industry and business in the 19th century had pushed the value of contests to a new level. Activities that before were done alone, for example Sunday school activities, by the 1880’s included competition and prizes for the winners.[[60]](#endnote-60) The growth of sporting events, professional and amateur, signaled the new emphasis on competition. Theories such as Social Darwainism, “viewing life as a struggle” for racial evolutionary advantage, also exemplified and fueled this competitive phenomena.[[61]](#endnote-61) In the emerging ultra-capitalist framework of industry and business, mountains were to be climbed and first to the top won the title of most masculine.

Towards the end of the 19th century, an increasing number of scholars and leaders worried that modernization had weakened the middle and upper class man. Prominent in their psyche was the fear that as the predominately immigrant working classes used their muscles to toil, the social and business leaders sat at their desks and their muscular fibers degenerated. Framed in the prevailing Social Darwainism of the time, the white, Anglo-Saxon race would be in trouble if efforts to strengthen their physical core were not taken.[[62]](#endnote-62) Men needed to be urged to exercise not only for their own good, but also for the good of their race and the nation as a whole.

The sportsman’s movement served as one of many vehicles for advancing the new standard of masculinity with the sportsmen embodying a form of noble masculinity. Getting into the outdoors with rifle or reel was pitched as an upper class way to build physical toughness, which thus made a man more masculine. Editor Charles Hallock makes this clear in a couple of places in his “Announcement” in the first issue of his publication *Forest and Stream*. First, Hallock says that, “all of us have something to impart, which, if made available to each other, will in time render us proficient in all those several branches of physical culture which are absolutely essential to our manhood and well-being, both as individual men and as a nation.”[[63]](#endnote-63) Hunting and fishing, Hallock argued, were ways to improve ones physical state and this was imperative to manhood. But getting in better shape wasn’t about individual manhood; it was about *national* manhood and the security of the country. Hallock proclaims hunting, fishing, and other outdoor pursuits as ways to achieve this national manhood.

Hallock continued in the “Announcement”, arguing for the necessity of the new publication. He addressed the proper way to practice field sports:

In a word, every description of game that is in vogue among respectable people, and of value as a health-giving agent or recreative amusement will be considered and its practice encouraged. Nothing that demoralizes or brutalizes, nothing that is regarded as “sport” by that lower order of beings who, in their instincts, are but a grade higher than the creatures they train to amuse them, will find place or favor in these columns.[[64]](#endnote-64)

Hallock promises to print only the highest forms of sport in his publication, refusing anything that is practiced by “that lower order”. Indirectly, Hallock says that he will publish only the noblest practices in his columns fit for his high-mannered readership. In Hallock’s column extolling manly physical virtue and high sport, the conception of the noble, masculine sportsman becomes apparent.

Hunting and fishing were promoted as ways to fight the effects of sedentary city life and work for those of higher social status. A quote used earlier warrants re-examination in this framework of the “noble sportsman”. The quote comes from a speech by a Rev. Dr. Boardman from Philadelphia, transcribed in journal *Rod and Gun*. In it, Dr. Boardman proclaimed the value of field sports such as hunting and fishing. He said that field sports are “the best mode of preserving the combined advantages of *mens sana in corpore sano* [a sound mind in a healthy body].” They also kept “up manhood” and maintained “the physical energies and capacities of the human race at their highest standard.” Dr. Boardman continued, saying that the British were greater than “any other class of nobility in the world” because their aristocracy were sportsmen. He said that there is a need to promote field sports in the United States because, “the wealthy classes of the Northern States entirely, and of all the States, in a great degree dwelling exclusively in large cities and not residing at all on rural estates or acquiring rural tastes and habits, are infinitely more liable to become effeminate and *effete* than the gentry, not of Britain only, but of France and Germany.” He called the “dandies of our cities…softer and more cocknified, as a rule, then the gentry of the European monarchies.” Here in the article, the transcription of the speech stops and the author continued with his own comments:

It is a common remark of foreigners who land in our cities, that our young men look fit for nothing but to stand behind counters and sell laces and ribbons, and our merchants and bankers as though they knew of no exercise but that of going to and from their places of business, and knew of no recreations but hot suppers and late hours at the theaters.[[65]](#endnote-65)

Underlying all of this was the notion that the strength of the country rested with the upper class youth. As things stood, in the author’s opinion, the elite were withering away in the cities. The ways of the sportsmen answered this string of problems for the author because “to be a sportsman, in the true sense of the word, a man must be a gentleman.”[[66]](#endnote-66) This author saw converting others field sports as a way for the elite to maintain power over society. It was also a way for one to become a true man. If a man stayed in the city, he risked becoming a fop like the *Godey’s* character Mr. Monmerency introduced earlier.

Others too saw the city as a corroding agent on society and argued that following the sportsmen’s path could solve the problem. A former inventor from Indiana, who goes unnamed, remarked in 1875 that, “close confinement in business sixteen hours a day had reduced me to a mere nothing in flesh, and the common remark was, ‘how miserable you look.’” His solution? To leave the city, take up his gun, and hit the woods. “I have no regular physician now, don’t need any. I take my tonic in the woods and on the prairie. God’s pure air, with healthy exercise, takes the place of drugs and bitters.”[[67]](#endnote-67) Free from the confines of the city, the former inventor is able to excel physically and mentally. Because a strong bill of health was essential to the definition of manhood at the time, leaving the city and taking up the gun were the first steps he had to take to truly encompass his masculinity. This Hoosier demonstrates how the ordinary bourgeois man could benefit from rural life.

These sportsmen writers encapsulated the image of the angler and hunter in noble masculinity. For them, the sportsman’s life in the outdoors provided a powerful retort to the urbanity that they felt threatened the sanctity of the nation and they urged their upper and middle class piers to follow the path of the sportsmen which provided a way for city men to become stronger and thus more manly. Ultimately, the goal of writers such as Grinnell and Hallock was to produce a class of more physically fit men. But this physical fitness could only be achieved by continued effort in the outdoors, not just infrequent vacation trips. Like the former Indiana inventor who left his city job to live in the country, Theodore Roosevelt who escaped to spends months on hunting excursions across the world, and our noble hunter Mr. Gordon from the play in *Godey’s*, writers envisioned men leaving the city for an extended period, seeking a rural sportsman’s life. But this antimodern desire never came to fruition and, like many elements of the antimodern movement at large, the focus on a noble masculinity only served to ease the transition to modern urban living. Because the consequences of this accommodation are closely tied with the next antimodern tenet that will be examined under a sportsman’s lens, more will be discussed about this later. For now, we will turn to an in-depth look at anti-economic rationalization in the sportsman’s movement.

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*Section VI: Anti-Economic Rationalization*

The industrialization of the late 19th century in the United States brought with it a number of key cultural shifts that antimodernity responded to. Increased technology, now in the hands of big businessmen, led to what Lears dubbed a “rationalization of economic life”.[[68]](#endnote-68) Efficiency became gospel and the individual, local ways of doing business in the old capitalist system gave way to big business focused on a policy of sheer economic calculation. Monopolies secured the market and sought modes of production that could produce the largest amount of goods for the most profit. This period too saw a shift from a producer to consumer culture.[[69]](#endnote-69) Now that the new factory systems could roll out goods at a much faster speed, industrialists needed consumers to buy their expanding quantity and array of products to make more money. The more consumers would buy, the more a factory could produce, and the greater efficiency it could reach. In the new emerging consumer culture, Americans, influenced by advertising, began to believe that self-expression lay in buying and consuming goods. A better “self” could be purchased.[[70]](#endnote-70) Social class began to change too as capital became consolidated in the hands of the new businessmen. These men comprised a new national bourgeoisie who glorified the efficiency of rationalization and the national progress it could bring to the nation.[[71]](#endnote-71)

Antimodernists responded to these changes by seeking an intensive, “real” experience. In effect they used intense emotion as a way to reject rationality and urban luxury that could be purchased.[[72]](#endnote-72) Nature served as the antithesis of modern life and antimodernists encouraged the bourgeois to “refresh” themselves out in the countryside.[[73]](#endnote-73) To those tired of the overcivilization of 19th century modern life, the countryside offered simple living away from the buzz of machines, the confusion of the city, and the emphasis on rationality and utility. Nature was viewed not as a commodity but an entity full of simple beauty and wholeness not intended to be bought and sold.

It is important, however, to recall the ambiguity of the antimodern sentiment discussed earlier. This ambiguity certainly applies towards business and anti-rationalization. Antimodernists frequently shared enthusiasm for “material progress”.[[74]](#endnote-74) Some, like Roosevelt, felt that antimodern values such as the strenuous life should complement a businessperson.[[75]](#endnote-75) The unrelenting pursuit of money and the desire to reduce the world to a salable good were what concerned anti-economic rationalists most. As with other facets of antimodernism, this form of reaction to modernity can be found extensively in the rhetoric of the sportsman.

Charles Hallock’s initial 1873 editorial in *Forest and Stream* about the aims of the magazine revealed the foundation for the anti-economic rationalization ideology in hunting, fishing, and outdoor pursuits. After romanticizing the “native” knowledge of the land--how they used it for their existence and the “beauty” they found in it--Hallock says that, “It is not sufficient that a man should be able to knock over his birds dexterously right and left or cast an inimitable fly. He must learn by study and experience the haunts and habits of the game or fish her seeks.”[[76]](#endnote-76) The goal of the sportsman is not to capture as much game as possible but instead to enjoy the practice and to procure game in a manner that is divorced from maximization.

True sportsmen did not seek material gain from what they pursued as well; they chased game for the pleasure of it, the intensity of the real experience. A 1873 *Forest and Stream* letter from a career Cape Cod fisherman, describing the proper rules that fishermen should follow, testifies to this sentiment well:

1st, faithfully study the nature and habits of fish you seek; 2d, give freely of your catch to your neighbor; 3d, never make a noise as you near the fishing ground; 4th, never pass your boat over the lines of other fishermen; 5th, anchor your boat on the tide with other boats; 6th, avoid the company of every man who refuses to observe these rules; 7th, be a gentleman at all times and places; 8th fool the fish but not yourself.[[77]](#endnote-77)

Fishermen should be willing to give away their catch and should not seek unfair advantages over other men on the water by getting ahead of them on the tide, scaring the fish, or sabotaging other’s lines. Instead of looking to catch the most fish for themselves, fishermen should be “gentlemen” on the water. The posted rules are a rebuttal of individualism, competition, and maximization. Instead, they preach fraternal unity among fishermen.

An article that bears repetition is “The Value of Field Sports” published a few years later in *Rod and Gun*. The author, named only as “Recapper”, further reveals the sportsman’s contempt for modernity’s obsession with rationalization and profit. In the article, the author comments on the value of field sports and how society has lost touch with bodily health and taking breaks from work, saying, “The one grand idea seems to be to get rich, to hoard up money without a thought of the failing powers of body and mind. Even our so-called recreations are looked upon as part of our business, and are made to extend business connections and influence.” Later in the article, the author continues on the importance of physical health so that the nation can be strong. He claims that the obsession on business and economic rationalization are holding the nation’s youth down:

Each young man as he starts on the road through life, sees no reason why he may not one day be at the head of the nation, but unfortunately he sees that under our form of government wealth is too surely the means of power; and being ambitious, he is too apt to think that the great object of life for him to get rich. And so following the example of those around him, he sits down to work, and makes his life one continual grind; health and strength are bartered for gold, and lucky is he if principles and honor are not bartered with them. Premature old age comes upon him and too late he finds that his body is not a mere machine, and that for want of an occasional rest and relaxation in the past he is now no longer able to enjoy even the things his gold can buy him.[[78]](#endnote-78)

Society’s shift to a consumption culture obsessed with maximizing work potential is corrupting the future, he argues. Harkening back to the noble masculinity discussed previously, the author decries the business culture for causing young men to neglect their physical health, thinking only of financial profit. Field sport, enjoyed for its own sake and not its monetary value, promised to solve the problem. These young businessmen, however, were not the worst offenders in terms of economic rationalization and pursuit of profit in the eyes of many sportsmen. That title lay with the market and “pot” hunters.

Those who introduced the principles of the market into harvesting game animals received the scathing fury of the “true” sportsmen. These were the pot-hunters and market hunters. A letter writer from Delaware City, Delaware into the magazine *Rod and Gun* in 1876 testified to the difference between a sportsman and “pot-hunter” when he proclaimed that, “A pot-hunter and sportsman have nothing in common; a pot-hunter is he whose pleasure is in the value of what he kills.”[[79]](#endnote-79) Harvesting game should be about esthetic joy and not material benefit. A later article on pot-hunters described them as a “very greedy class…who are despoiling the game covers and reaping the game for themselves.” They have “plied their business so systematically and persistently and successfully” and society suffered as a result.[[80]](#endnote-80) George Bird Grinnell blamed the market and railroad lines for destroying the buffalo herds, saying that in “the struggle to obtain a few dollars by a most ignoble means”, hunters “too lazy to work” but “not too lazy to hunt” were able to profit immensely and destroy the once seemingly indestructible herds.[[81]](#endnote-81) For sportsmen like Grinnell, the destruction of the buffalo herd showed the frightening possibility of the unchecked rationalization of the market. The systematic slaughter of the herds took away the beauty of nature by reducing it mentally to a number and by physically eliminating the animals.

Game laws became the tool that sportsmen used to combat market hunting. Sportsmen saw the markets themselves as the real problem of the slaughter. An 1875 editorial in *Forest and Stream* states that:

There is no trouble here to determine the real culprits, who aid and abet the violation of the law by giving employment and profit to the hunters. They are the accessories before the fact. How to punish and check these powerful offenders, with their own wealth and the influence of their potential guests behind them has been the problem that puzzled.[[82]](#endnote-82)

The answer to this conundrum for anglers and hunters was to restrict the actual game market through promoting laws establishing bag limits (the amount of game that could be taken in an outing) and seasons for game so that they could not be shot all season and depleted. Articles in *Forest and Stream* constantly argue for better game laws, more effective enforcement of current laws, and try to discourage the average sportsman from selling game in an attempt to undermine the game market. The “refrigerator amendment” proposed by New York in 1881 is just one example of sportsmen fighting for more control of the market. Sportsmen feared the introduction of the refrigerator and refrigerator car because of its ability to transport huge quantities of game over a vast expanse of terrain to the “great market centres [sic]”. They lamented that the “new agent into the traffic of game…has very materially affected its destruction and consumption.” To counter the effects of the refrigerator, the editors of the magazine propose that game should only be sold during the open hunting seasons. To allow game to be sold outside of season “means killing all the year around, in season and out of season; and that means speedy game extermination” because of the inability to police the markets and hunters. In order to fight this problem, the author proposed a system of market inspectors and affidavits for game dealers.[[83]](#endnote-83) Through proposing laws at the state and federal level and advocating tight enforcement of established laws, sportsmen attempted to demolish the market for meat and reduce the market hunting.

The sportsman’s efforts to reduce market hunting were generally successful and individual states, like Massachusetts in 1912, eventually passed laws forbidding the sale of wild game.[[84]](#endnote-84) But the initial effort to keep rationalization and the commodification of nature out of the field sports did not go as originally envisioned. Like noble masculinity and the antimodern movement as a whole, the anti-rationalization rhetoric of sportsman served more to accommodate and ease the transition to modernity more than to prevent its spread to certain facets of life. But in the process of accommodation, the sportsman’s movement, initially comprised of the old-money elites, did gain a foothold on the new emerging social structure. The ways of the sportsman, evolved to fit the modern structure of life, served to promote cultural hegemony.

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*Section VII: Accommodation and Hegemony*

Antonio Gramsci, in his Marxist study of power, breaks society down into two pieces: civil and social. In the civil sector, a dominant social order maintains power through “legal” means, which is generally in the form of state power. In the social sector, the “great masses of the population” give power to a dominant group based on that groups “function in the world of production.” This form of power is referred to as cultural hegemony. Gramsci argues that intellectuals act as “the dominant group’s ‘deputies’” who impose societal norms and create social constructs that reinforce and legitimate the dominant group’s power in society.[[85]](#endnote-85) The change in the mode of production with industrialization can create a “crisis of authority” in which the ruling class isn’t setting the cultural standards, but only exerting force to control the political sphere.[[86]](#endnote-86)

T.J. Jackson Lears uses Gramsci’s analysis extensively in his look at antimodernism in the 19th century. The process of cultural hegemony, as stated by Lears, is by no means “conscious…deliberately planned by the bourgeois moralists and literati to further the interests of their class.” In most cases, Antimodernists did not set out to consciously employ hegemony or shape social power. Lears states rather that it was a process of “instinctive self-deception rather than deliberate duplicity” with “unintended social consequences.[[87]](#endnote-87) Often times, hegemony emerged from individual’s personal struggles for meaning in modern life that moved into the public sphere. Individual thoughts and values, transmitted because of the power, cultural influence, public trust, and public visibility already held by antimodern thinkers, transferred to others and eventually became a part of larger societal values.[[88]](#endnote-88) In this way, various antimodern sentiments influenced public thought. Ironically, however, these ideas were often diluted from their pure, ideological form because there was no organizational structure to antimodernist thought and individual opinions and views of the modern world varied considerably. Rather than entirely changing popular culture, antimodern ideas were absorbed by the culture. Here lies the irony though because these diluted values better allowed the dominant class to exercise hegemony by evolving and becoming a larger part of the cultural sphere and thus allowing the ideas and people promoting them to exert more influence.[[89]](#endnote-89) While the values that the popular culture absorbed were not entirely what antimodernists conceived, these new weaker values actually benefited the social standing of the antimodernists. What function did the sportsman play in this hegemonic process?

The American sportsman was one of many modes that helped maintain power for the dominant class in American society during the late 19th century. The leading sportsmen--the Hallocks, Roosevelts, and Grinnells--came predominately from established wealthy families with historical influence. These men also held cultural sway through literary journals and their writings. In this sense, they functioned much like the literati and intellectual figures in the antimodern movement as a whole, exerting influence at the social level. Their papers, books, and journals became an important tool of hegemony, creating an avenue through which these men were able to communicate values to other people and classes, critiquing American society as a whole and arguing for a shift in belief. Editors of these magazines had a means to convey their opinions and values while also silencing and refuting the values and thoughts of others by editing what appeared on their pages. The communication lines created by journals put the writers in the driver’s seat of culture.

The sportsman’s movement had a prevalence of national issues that related to social class that can be found in the pages of the journals. Take, for example, “A Moral Tale For Poachers” found in the 1880 editorial section of *Forest and Stream*. Here is an example of a conscious employment of hegemony. The piece discusses two market hunters, “Andre and Joe”, who have recently become naturalized in the United States from French Canada. Because they are selling fish for market, Andre and Joe have blocked a creek with a net “to their own great profit”, at the expense of all of the other “honest fishermen” downstream. Unfortunately for the true fishermen, Andre and Joe were within their “rights” to block the creek and take all that they wanted to sell at the market because they were newly naturalized citizens and there were no game laws in place. It takes two good “Yankees” to sneak in during the night and cut the immigrants nets to right the situation.[[90]](#endnote-90)

The story of the two immigrant market hunters provides a glimpse of some of the national fears among prominent sportsmen and how the literary journals served as a tool through which these sportsmen could influence the culture. The villains were city-dwelling immigrants who took advantage and abused of the freedoms implicit in American society. The images of these two poachers illustrate the fear of immigrants using the liberties of the American system to wrest control of something (the fishing climate) from another class of individuals, the true noble sportsmen. The game laws are the way for sportsmen to fight this kind of wrong. Game laws served as an important form of hegemony for the sportsman, a cultural method that branched into the legal sphere that allowed the noble sportsman to define how the rules on their own terms. This editorial in *Forest and Stream* shows how the sportsman’s movement was based in upper society and occasionally used as a tool to critique elements of the lower classes.

The two modes of antimodernism that were examined extensively--noble masculinity and anti-economic rationalization--also demonstrate the subtle fear factor embedded in the sportsman’s movement. Writers argued in places like *Forest and Stream* that the country was becoming too effeminate and weak. Maintaining manhood through the field sports was important not just for individual, but also national, reasons. The dominant class had to remain strong or the laborers who used their muscles to toil all day may at some point be able to rise up in a large group and threaten the power structure. Other nations too, like the Spanish, may threaten the country and the WASP elite had to be a “vigorous race” to defend the country.[[91]](#endnote-91) The movement against rationalization in the field sports demonstrates the class fears in the ranks of the sportsman’s movement. A high degree of social mobility, created by the new mode of production, threatened the power base of the old-money elite. Although they didn’t scorn business enterprises, they did challenge the rationalization of everything in life to make a profit. People who were able to commodify new elements of society threatened to make the upper rungs of the social ladder more crowded, squeezing out the influence of the old dominant class.

Some outwardly recognized and decried the attempts of the prominent sportsmen to shape the field sports and use it to their advantage. A letter writer to *Forest and Stream* in 1880 remarked that the game laws being passed are “encroachments which are constantly being made upon the liberties of the people by the wealthier classes.” The writer scolded the “true sportsmen” who trespass farmers land and “throw down out fences, wound our cattle, and kill game which we have grown.” He further warned “aristocratic trespassers” not to shoot farmer’s game.[[92]](#endnote-92) This letter bluntly reveals class tensions within the sportsman’s movement and at least a part of one social class’s perception (the farmers) that the wealthy sportsman are using their game laws to control the people. Essentially, this letter writer accuses the sportsmen of exercising hegemony.

But, because the prominent sportsmen are in control of the literature, they are able to select this letter and print an immediate rebuttal. The journal responded to the letter writer by saying that these acts are largely perpetrated by city dwellers who, “are a disgrace, and worse yet a great injury, to all the real gentlemen.” This rebuttal again reinforces the importance of the literary publication as a tool of hegemony, allowing the sportsmen to control their own image and shift it as they wish. The article continues further with a telling proposition to farmers that reveals the ambivalence of the movement as a whole and its diffusion into mass society: The magazine editors propose that farmers allow sportsmen to pay to shoot their game.

Let all the farmers and their sons and hired men find that it pays them to protect birds and they will do it and satisfy all parties. The gunners are willing to pay for their sport more than the pittance of ten cents a quail, which a sly and stingy baggage-master hands out secretly to the trapper. The dime is a bigger coin to the hard-handed farmers boy, scant of spending money, than a quarter is to many a sportsman.

Not only are there again the elements of class distinction and money (sportsmen much better endowed than farmers boy), but the accommodation of the movement begins to become apparent. Supposedly against business in the field sports, sportsmen argue for including elements when it benefits them to do so. The antimodern critique of sportsman eventually morphed into a way to ease the transition to modern life alongside of becoming a mode of hegemony.

Originally a minority criticism of modern life, as the sportsman’s movement became a more mainstream part of modern culture rather than standing apart from it. Masculinity became something that could be achieved while living in the city: city dwellers only need to take a weekend getaway to rejuvenate themselves instead of leaving the city like Mr. Gordon in the acting charade or like Theodore Roosevelt who spent months in the Bad Lands. Taking a short vacation was all that was needed to classify oneself as a sportsman. Rather than totally debunking the city, the rhetoric of the sportsman evolved to be compatible with it.

The ability to take a short vacation and establish masculinity also plays into the economic rationalization that made its way into the sportsman’s movement. Selling vacations to sportsmen became big business for the railroads and they published pamphlets highlighting their routes, game laws of the states they stopped at, and the game that could be found there. Real experience then became commodified in modern life: masculinity and escape were items to be purchased in the new consumer economy. By 1890, editors at *Forest and Stream* were arguing for railroads to stop shipping hides in order to end the market of elk hide hunting in Wyoming. The rationale? Tourists wanting to hunt the elk can replace the hide hunters and make more money for the railroads.[[93]](#endnote-93) Instead of rejecting rationalization in the field sports, the prominent sportsmen writing in these magazines have accommodated and now argued for shifting of one form of consumerism to another. A “sportsman’s exposition” at Madison Square Garden in 1895 revealed the full extent to which this accommodation occurred: here, in the heart of the city, over a hundred companies ranging from Remington Arms to Daimler Motors to Savage Repeating Arms to DuPont had booths demonstrating their goods for sportsmen.[[94]](#endnote-94) Money could be made from sportsmen; the tenets of anti-economic rationalization had folded and found their way into reinforcing modern life.

*Section VIII: The Modern Sportsman*

The August 15, 1903 issue of *Forest and Stream* marked the 30th year of publication of the magazine. Prompted by the anniversary, the editorial department printed an article looking back on the state of the sportsman since the conception of the magazine by Charles Hallock in 1873. The piece noted the changes in field sports over the thirty-year time span, “more marked transitions in character than those which took place during a century before, and we may well believe that a century to come will not witness changes so radical and complete.” The article continues, saying that the three most prominent features of the last thirty years have been, “the multiplication of sportsmen, the decrease of game, and the development of the game protection idea.” Although the outlook for sportsmen appears hopeful, the author laments the decline in big game animals, such as the antelope and mountain goat, to the point that “only the man who is specially favored of fortune…may hope to see them in their native wilds.”[[95]](#endnote-95)

Indeed, the ranks of the American sportsman had greatly changed, as had American society as a whole. Hunting and fishing, as hoped for by promoters of field sports, had become favorite pastimes among the upper and middle classes, especially as recreational hobbies. Men and women took their families and left the cities on vacations out into the woods, selecting locations and following advice printed in the new “sportsman tourist” section of publications like *Forest and Stream* and buying trips advertised by the railroad companies, like the 1890 “western resorts” brochure for Union Pacific.[[96]](#endnote-96) Strict game laws too had effectively reduced the activities of market hunters and had stopped the once seemingly eminent decline of certain species.

To these ends, the sportsman’s movement had been a great success. And with this, hegemony was partially achieved by the WASP followers of the sport. They had changed the culture and thus put themselves back in the drivers seat, keeping the middle classes following them for cultural cues. The passage of numerous game laws, urged by East Coast promoters like Hallock and Grinnell, meant also that the elites could control how and when game was pursued, bending the rules to their advantage and using them to influence the numerous followers on the “proper” way to be a sportsman. American culture never crumbled and there was no radical overthrow of the class system, as some had predicted. Many of the elite WASP families that had a sportsman’s background maintained their supremacy.[[97]](#endnote-97)

But had the overall antimodern visions of writers, like Hallock and the correspondents in his publication, been achieved? To some degree, upper and middle class men took the advice of the “Recapper”, the promoter of field sports in *Rod and Gun*, who urges readers to not work “’by day and by night, unceasingly and unremittingly.’”[[98]](#endnote-98) Many men did take breaks from their work to pursue field sports. But often, these breaks were short-lived vacations. The urban masses had not rejected the city in favor of rural living. Instead, the notion of the outdoors escape became embedded in their urban identity. And this urban identity often wasn’t earned by the “experience” in nature that so many outdoor writers preached; it became an identity that could be bought at department stores with the “gold” from working “by day and by night”.

Like antimodernism as a whole, the sportsman’s movement evolved into a way to ease accommodation, rather than reject, modern life. Companies seized the opportunity to make money from the swollen ranks of men who called themselves sportsmen. Advertisements for railroads, like Union Pacific, reveal that sportsman’s train tourism had become big business. Some railroads even built their own resorts, such as the Hotel Chequamegon built in Ashland, Wisconsin by the Wisconsin Central Railroad. The mass production of sportsman’s equipment also meant that advertisers could make money off of marketing to sportsmen and anglers and hunters began to associate their image with the quality of products that they could purchase. Credibility as a sportsman could be purchased in many cases. The cries of anti-economic rationalization towards the market hunters had ultimately hoped to keep the culture of rationalization and consumption out of field sports. Writers and prominent sportsmen wanted status as an outdoorsman to be earned through experience, not purchased. But this never came to be. The image of the sportsman, like much the rest of American culture, became a commodity in the expanding consumer culture.

In 1897, at the aforementioned sportsman’s exhibition thousands could sit in a stadium in the middle of New York City, the center of urbanity, and watch a fly-fishing casting tournament:

There is no danger of any interference by sun, rain, or win, as the roof and walls of Madison Square Garden will insure them against that. In order that they may not have it too easy, however, certain obstacles which they would be likely to find if fly casting for trout in earnest will be duly made and provided. The fly fisherman will cast over the surface of an artificial lake, so that their flies will kiss the water as they would if really fishing in a pool in the forest. For long casts they will have a clear stretch of water, but the utmost finesse of putting the artificial insect just where the angler wishes it to go is attempted the contest will be made difficult by semi-submerged branches of trees in the water and bushes irregularly disposed about the water’s edge, where they are likely to prove metaphorical thorns in the impatient fisherman’s flesh.[[99]](#endnote-99)

The field sports had become part of popular society, an element that now comprised modern life. The chirping of thousands of birds and bugs outdoors had been replaced by the murmurs of thousands in the crowd. Real thorns were no longer needed; metaphorical ones could be manufactured instead.

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