THE REVOLT AGAINST INSTINCT

The Animal Stories of Seton and Roberts

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IN HIS INTRODUCTION TO *Kindred of the Wild* — a chapter that stands as a succinct apologia for the animal story — Sir Charles Roberts in 1902 explained the particular inspiration of the new genre practised by Ernest Thompson Seton and himself. Animals and men, he said, were not so separate as had been supposed, for animals, far from being mere creatures of instinct, could and did reason, and what is more, frequently displayed to the discerning observer signs not only of their psychologies, but also of something which might appeal to man's spiritual self. "We have come face to face with personality, where we were blindly wont to predicate mere instinct and automatism." The animal story, Roberts concluded, was thus a "potent emancipator," freeing us from "shop-worn utilities" and restoring to us the "old kinship of earth," a spiritual and uplifting union with nature.[1]

These statements can be labelled "romantic," or "transcendental," and dismissed as a rather sentimental defence of the "inarticulate kindred" of the wild, who are distinguished from Black Beauty and Beautiful Joe only by the fact that they live in the woods. I propose, however, to take Roberts at his word, and to examine his and Seton's stories in the light of his crucial distinction between instinct and reason. The animal story, I shall show, is part of a popular revolt against Darwinian determinism, and is an affirmation of man's need for moral and spiritual values. The animal world provides models of virtue, and exemplifies the order of nature. The works of Seton and Roberts are thus celebrations of rational, ethical animals, who, as they rise above instinct, reach towards the spiritual. This theme, inspired as it is by a vision of a better world, provides a mythic structure for what is at first sight, realistic fiction.

At the popular level, the chief implication of Darwin's theories of evolution and the principle of natural selection had been to diminish the distinction between man and the animals. We were descended from the apes, and if the apes were mere brutes, could we be very much different? All creatures, it seemed, owed their present form to certain inherited characteristics, which together with environ-

mental influences, dictated their ability to survive. Nature was amoral; life was a power-struggle in which only the fittest survived. Instinct, to a large extent, seemed to govern animal behaviour; there was little place in nature for ethics or spirituality. Though man traditionally had been separated from the animals by his unique power of reason, could it not now be that man himself was little more than a brute beast?

By 1900 one of the most important controversies in the biological sciences was the question of animal behaviour: did animals act instinctively, or were they capable of learning? What was the nature of an animal's knowledge: was it inherited, or was it acquired? Were animals capable of reason? Did they learn from experience, did they teach each other? The weight of opinion, at least from the biologists, seemed to favour instinct and inheritance.[2] In their reaction to this controversy (and in a larger sense to the whole impetus of Darwinism), Seton, Roberts and their fellow nature writers rescued their public from the awful amorality of Darwinian nature. They reassured their readers, not so much that man was superior to animals, but that animals were superior in themselves, that they could reason, that they could and did educate their young, and that they possessed and obeyed laws of their own. Judging by the commercial success of their stories, this was a popular and much-needed antidote to Darwinian pessimism.

"The life of a wild animal," said Seton in *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1899), *"always has a tragic end."* By that he meant that all animals die, and since most of them prey upon each other, they frequently die violently. Both Seton and Roberts refused to evade this unpleasant fact: kill or be killed is the natural law. To this extent they were both Darwinians: nature was indeed red in tooth and claw, and only the best escaped for a time. Thus "Kneepads," the mountain ewe who took to kneeling as she grazed, was an easy prey for the mountain lion, and Red Fox's weaker and stupider siblings met an early death.[3] Survival does indeed go to the fittest.

In their biographies of animal heroes, both men repeatedly illustrate this central fact of the evolutionary theory. Their animals are not ordinary animals, but superior animals, distinguished by their size, skill, wisdom and moral sense. These animals have all learned to cope with a hostile environment; they endure. They are the leaders of their kind. Thus Wahb is the largest and most intelligent grizzly, Krag the noblest mountain sheep, Lobo a giant among wolves, Raggylugs a most sagacious rabit, and so on. From the first Red Fox is the pick of his litter, larger, livelier, more intelligent, and, curiously, redder. Seton's comment on the old crow, Silverspot, will serve to characterize all these heroes: "once in awhile there arises an animal who is stronger or wiser than his fellow, who becomes a great leader, who is, as we would say, a genius, and if he is bigger, or has some mark by which men can know him, he soon becomes famous in his country, and shows us that the

life of a wild animal may be far more interesting and exciting than that of many human beings."

Both Seton and Roberts took pains to establish that everything they wrote was within the bounds of truth. Their animal biographies were frequently "composite" biographies; that is, they included everything that had been done, or might have been done, by a crow, or a wolf, or a fox, but they contained nothing that was not possible. Thus Seton, in his preface to *Wild Animals I Have Known*, acknowledges having "pieced together some of the characters," but claims that there was, in at least three of the lives, "almost no deviation from the truth." Roberts, introducing Red Fox, makes the same point saying that in the life of his hero, "every one of these experiences has befallen some red fox in the past, and may befall other red foxes in the future." He has been, he assures his readers, "careful to keep well within the boundaries of fact." We may take these statements at face value: by and large, both men were astute and careful observers of nature, and in most of their writing give realistic, though fictionalized, descriptions of animal life.[4] Both also claim that though they have given their animals language and emotions, these are, within the demands of the genre, realistic, and not anthropomorphized.

However it is not realism that entirely inspires the art of Seton and Roberts, whatever strength that lends to their work, but certain ideas which frame and condition the realism, and which give to it symbolic form. The animal heroes may live and die in the wild, being only interesting specimens of their race, but their biographies, as literature, belong in the world of myth.[5] What matters is not that everything that is told *could* have happened to a fox, or a grizzly, but that it *did* happen, and that, for the author, the life of the animal was organized according to certain basic ideas, and that in its living it demonstrated certain fundamental truths. At the heart of the myth that gives structure to the work of both Seton and Roberts is their belief that animals are rational and ethical beings, and that they rise above instinct. This is demonstrated most clearly in the ways the animals train their young to survive, and the ways in which their young respond to the challenge.[6]

Seton's story of the cottontail rabbit, Raggylugs, will serve to illustrate. The young rabbit Raggylugs is "unusually quick and bright as well as strong," and he has in his mother Molly an extremely intelligent and valiant tutor, a "true heroine," a devoted mother who finally gives her life so that her son may survive. Here, as we might expect, are the superior animals, models of intelligence and mother love. Molly's first duty is to train her son, to educate him in the skills of life. His first duty, as a successful and superior animal, is to obey. "Molly was a good little mother and gave him a careful bringing up . . . he did as he was told." Rag learns the essential rabbit lessons, to "lay low," to "freeze," and to regard the briarbush as his best friend. "All the season she kept him busy learning the tricks of the trail,

and what to eat and drink and what not to touch. Day by day she worked to train him; little by little she taught him. . . ." In some of his lessons he shows himself "a veritable genius," and he even goes on to take a "post-graduate course" in how to use water. On the one occasion he is disobedient — he sits up to watch his mother lose a dog — he is severely punished, being cuffed and knocked over by Molly.

Throughout this story Seton's emphasis is on the intelligence and skill of the successful animal, the "tricks" it uses to outwit its enemies, and the way in which it is able to educate its young. Molly shows her son how to run a dog into a barbed-wire fence, how to avoid snares, and how to use water as a last resource. Animals are not mere creatures of instinct, behaving according to a set of inherited responses, but capable, within their own terms, of intelligent reasoning, of teaching and learning, and of knowing right from wrong. Rabbits, for instance, have their own language: they "have no speech . . . but they have a way of conveying ideas by a system of sounds, signs, scents, whisker-touches, movements, and example that answers the purpose of speech. . . ."

IT IS WORTH PAUSING HERE to answer some questions: is Seton not right — do animals not have some very definite ability to communicate in a language of their own, and are they not capable of some kind of inductive reasoning? Do they not, in fact, educate their young, and is there not more to animal behaviour than a set of instinctive reactions?

The modern ethologist would almost certainly approach these problems with caution, for the whole question of animal behaviour has become one of immense complexity. In 1900 there seemed to be a straightforward contrast to be made between instinctive and learned behaviour; now the first point to be made is that rigid alternatives are simplistic.[7] Even the terms have changed. The "nature or nurture" controversy has been replaced by a discussion of innate or acquired characteristics, and behaviour is now classified as "environmentally stable" or "environmentally labile." The discovery of imprinting, the process by which certain animals when young respond as a species to certain stimulae, has been contrasted to "adaptive" learning. The mental processes of animals are not simple, but they are clearly not always automatic, or mechanical, or, in the old sense, simply instinctive. Apes have been taught to communicate with humans using the American Sign Language: the higher mammals, it has been argued, have mental experiences and probably even a conscious awareness.[8]

In spite of the complexity of the problems, certain generalizations may be made. Many animals are able to learn from experience. Many animals do teach their young, chiefly by example.[9] Some animals are capable of inductive reasoning.

Some other animals may be able to adapt their behaviour, by a process of trial and error, and though it might appear that they act rationally, they do not always seem to comprehend what they are doing. Considered in general terms, however, the observations and speculations of the nature writers are closer in many ways to current scientific thinking than those of their more sceptical, behaviourist contemporaries. Animals have complex means of communicating with one another: Seton's description of rabbit language, a "system of sounds, signs, scents, whisker-touches" and so on, is not fanciful, though modern naturalists might argue with the details. What matters is not the scientific accuracy of Seton's nature stories — although that itself is an interesting question — but the ideas which give his work symbolic form. By the lights of his day he played down instinct; his animals are rational creatures who educate their offspring to be obedient and successful. As such, they are intended to be models for human edification, and nature, though full of sudden and "tragic" death, is an ordered and in many ways superior world.

Seton, as a careful naturalist, frequently describes instinctive (or innate) behaviour in animals. In most cases, he regards it as an inherited substratum, a built-in defence against the early dangers of life. He speaks of an animal's "native instincts," which are supplemented by the twin teachers of life, experience and the example of fellow animals.[10] The little mountain lambs in *Lives of the Hunted*, surprised and chased by a hunter just after birth, are able to dodge and escape, for "Nature had equipped them with a set of valuable instincts." Instinct, however, takes an animal only just so far. Its role in survival is subsidiary to reason. In the story of the Don Valley partridge, for instance, Seton tells us that the partridge chicks soon graduate from instinctive to rational behaviour: "their start in life was a good mother, good legs, a few reliable instincts, and a germ of reason. It was instinct, that is, inherited habit, which taught them to hide at the word from their mother; it was instinct that taught them to follow her, but it was reason which made them keep under the shadow of her tail when the sun was smiting down. . . ." And, Seton concludes, "from that day reason entered more and more into their expanding lives."[11]

Roberts treats instinct in much the same way, as a valuable though necessarily limited body of inherited knowledge. Thus Red Fox, as befits a superior animal, has an extra amount: "he seemed to inherit with special fulness and effectiveness that endowment of ancestral knowledge which goes by the name of instinct." At the same time, of course, we are told that he is more intelligent, that he can reason, and that he is "peculiarly apt in learning from his mother." Instinct is, too, a latent skill, which can surface when necessary: in the story of "Lone Wolf" (*Neighbours Unknown*), the tame circus wolf who escapes to the wilds, Roberts shows us its hero rediscovering "long buried memories" of how a wolf kills. "It was as if all his life Lone Wolf had been killing bulls, so unerring was that terrible chopping snap at the great beast's throat." These are perhaps unexceptionable ideas, yet else-

where in Roberts' work there is the definite implication that instinct is a primitive force which must be controlled and subdued by reason. This is especially true when applied to man himself (though as the highest of the "kindred" what is true for man is also true for animals). In "The Moonlight Trails" (*Kindred of the Wild*), we are told of a boy who loves animals and is sensitive to their feelings, who accompanies the hired man on an expedition to the woods to snare rabbits. As they set the snares the boy is moved by the primitive lust of the hunter; he feels "stirrings of a wild, predatory instinct." When they return in the morning to see what they have caught the boy is still at first in the grip of the hunting passion, but when he sees the cruel tragedy of death his more civilized feelings come to the surface. "We won't snare any more rabbits, Andy," he tells the hired man.

The gap between man and the animals, Roberts insists, is very narrow. Animals "can and do reason."[12] *Red Fox* illustrates this thesis: the whole novel is a celebration of one animal's cunning and sagacity. We are repeatedly told of Red Fox's cunning, his "nimble wits," his ingenious and deliberate schemes for evading his enemies, his prodigious memory, his ability to study a situation, to make plans, to reason. We hear how he outwits "the Boy," how he leads the hounds to their destruction, how he fools his enemy Jabe Smith. His qualities are quite obvious: "look at that cool and cunning eye," says one of his American captors. "He's got brains."

In his early education, Red Fox shows that instinct is subservient to reason. Red Fox must learn both from his mother and from experience. "It is possible (though some say otherwise!) to expect too much of instinct," Roberts tells us, and explains how a successful fox will learn his lessons, "partly by example and partly no doubt by a simple language whose subtleties evade human observation." Yet we notice that when instinct gets Red Fox into trouble, it is instinct that rescues him. His nose tells him to dig in a bees' nest for honey, and when they sting him, he runs blindly for a thicket, and automatically cools his smarting nose in the mud. These are inconsistencies: Roberts' dominant theme is the supremacy and efficacy of his hero's reason. The vixen's instructions to leave men alone have "their effect on [Red Fox's] sagacious brain," whereas his stupider brother thinks he knows better, and pays the price with his life. This incident, one should note, is at the same time an apt illustration of Darwinian theory, for it is the better animal that survives.

The intelligent young animal is also the obedient young animal. In the School of the Woods, obedience is a primary virtue. The child must obey the parent. "For a young animal," Seton said, "there is no better gift than obedience,"[13] and he demonstrated this again and again by showing us the fate of the disobedient, the young lambs who do not come when they are called, and are caught and killed, or the foolish partridge chicks who refuse to stay close to mother. The fate of Red

Fox's siblings again makes the point: the weak and the foolish will not survive, but the disobedient bring trouble upon all.

The essential argument of this article should be clear by now: the fiction of both Seton and Roberts is inspired by their desire to present a moral and coherent order in the life of the wild, which is part of the greater order of the cosmos. That many of their observations of animal life are accurate is undeniable — animals do learn, they are intelligent in their way, and they are probably even capable of reason. Yet what is important in Seton and Roberts is the way the details are presented. Animals, we are told, are very much like ourselves. They obey certain laws, they demonstrate qualities we would do well to admire, they are our own kin. They inhabit what is often clearly a mythic world; they are symbols in our own ontological system. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the context of morality.

Each animal, first of all, must learn to obey the laws of its kind. Morality is not a human invention, but an integral part of all nature. "It is quite common," says Seton in *Lives of the Hunted*, "to hear conventionality and social rules derided as though they were silly man-made tyrannies. They are really important laws that, like gravitation, were here before human society began, and shaped it when it came. In all wild animals we see them grown with the mental growth of the species." The higher the animal, the more clearly developed the moral system. The better the animal — the more successful, or superior specimen — the more moral the animal. Thus superior animals fight fair, but the weak, the cowards, and the mean may well resort to dirty tricks. Krag the mountain sheep, whose strength, and size, and curling horns make him appear like a "demi-god" to his ewes, has to beat off two other rams to defend his rights to his harem. One ram fights fair and meets Krag horn to horn; the other fights foul, and attacks from the side. It is important that in this moral world the immoral ram "works his own destruction," running himself over a two hundred foot cliff to his death.

These animal laws would appear to be somewhat flexible, coloured as they are by the vision of the human observer, since occasionally even a "good" animal will break the rule of his kind to preserve himself or another. This is always done for a reason: the law may be broken in the name of the higher good. We are told, in "Raggylugs," that "all good rabbits forget their feuds when their common enemy appears." Rag's rival, the stranger, ignores this basic rule of rabbit society, trying to drive Rag into the reach of a goshawk. This is bad. Yet one sentence later we find Rag playing the same game to save himself and his mother, as he successfully lures old Thunder the hound into the nest of "the stranger." This, we infer, is good.

It is at moments like this that it is most evident that the animal story belongs not to the world of natural science, but to the world of literature. There are good animals and bad animals, and we, as readers, are always expected to be on the side of morality. Seton, however, is usually careful not to denigrate a species: each

animal, of whatever kind, has some quality that a man might admire. Even the hated rat is courageous.[14] Roberts, on the other hand, lets his sympathies show: there are some species who exhibit only the worst. Such are lynx. In "Grey Lynx's Last Hunting" we are shown a portrait of animal cruelty, selfishness and marital hatred, whose appropriate outcome is the sordid death of the male, killed by his savage and mad mate. Both writers, in their desire to make a moral point, cross from realism into romance. Seton has a story of wolves who lynch an apparent cheat and liar,[15] and Roberts the fanciful tale of a society of animals who voluntarily resolve not to kill "within eyeshot" of a sensitive and disapproving child.[16]

Throughout Roberts' work there is an insistence on the meaning, the vitality, the harmony and the morality of the struggle of life, and in Seton, of the fairness and ultimate order of nature. Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of their essentially similar moral philosophy is Seton's short *The Natural History of the Ten Commandments* (1907), in which he finds that the Mosaic laws are not "arbitrary laws given to man, but are fundamental laws of all highly developed animals." Animals, in their own way, observe the last six of the ten commandments, and in their occasional willingness to "throw themselves on the mercy of some other power," manifest the beginnings of a spiritual life. Man, obeying the first four commandments, acknowledges the Deity; the higher animals acknowledge man.

THIS IS AN IDEA which, in its implications of a natural cosmic order, testifies to the true symbolic role of the animals. There is an obvious correspondence here to the writing of Seton's contemporary, Kipling, and especially to the society of *The Jungle Books* (1917). Roberts, in his preface to *The Kindred of the Wild*, praised the Mowgli stories, though, noting that the animals were "frankly humanized," distinguished them as a different and a separate kind of fiction from Seton's and his own. Yet the difference is one of degree, rather than kind: Kipling's jungle animals are also rational creatures, who live in a balanced and reasonably harmonious society, provided they obey the rules of their kind. There are good and superior animals such as Bagheera the panther and Baloo the bear, and evil animals such as Shere Khan the tiger and the whole tribe of monkeys. The evil are punished and the good survive. The laws of the jungle must be obeyed. Man, in the shape of Mowgli himself, is superior to all the other animals.[17]

In their insistence on certain social principles — for instance the all-important rule that the young must obey the old, and that obedience is both a necessity and a duty — Seton, Roberts and Kipling all use their animal stories to exemplify clear and precise morality. The first law an animal learns, Seton tells us, is obedience, and it is with the Fifth Commandment, "Against Disobedience," that he begins his examination of the Mosaic code of nature. This is the law "which imposes

unreasoning acceptance of the benefits derivable from the experience of those over us."[18] We remember from *Red Fox* "how sternly Nature exacts a rigid observance of her rules," and how Red Fox himself is always obedient to his mother, for "it was no small part of his intelligence that he knew how much better his mother knew than he." Obedience for Kipling is the first law of the jungle; every cub of the wolf pack must learn it:

> "Now these are the Laws of the Jungle, and many and mighty are they;
> But the head and the hoof of the Law and the haunch and the hump is — Obey!"

It could be argued that the evidence for the success of this moral philosophy, and the public acceptance of an anti-Darwinian optimism, can be found in the popularity of the nature writers. Both Seton's and Roberts' nature stories went through edition after edition at the beginning of the century, and one would suspect that Kipling's *Jungle Books* were read to generations of young listeners. All three writers supported the status quo; a child, if he paid attention to the moral lessons, would surely be improved. There is, however, one other means of estimating the popular encouragement given the nature writers, and that in a surprising though socially significant place — the Boy Scouts. The Scouts were also trained to be superior animals, to be brave, helpful, and especially, obedient. The third and most important part of the Scout Promise was obedience to the Scout Law. Curiously, their founder, General Robert Baden-Powell, used the work of the nature writers, and of Kipling, when he came to write the manual for his movement, *Scouting For Boys.*

"Any naturalist," Baden-Powell told his scouts, "will tell you that animals largely owe their cleverness to their mothers."[19] Older animals taught younger animals, and they taught them to obey. Instinct was not half as important as training. Seton was closely associated with the scouting movement from the first, having in fact organized a "woodcraft" group for the boys of America, and in *Scouting For Boys*, Baden-Powell used many of his ideas. Baden-Powell also recommended several of Seton's books to his readers, but when it came to the crucial questions of education, of training and obedience, and the naturalists' models of good conduct, he turned not to Seton or Roberts but to the American writer, William Long. Long's work has now sunk without trace; reading him one can see why he would appeal to a straightforward moralist like Baden-Powell. Much more sentimental and didactic than his contemporaries, and, one would guess, a less careful observer of animal life, Long made no pretense at Darwinism, but preferred to see in the school of the woods "no tragedies or footlight effects of woes and struggles, but rather a wholesome, cheerful life to make one glad and send him back to his own school with deeper wisdom and renewed courage."[20] He was quite clear on the unimportance of instinct, and he had no doubt at all

about the necessity for obedience: "when one turns to animals, it is often with the wholesome, refreshing sense that here is a realm where the law of life is known and obeyed. To the wild creature obedience is everything. It is the deep, unconscious tribute of ignorance to wisdom, of weakness to power."

In *Scouting For Boys* Baden-Powell quoted Long at some length. "The Old Wolf" himself was a military man, and he believed in old-fashioned virtues; the scouting movement, though encouraging individual initiative, was authoritarian, its aim to turn out patriots and model citizens. It was important that boys be well trained, and if, in the stories of the nature writers, they had models of good behaviour, these were models that would naturally appeal to boys. Even the scout patrols were named after animals. When it came time to form the junior organization, Baden-Powell went to Kipling, and with his permission took his inspiration from *The Jungle Book*. Significantly, the first "law" of the Wolf Cubs was "the Cub gives in to the old Wolf."[21]

We have in this last detail the clue to the stories of animal heroes. Animals are not so much animals as emblems, symbols of a more perfect world. Baden-Powell called himself the "Old Wolf," and Seton used the wolf paw mark as his signature. To each, the wolf was a superior creature, a star in an ordered and moral universe. The animal stories thus are best considered mythopoeically: Old Silverspot, Seton's crow, drilling his troops and training his youngsters, could well be a model for General Baden-Powell. Red Fox, in his bravery and intelligence, might stand as a shining example to any young scout.

Seen in this light, the lives of the animals resemble, in their structure, the life of the mythic hero: they are born, go through early trials, win their kingdom and die. Some, like Seton's Krag, who returns after death to haunt his murderer, even have an apotheosis. Fate in the shape of a Darwinian catastrophe ensures in the evitable death of the hero a technical tragedy, though the prevailing note in both Seton and Roberts is one of life ever renewed. Man, especially in Seton's stories, may be part of a corrupt and decadent postlapsarian world. In Roberts, man's ignorance and callousness are crimes against nature, though innocence and goodness are often represented by a child or youth, the sensitive girl or boy who knows and loves the creatures of the woods. In Roberts also, the landscape is often magical or enchanted.

In all these details it is clear that the animal tales of both Seton and Roberts take their inspiration and structure as much from literature as from life. In their use of the conventions of the romance, in their echoing of a mythic pattern, and in their quite definite symbolic treatment of animal character, both men translate the indiscriminate facts of nature into the ordered patterns of art. At the centre of their fiction is their belief in moral and rational animals, which in its extensiveness and pervasive force, takes on the quality of an organizing myth. It is ironic that at a time when the forces of instinct, intuition and the unconscious were being redis-

covered in man, the power of the Logos was found in the kingdoms of the brute beasts.

NOTES

[1] *The Kindred of the Wild* (1902; rpt. Boston: Page, 1921), pp. 15-29.

[2] For a summary of the history of the concept of instinct see W. H. Thorpe, *Animal Nature and Human Nature* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 134 ff.

[3] "Kneepads" appears in Seton's *Lives of the Hunted* (1901), "Red Fox" in Roberts' *Red Fox* (1905). Roberts wrote over two hundred stories: I have chosen to refer only to those that are (1) best known, and (2) written from the animal's point of view, or (3) contain some statement on or illustration of the instinct problem.

[4] Both Seton and Roberts were embroiled in a controversy on the realism of their stories, having, in 1903, come under attack from the naturalist, John Burroughs. W. J. Keith argues that the problem of realism is important: "the stories are convincing only in so far as they can be accepted as at least possible within the world of nature" (*Charles G. D. Roberts* [Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969], p. 93). This is a reasonable view, to which it is worth adding that it depends on the genre — if the author's intention *is* realism, and not romance. A difficult case is presented by, for example, *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*, which, to use Northrop Frye's terms, falls into the mode of romance. In this tale a loving, intelligent, maternal bear named Kroof protects the child Miranda, and eventually rescues Miranda and her mother from a pair of wicked men. Did Roberts expect his readers to take this fairytale as "realistic" fiction?

[5] See Joseph Gold, "The Precious Speck of Life," *Canadian Literature*, No. 26 (Autumn 1965), pp. 22-32. In this important and provocative article, Gold argues for an archetypal and mythic interpretation of Roberts' animal stories. He sees the essential myth in Roberts as that of the vitality and persistence of life in its cycles. Roberts, he states, left a body of work "consistently arranged about a clear idea of the order of life itself."

[6] These were the very points on which Seton and Roberts were challenged by John Burroughs, when he returned to the attack in 1905, in his book *Ways of Nature*. See Keith, pp. 91-92.

[7] See Thorpe, pp. 151 ff. For more extensive discussion, see R. F. Ewer, *Ethology of Mammals* (London: Elek, 1973).

[8] See Donald R. Griffen, *The Question of Animal Awareness* (New York: Rockefeller Univ. Press, 1976).

[9] See Ewer, pp. 277-78.

[10] "Badlands Billy," in *Animal Heroes* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, n.d.), pp. 124-25.

[11] Twenty-three years later Seton retreated from this position, and declared that "although an animal is much helped by its mother's teaching, it owes still more to the racial teaching, which is instinct. . . ." See his foreword to *Bannertail* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922).

[12] *Kindred*, p. 23.

[13] *Lives of the Hunted*, p. 43.

[14] See "The Rat and the Rattlers," *Mainly About Wolves* (London: Methuen, 1937), pp. 171-79.

[15] "The Wolf and the Primal Law," *Mainly About Wolves*, pp. 121-31. Here, as so often in Seton, it is man himself who is the villain.

[16] *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*, p. 128.

[17] For a discussion of the educational and moral didacticism of *The Jungle Books* see Shamsul Islam, *Kipling's "Law"* (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 122-31.

[18] *Natural History*, p. 7.

[19] R. S. S. Baden-Powell, *Scouting For Boys* (London: Cox, 1908), p. 124.

[20] *School of the Woods: Some Life Studies of Animal Instincts and Animal Training* (Boston: Ginn, 1902), p. 21.

[21] *The Wolf-Cub's Handbook* (1916; rpt. London: Pearson, 1923), p. 39.

LAUGHTER OF CROWS

Ernest Hekkanen

When my time came around
the sky filled with crows,
all gesturing in unison
and beckoning me on.

So I went the beating route,
escorted by my nightmare
and the howling tongues
of feathered phantomrey.

I went into the bird black
unknown, hugging my fear
and disdaining the maker
of my inadequate flesh.

I went with a swoon of wings,
plummeting into the wide terrain
where flight became the law
and I lost myself in motion.

I went with the beckoning
and found myself in the dark
enormity, wingless and depleted,
laughter of crows consuming me.