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Article abstract

Charles G.D. Roberts's animal stories are regularly discussed as an attempt to create a new kind of animal character, one that is not an anthropomorphic copy of human psychology nor a one-dimensional allegory, but instead a "real" animal based on accurate observation and up-to-date science. However, since no realism is transparent, Roberts's stories cannot be expected to neutrally reproduce reality, despite their modernist techniques. Indeed, what Roberts's "animal biographies" choose to signify as "real" -- human, masculine selfhood concerned with hierarchical power structure, as well as a unified autonomous human personality as universal phenomenon -- is as important as the ways in which these notions are signified. The stories function as ideology and do the work of politics; they occupy a place in the critical narrative of the development of realism in Canadian fiction by constructing the reader as subject, "naturally predatory," material, and male.

POLITICAL SCIENCE: REALISM IN ROBERTS'S ANIMAL STORIES

Misao Dean

> In that country the animals
> have the faces of people
> "The Animals in that Country," Margaret Atwood

Charles G.D. Roberts's animal stories are usually discussed as an attempt to create a new kind of animal character, one which would not be an anthropomorphic copy of human psychology nor a one-dimensional allegory but a "real" animal based on the most up-to-date science and on accurate personal observation.[1] Critics read the stories as marking an important stage in the development of Canadian realism, citing the development of credible animal characters and the location of the stories in a meticulously accurate and recognisable New Brunswick landscape.[2] But these analyses of Roberts's animals stories as "realistic" have failed to take account of the ideology implicit in realist technique. Even in the most "realistic" text, "the thing represented does not appear in a moment of pure identity" (MacCabe 136). Far from "reflecting" reality, Roberts's stories create as reality a natural world which is inflected with assumptions about human personality and masculinity as norm which are endemic to his historical period.

Critical approaches to Roberts's stories are dominated by the assumption that in good writing language directly corresponds to material reality: "most critics have agreed . . . that an intimate, almost transparent connection between diction and object, between the word and the phenomenal world, is the hallmark of Roberts's best writing" (Whalen 172). Whalen sums up Roberts's "legacy to Canadian novelists" as his demonstration of how to represent in prose "the world as a tangible reality, human beings as recognisable entities, and settings as actual locales" (168). Lennox praises Roberts's ability to depict, "in a realistic way, animals as animals in

relation to their place in the actual, natural world" (121) and Joseph Gold locates "myth", which he argues structures all of Roberts's stories, "within the framework of an accurate survey of natural history" (Gold 23). While Gold, Atwood, MacDonald (1980) and Dunlap emphasise the way the stories result from a dialectical relationship between material reality and the "shaping consciousness" of the artist, ultimately their critical judgments are based on the tenet that the stories are "true" in some ultimate sense—"true" to an observable physical reality and (perhaps) "true" to an underlying and universally (or, in the case of Atwood, nationally) valid mythical structure.

The verisimilitude of the stories is often confirmed by contrasting them to contemporary animal stories such as the sentimental novels of Anna Sewell and Marshall Saunders, or the two *Jungle Books* of Rudyard Kipling.[3] Sewell's *Black Beauty* and Saunders's *Beautiful Joe* self-consciously create quasi-human "personalities" for their animal characters in order to foster reader identification, and so forward their animal-rights politics. Rudyard Kipling, whose *Jungle Book* is "in no sense realistic"(Ware xv), creates animal characters who are descendants equally of the proverbial animals of Aesop and of "Indian folk wisdom" (xv). All of these stories are infused with various kinds of Victorian ideological baggage: racist and colonialist attitudes in the case of Kipling, and the sentimental evocation of suffering innocence in order to arouse public concern in the case of Sewell and Saunders. In addition, their use of intrusive moralising and their romantic and implausible plots make them technically less "realistic." Placing Roberts's animal stories in the context of these (now) obviously unrealistic works has the effect of making them seem objective and materially "real" by contrast.

Roberts invites such judgments when he presents the creation of a "realistic" animal personality based on taxonomy and the new science of psychology as the major innovation of the animal story as genre. Roberts argues that previous generations of writers had imposed an anthropomorphic self upon their animal characters in order to create moral fables for their readers. In contrast, his stories grew out of the scientific observation evident in their immediate predecessors, the hunting "story of adventure and the anecdote of observation" (*Kindred* 21). The first, he states, generated a taxonomy of animals: "Precise and patient scientists made the animals their care, observing with microscope and measure, comparing bones, assorting families, subdividing subdi-

visions, till at length, all the animals of significance to man were ticketed neatly, and laid bare, as far as their material substance was concerned" (*Kindred* 22). The second generated an interest in animal psychology, which he considers to be an inductive science whose methodology led inevitably to the conclusion that "animals can and do reason" (*Kindred* 23). Observation confirmed Darwin's speculation that if humans evolved from "lesser" animals and shared many traits with them, then reason (in a rudimentary form) might also be a common attribute; from this Roberts developed his idea that animals must possess a "personality, individuality, mentality" (*Kindred* 28) which is distinctive, and which he contrasts positively to "mere instinct and automatism" (*Kindred* 24).[4]

But the language of Roberts's animal stories cannot transparently reproduce material reality, for no realism is transparent: "in so far as language is a way of articulating experience, it necessarily participates in ideology" (Belsey 42). All realistic works rely on the evocation of cultural codes which are ideological; they construct the real rather than reflect it. This is not to say that Roberts's stories are not technically accomplished, or that they are ideologically suspect: even less does it suggest that they are consciously deceptive or bad. Rather, despite their modernist technique of minimising the intrusion of the narrator, despite their evocative description and claims to scientific accuracy, we cannot judge naively that they reproduce reality. The stories demand analysis as "realist," that is, as attempts to create an illusion of reality. What they choose to signify as "real" is as important an area of analysis as how they signify it.

The ideology within which Roberts's stories speak is the masculinist discourse of the early twentieth century in which the "primal" experiences of hunting, scouting and woodcraft serve as an antidote for the feminised life of the industrial city dweller. "From 1890 to 1930 the 'Nature Movement' was at its height in the United States," providing a focus for "conventional western ambivalence about 'civilization'" (Haraway 54). North Americans in an increasingly urban society idealised the (American) frontiersman and the (Canadian) trapper or voyageur; the British created a popular image of "empire" which relied upon the enterprise of the "clean-limbed" and active irregular troops, offered as a model for the supposedly lazy and immoral members of the urban working class. The perceived "crisis of masculinity" in English, American and Canadian cultures consisted in the belief that men were becoming "soft," physically weak and morally corrupt through

sedentary or industrial work. The construction of homosexuality in the discourse surrounding the trial of Oscar Wilde and the "decadence" of the 1890s produced a corresponding emphasis on "cleanliness," physical fitness and sexual autonomy in the first decades of the twentieth century. The popular literature of empire portrayed British colonies as appropriate fields for the exercise of British masculinity, preferably through a "cleansing" encounter with the natural world in adventures which emphasised "instinctive" reactions; the ability of the frontiersmen or backwoodsmen to adapt to and overcome any conditions was the stuff of popular novels set in the American West, along the Canadian Railway or in south central Africa.[5]

In order to provide the reader with a "return to nature" without requiring a "return to barbarism" (*Kindred* 29), Roberts's animal stories create animals as models of ideal autonomous selfhood, masculine and free from the taint of civilised life; by representing these animals in deep communion with human observers, they reproduce the selfhood of the reader as similarly autonomous, masculine and free. By encouraging identification with the animal subject, and with the position of the knowledgeable backwoodsman who lingers in the text as author and authoriser, the stories literally "naturalise" the position of reader as the result of this supposed primal return to the essence of being-in-nature.

But the human selfhood which is attributed to the animals is the ideological cover story for the subjectivity which the stories create. For while the animals as individuals are attributed freedom and agency, they are also "subjected" by a discourse which figures them as "the same as" humans, yet places them in a material and evolutionary hierarchy which is dominated by humans.[6] Similarly, the reader is "subjected" by the structural identification with animals, who are theorised as wholly material beings acting according to "natural laws," and with the predatory, male human observer for whose specular consumption the drama of animal life is offered. The "return to nature" promised by "The Animal Story" (*Kindred* 29) is promised to the male reader who by its means is offered a subject position of competence and mastery directly linked to his biological heritage as white male human being, crown and end product of evolution.

The theories of Charles Darwin were inevitably brought to aid this discourse. The struggle for existence, natural selection and evolution were widely thought to apply to the human species

at the turn of the century, and their application formed the basis of the developing discipline of sociobiology. Despite Darwin's own careful disclaimers on this issue, responses to his work dominated the newly founded discipline of sociology, especially in the United States. One school of thought held that Darwin had merely projected onto the natural world the human society he saw around him; Marx, for example, wrote:

> It is remarkable how Darwin recognizes among beasts and plants his English society, with its division of labour, competition, opening up of new markets, 'inventions,' and the Malthusian 'struggle for existence'. . . . in Darwin, the animal kingdom figures as a civil society. (Quoted in Beer 58)

This contention was supported by Darwin's own admission that he had drawn his idea of the "struggle for existence" from Malthus's work on human population. Other thinkers, such as Herbert Spencer, argued that the "laws" of nature discovered by Darwin to govern the animal kingdom ought to be guides for social policy, and still others argued that Darwin's description of the struggle for existence, or "survival of the fittest," ought to motivate people to adapt and create co-operative, moral organisational structures which would similarly ensure survival.[7] In the United States, naturalists and museum collectors commented on the supposed nuclear structure of animal families and constructed a fantasy of the peaceable kingdom in order to naturalise a conservative solution to social unrest: "'naked eye science' could give direct vision of social peace and progress despite the appearances of class war and decadence" (Haraway 54). What all of these streams of thought held in common was the importance of biological science in determining appropriate ways to view human societies, and the salience of the "social analogy underlying Darwin's description of the natural order" (Beer 58).

In short, the animal "self" created by the stories, while naturalised by scientific theory and reported observation, is the very human self created by "classic realist fiction" (Belsey 73). The animals masquerade as "other," but like the bull, cat, fox and wolf of Atwood's poem, they are really (m)animals, reproductions of the ideological subject offered to turn-of-the-century readers of realist fiction. Like the sentimental and self-consciously human animals of Anna Sewell or Marshall Saunders these (m)animals cannot claim to convey "the non-human aspect of [their] existence" (Ware

xxi) except as absence. In a culture increasingly obsessed with the "biological" or "natural" basis of human action, in which responses to Darwinism were the dominant sociological theory, Roberts's (m)animals function as simulacra of social subjects, and their motivations, actions and fates are created by the conventions of realist narrative, turn-of-the-century gender politics, and the historical intersection of biological and sociological discourses.

The stories which fall into Roberts's category of "animal biography" offer examples of the way that conventional manipulation of realist "point of view" works to create subjectivity. Using conventional third-person narration, Roberts creates the physical perspective and psychological motivation to substantiate the subjectivity of his animal characters and to structure the identification of reader with character. In "The Little Homeless One" the title character encounters a goshawk in a rabbit run:

> The runway was narrow, and densely overarched by low branches, so it was impossible that the great bird could have seen him from the upper air. . . . The beautiful, fierce-eyed bird was not home upon the level earth. His deadly talons were not made for walking, but for perching and for slaying. His realm was the free spaces of the air, and here in the runway he could not spread his wings. His progress was so slow, laborious and clumsy that, but for the glare of his level, piercing eyes he could have seemed grotesque. (*Vagrants* 41)

The narrative here describes the scene from the physical point of view of the rabbit, which is the only perspective from which "the glare of [the goshawk's] level, piercing eyes" and his labourious clumsy movements would be visible. The rabbit's perspective is also represented in the focus on the talons, whose functions are described with the elevated diction (slaying) which gives them a mythic importance for the vulnerable rabbit. As the anecdote continues, the rabbit is attributed a psychology which includes not only fear, but "curiosity." "Gifted beyond his fellows with the power of learning from experience" the "Homeless One" learns to be "a little suspicious" (*Vagrants* 42) of rabbit runs, and retains this knowledge as a guide to future action.

The perspective of the rabbit in "The Little Homeless One" alternates with addresses to the reader which reproduce the discourse of romantic nature; the goshawk is described as "beautiful," an inhabitant of the "realm" of the "free air." Thus in addition

to the positioning of the reader as identified with the subject animal, the narrative also invites the reader to participate in a discourse of "natural description" which positions him as knowledgeable observer, identified with the backwoodsman/author who directs his gaze. In "Mothers of the North" this identification is structured by the creation of a physical perspective on the action which writer and reader share. From the open water both the walrus herd and the attacking polar bear and her cub are visible. The narrative occasionally lodges a sweeping third person description of a scene in the consciousness of one animal, such as the old bull who is "on watch," or in the mind of the polar bear herself, who analyses the scene for the most effective angle of attack, but the dominant perspective is that of the human viewer, as in this description of the walrus herd:

> They were not, it must be confessed, a very attractive company, these uncouth sea-cattle. The adults were from ten to twelve feet in length, round and swollen looking as hogsheads, quite lacking the adornment of tails, and in colour of a dirty yellow-brown. Sparse bristles, scattered over their hides in rusty patches, gave them a disreputable, moth-eaten look. (*Vagrants* 2)

Specific dimensions, alternative vocabulary (sea-cattle) and colour references are "concrete details" that establish the referentiality of the description for the reader; the metaphors implied by "hogsheads" and "moth-eaten," in addition to the attributes of uncouthness, unattractiveness and disreputability provide the connotative aspects of the "authorial vision." This description, a demonstration of "reality" as "shaped" by the implied consciousness of the author, demonstrates the way that the text is constructed as a direct communication from one autonomous individual (author) to another (reader) and places both as observers of the scene.

In stories such as "King of the Mamozekel" and "The Little Homeless One" (in *Vagrants*) "King of the Flaming Hoops" and "The Monarch of Park Barren" (in *Kings in Exile*), Roberts uses the conventional biographical narrative pattern to reify both reader and character as subjects. In accordance with the conventions of the genre, the stories present a chronology of individuals from birth through maturity, offering the unified narrative of exposition, rising action, climax and denouement which reproduces "character" as the determinant of action in both life and art. Ro-

berts's animal "personalities" are autonomous, and like the heroes of romance, create that autonomy by leaving home, undergoing adventures, and often returning to or re-establishing that home. Animals experience free choice through action which is "psychologically motivated"; they express their desire through action, and their desire is eventually contained in the achievement of full adult autonomy and the opportunity to mate. In "King of the Mamozekel" a moose is ejected from "home" by his mother's new mate; after winning his own mate, and sustaining challenges for her possession, he achieves full selfhood by confronting his unreasoning fear of bears (created by the memory of being mauled as a calf) in a duel with a bear who attacks his own son. In "The Odyssey of the Great White Owl" (*Lure of the Wild*) an arctic owl recently bereaved of his mate experiences a restless desire to travel which is only assuaged when he encounters a mateless female. In "The Little Homeless One" a snowshoe rabbit, abandoned when his mother nurses a new litter, learns through observation and experience how to preserve his life from cunning predators and pass on his superior physical traits to his young. In *Kings in Exile* animals removed from the wild soon after birth experience a relentless desire for freedom which creates a psychological kinship with man, and often results in their regaining freedom.

The values celebrated in these (m)animal "biographies" are predictable: independence, physical superiority, ability to learn and adapt, superior cunning, honesty, trust, ability to co-operate toward material ends. "The Little Homeless One" survives an attack on his abandoned siblings because he is independent enough to leave the nest; the "King of the Mamozekel" is admirable because of his physical size and ability to defeat rival males. Both survive because they learn from experience, the "King" from his encounter with bears, the "homeless one" from his observation of predators who stalk the rabbit runs. Blue Fox, the "Master of Supply" (Vagrants) prevails over his enemies because he shows prudence, "wise forethought," and "discretion," by burying the fruits of his summer hunting in "cold storage" next to the permafrost to be eaten in winter; this animal expression of the Protestant work ethic has also learned to organize, calling on the aid of his fellow foxes to drive away marauders.

The realist technique of closure formally resolves the issues of the protagonists' lives, whether structured to reinforce a positive teleology of progressive evolution or to shock the reader into recognising the impartiality of "science." The protagonists of Ro-

berts' "anecdotes of observation" sometimes die meaningless deaths, dictated by random fate or undeserved bad luck: in these stories, such as "When Twilight Falls on the Stump Lots" the strength of animal character, and the persistence of animal endurance, are irrelevant to the final disposition of things, and the reader's identification with the animal characters results in a sense of the irrelevance of spiritual values to the workings of "natural law." But the heroes of "animal biographies" often die the "good deaths" dictated by the genre. When the snowshoe rabbit makes himself a target for predators by thumping a warning to other rabbits, "The Homeless One, as truly as many a hero of history and song, die[s] for the safety of his tribe" (*Vagrants* 46). In both, "natural law" is triumphant, for despite the death of the individual, "The Homeless One" continues his line through his (numerous) offspring.

Following the conventions of biography, only outstanding *male* animals achieve the simple personality which characterises the animal biographies. In these stories the linguistic practice of referring to animals using generic male pronouns has the effect of producing a natural world in which the vast majority of animals are gendered male. A survey of the stories published throughout Roberts's career and posthumously reveals that the male is the norm; female animals appear only in the context of their reproductive functions, as "mate" or mother of the protagonist, actors in the struggle for existence only when procuring food for their (male) young. Animals who initially appear in the text as "it" (usually insects, such as the giant water-beetle in "In a Summer Pool") become "he" when credited with voluntary action, instinct or emotion (*Lure of the Wild* 33-4). Individual animals designated by a generic species name, such as "Red Fox," "Blue Fox," "The Little Homeless One," are always male; exemplars of the best of their breed, "King of the Mamozekel" or "Lord of the Air," or the captive animals in *Kings in Exile*, are always male. Realist technique in fiction depends upon the creation of such "typical" characters which, rather than representing the average or ordinary specimen, join together a myriad of qualities which were considered desirable: in scientific circles at the turn of the century, the concept of the "typical" animal specimen included not only extraordinary physique, physical perfection and virtuous character, but—definitively—maleness (Haraway 41). The effect whereby this "generic male" becomes simply male is well known: Miller and Swift, in *Words and Women*, recount the way that the generic

"he" used to designate animals creates a presumption that "the male is the norm, and the assumption that all animals are male unless they are known to be female" (28).

Such (m)animals are not neutrally designated male as a matter of grammatical convenience; in Roberts's stories male animals display many of the characteristics typically associated with human masculinity at the turn of the century. Like the television programs on natural history, museum dioramas and Disney movies which they spawned, these stories reify gender difference as the primary category of human experience by projecting it onto the natural world: "Here in the animal kingdom, a natural world of male dominance and aggression is revealed. Here are males defending their property (territory or wives). Here are females selecting their mates as 'good' parents, either for their genetic endowments or their ability to provide" (Coward 212). Roberts's male animals achieve an independence marked by love of adventure, superior mental skills, competitiveness, instinctive love of hunting and virility.[8] In contrast, female animals are motivated primarily by mother-love;[9] the occasional unmated female characteristically displays simple cruelty and bloodlust (*Kindred* 233) and represents an uncontrollable, immoral wildness which demands human control.[10] Male animals are the agents of sexual desire in the stories: while cow moose sometimes feel "jealousy" at the idea of a female rival, male moose are driven into "an insurrection of madness, and suspense, and sweetness" (*Kindred* 185), owls into migrations, and ganders enticed to flee captivity by sexual desire. In an almost parodic representation of the rabbit's legendary potency, "The Little Homeless One" is offered numerous opportunities to mate, as female rabbits coyly lead him into the bushes, flashing their haunches enticingly:

> a sleek young doe met him in the runway, and waved long ears of admiration at his comely stature and length of limb. He stopped to touch noses and exchange compliments with her. Coyly she hopped away, leading him into a cool, green-shadowed covert of sumach scrub." (*Vagrants* 40)

He spends his days "hopping lazily after a pair of does who were merely pretending, by way of sport, to evade him" (41).[11]

Roberts's depiction of the female animal's role in reproduction is particularly inflected with contemporary debates about the nature of women. Progressive thinkers in the United States argued that species evolution demanded that women should actively

choose their own husbands, offering as evidence numerous animals species in which the female is dominant. Charlotte Perkins Gilman believed that men, by valuing small, weak and frail "feminine" women as sexual partners, were unnaturally retarding the evolution of humankind, and with sociologist Lester Frank Ward argued that women, as guardians of the species, were more competent to choose the fathers of their children than men were to choose the mothers.[12] "King of the Mamozekel" depicts a cow moose who, while indifferently awaiting the outcome of a purely male battle in which she is the prize, yet has some concern in the affair beyond passive acquiescence:

> But as for the cow, she moved up from the waterside and looked on with a fine impartiality. What concerned her was chiefly that none but the bravest and the strongest should be her mate—a question which only fighting could determine. Her favour would go with victory. (*Kindred* 315)

Motivated by mother-love, she awaits the opportunity to become the mate of the most physically aggressive and strong male moose, a fit father for her children. The story intervenes in a debate about women by representing feminine animals who contradictorily exercise choice by remaining passive. "The Little Homeless One," in a popular distortion of Darwinian evolution, seems to assert that advantageous genetic traits can only be passed from male parent to offspring, and that the female has little role in the improvement of the species. The male rabbit is

> singled out, apparently, for the special favour of the Unseen Powers of the Wilderness . . . . to the end that he should grow up a peculiarly fine, vigorous, and prepotent specimen of his race, and reproduce himself abundantly, to the advantage, not only of the whole tribe of snowshoe rabbits, but all of the hunting beasts and birds of the wilderness, who chiefly depended upon that prolific and defenceless tribe for their prey. (*Vagrants of the Barren* 39)

Mothers are represented as important in the nurture of their offspring, but random (in the case of the "Homeless One," exceedingly random) and biologically unimportant factors in their nature.

Roberts emphasises in "The Animal Story" the thematic and cultural importance of a mutual recognition of kinship between human and animal, ritualised as a look "deep into the eyes of cer-

tain of the four-footed kindred" (*Kindred* 23).[13] This encounter is the theme of "stories of adventure with beasts" (*Kindred* 21), another of Roberts's three categories of animal stories. In "The Moonlight Trails," the recurring character called simply "the boy" shares with predatory animals the excitement of hunting and the kill: "His heart leapt, his eyes flamed, and he sprang forward, with a little cry, as a young beast might in sighting its first quarry" (*Kindred* 51). Everywhere in Roberts's stories "man" is figured as a predator at the top of the food chain, sharing with animals the desire to hunt and needing meat to maintain physical health (see "Wild Motherhood" and "Savory Meats" in *Kindred*; also *The Heart of the Ancient Wood).* Yet man also shares with animals more complex identifications: "the boy" also identifies with his victim, and in "Moonlight Trails" he vows never to snare rabbits again after he witnesses the desecration of his snare by foxes. The stories in *Kings in Exile* represent exchanges and partnerships between "man" and wild animal, in which an identification based on the temporary emasculation represented by civilised life is played out between captive zoo or circus animals and their "masters." In "Last Bull" a relic of the dying race of American Bison is named by "two grim old sachems of the Dacotahs" in symbolic recognition of their likeness; in "The Sun-Gazer" Horner feels such strong identification with a caged eagle that he purchases it in order to set it free: "Horner could almost have cried, from pity and homesick sympathy" (168). Stories of loyalty and honesty in relationships between human and animal such as "Gray Master," "Lord of the Flaming Hoops" and "Lone Wolf" emphasise the homosocial culture in which these stories originate. The experience of identification, of seeing "a something, before unrecognised, that answered to our inner and intellectual, if not spiritual selves" (*Kindred* 23-4) in the lives and personalities of animals is represented as an exchange between male humans and male animals only.

Like the predators celebrated in Roberts's stories as intelligent and moral adversaries, "man" is also a "king," "lord" and "master" of the natural world. In "Vagrants of the Barren," the woodsman hero becomes identified with his animal rivals in a struggle for existence:

> His anger rose as he realised he was at bay. The indomitable man-spirit awoke with the anger. Sitting up suddenly, over the edge of the trench his deep eyes looked out over the shadowy

> spaces of the night with challenge and defiance. Against whatever odds, he declared to himself, he was master." (Vagrants 150)

The language here associates the protagonist's animal defensiveness ("he was at bay") with his "indomitable man-spirit." The two become further identified as the story progresses, with the woodsman recognising that "No animal but man himself could hunt" in the blizzard he confronts, and later choosing to spare the lives of a helpless caribou herd, foundered in the snow:

> through contact there in the savage darkness, a sympathy passed between the man and the beast. He could not help it. The poor beasts and he were in the same predicament, together holding the battlements of life against the blind and brutal madness of storm. (*Vagrants* 157)

While the story is structured to ironically challenge the protagonist's "obstinate pride in his superiority to the other creatures of the wilderness" by requiring the protagonist to descend to animality, it in fact "strikes the chord of man's innate superiority" (Keefer 90), demonstrating it to consist in both the physical strength and cunning which ensures survival, and the moral ability to discern kinship and thus spare lives.

The moment of mutual recognition and identification in these stories reifies the subjectivity of reader and animal and situates that subjectivity within a network of ideological assumptions. The first of these is a mutual recognition of shared conditions of life: both human and animal are products of "natural laws," most especially the struggle for existence, and their lives are determined by material conditions. The second, and intertwined, assumption, is their mutual rebellion against these conditions of life and their expression of the will to triumph in the struggle for existence by killing, and in the achievement of a free, independent life. "Man" is here assumed to be a predator like others, participating in an implicit morality in which "good" predators learn to live peacefully among themselves through co-operation and kill only to survive (or to improve the breed through competition), and "bad" predators are loners, killing for sport and mad with "bloodlust." This morality is not guaranteed by supernatural powers, but implied by the "laws" of evolution and natural selection, which, as suggested in Roberts's sonnet, "In the Wide Awe and Wisdom of the Night," may be the utterances of God, but need not be.

"If representation is not to be conceived as a mirror held up to nature but as a signifying practice, then it and not nature is responsible for its statements, and political questions can be addressed to it" (Robbins 7). By masquerading as "science," Roberts's animal stories do the work of politics, creating and maintaining a hierarchical power structure which is dominated by humans, naturalising the masculine as norm and asserting unified autonomous human personality as a universal phenomenon. By effacing their status as ideological text and masquerading as "concrete reality," the stories "[do] the work of ideology" (Belsey 72) obscuring the arbitrary relationship between word and thing, discourse and subjectivity. The stories occupy a place in the critical narrative of the development of realism in Canadian fiction not by allowing "the thing represented" to "appear in a moment of pure identity" (MacCabe 136), but by constructing the reader as subject, "naturally" predatory, material and male.

NOTES

[1] See Atwood, *Survival*, pages 72-75 for a discussion of the ways these stories are considered to be a reply to the anthropomorphic stories of British writers.

[2] See Lennox and Whalen, for example.

[3] See, for example, Martin Ware's "Introduction" to *Vagrants of the Barren*, xv.

[4] MacDonald (1980) and Dunlap disagree as to the relative weight Roberts placed on the two terms in the binary construction of reason and instinct; I'm not convinced that Roberts is consistent in this regard.

[5] See Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire* and *Language of Empire;* Donna Haraway, esp. chapter 3; also Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy.*

[6] There is a direct analogy between this discourse and the more overtly political "colonialist discourse" discussed by Stephen Slemon, which works "to *produce and naturalise* the hierarchical power structures of the imperial enterprise, and to mobilise those power structures in the management of both colonial and neo-colonial cross-cultural relationships" (qtd. in Hutcheon 150).

[7] See Bannister 14-33.

[8] MacDonald, *Language of Empire* passim.

[9] Primarily, but not exclusively. In "The Little Homeless One" the litter is aban-

doned by its mother in her struggle for survival: "She loved her young ones; but she loved life better. She had but one life."

[10] Both sexes of the weasel, wolverine and fisher are also represented as bloodthirsty animals who enjoy killing for its own sake ("Keepers of the Nest," in *Vagrants of the Barren*, and "The Den of the Otter," in *Lure of the Wild*) but in neither case is human intervention required.

[11] Clearly, in the animal world of these stories, "no" means "chase me." This fantasy projection of sexual power is all the more offensive in the biographical context of Roberts's self-created image as a rogue and a successful ladies man.

[12] See Gilman, *Herland*.

[13] This moment became a conventional element of museum dioramas by the 1920s, which contained "at least one animal that catches the viewer's gaze and holds it in communion." Realistic technique creates the illusion that "There is no impediment to this vision, no mediation" between the animal and man, for "Only then could the hygiene of nature cure the sick vision of civilized man" (Haraway 30).

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