The Wolf as Victim

MARY FORD

He huffs and puffs and blows your house down. He lurks behind trees waiting to pounce on unsuspecting little girls. He gobbles up old grannies and does the bidding of wicked witches. He protects the lair of a practitioner of deep magic and is in league with goblins. He personifies "the tyrannies of sin"[1] to the hymn-writer and the "gray fiend"[2] to early animal raconteurs. Who is this menace? He is *canis lupus,* the wolf, the recipient of the most unfortunate stereotype in literature. Happily the situation is changing thanks to authors E.T. Seton, Charles G.D. Roberts, Farley Mowat, Claude Aubry and others who have described the plight of the wolf in modern times with skill and sensitivity and, occasionally, in poignant human terms.

Though much has been surmised, until recently little has actually been known about the wolf. To the ancients, the wolf was a ferocious beast of prey, swooping down in dead of night on domestic stock. His primeval howl, his ability to appear and fade mysteriously, his ravenous appetite, and his indisputable skill as a hunter—all served to establish his reputation as the demon aggressor among animals. Recent biological investigation, however, has indicated that this is not necessarily the case.

As an investigative biologist for the Dominion Wildlife Service, Farley Mowat went to the Barren Lands of Canada's eastern Arctic in 1957 to do a six-month study on the wolf-caribou relationship. Mowat's superiors believed, and his own built-in prejudices supported the belief, that the caribou population was being decimated by an overabundance of hungry wolves. His study, and subsequent book *Never Cry Wolf,* destroyed that hypothesis. Indeed, as he lived in close harmony with his subjects for six months, the author's opinion changed dramatically. He has now become one of the foremost champions of the species. He speaks of his metamorphosis in this way: "Inescapably the realization was being borne in upon my preconditioned mind that the centuries old and universally accepted human concept of wolf character was a palpable lie."[3] Mowat's work, along with that of Dr. Douglas Pimlott of the University of Toronto, Mark Robinson in Algonquin Park, Dr. E.W. Nelson of the U.S. Wildlife Service, film maker

---

[1] *The Book of Common Praise,* comp. by Comm. of General Synod (Oxford Press), p. 280.

[2] Jack London, *White Fang* (London: Methuen, 1927), p. 199.

[3] Farley Mowat, *Never Cry Wolf* (Toronto: Dell, 1975), p. 56.

Bill Mason, and others, has at last given the public an accurate description of wolf life.

The stereotype does not fit. Contrary to popular belief, wolves are not bloodthirsty; they do not kill for sport; they do not crave human flesh; they are not oversexed; they do not attack settlements or stalk man. They are not destroying the caribou or deer population, and the full moon has nothing to do with their howl. In fact, due largely to man's relentless efforts to exterminate them, wolves have become an endangered species. By 1973 all bounties had been removed in Canada, except in the North West Territories.

Except in Minnesota and Alaska, wolves have been eliminated in the U.S., and their numbers have been drastically reduced in Europe and Asia. In Canada, though their range is wide, the population is relatively low (approximately one wolf for every two hundred square miles.)[4] Because of their highly structured social order, says Mowat, the wolves, in fact, practice birth control by continence. They live in family groups consisting of a dominant male and a dominant female (probably mated for life), usually a litter of pups, and often another adult wolf, either young and celibate, or an older wolf who has lost his mate. They are gregarious and fun-loving. They spend their days sleeping and romping, and their nights searching for food. Mowat discovered an astonishing fact about the wolf's eating habits. His Barren Lands family subsisted almost an entire summer on a diet of Arctic mice and lemmings. The group was maintained in good health and the puppies thrived. Fish and fowl also constitute a part of the wolf's diet.

Mowat was impressed by the respect with which his Eskimo friends regarded the wolf. The Eskimos believe that the survival of the wolf is essential to the perdurability of the caribou. The Eskimo feels a solidarity with the wolf; indeed, some claim to understand the various communications between wolves. Mowat himself soon came to appreciate the importance of the wolf for the natural balance of life in the Arctic. More than that, he developed genuine affection for this essentially mild and sensible beast. During his six-month stay, Mowat was never attacked or even threatened by the wolves although on one memorable occasion he accidently confronted a mother wolf and her pup in the narrow and gloomy confines of her den:

> To be honest, I was so frightened that paralysis gripped me. I had no weapon of any sort, and in my awkward posture I could barely have gotten one hand free with which to ward off an attack. It seemed inevitable that the wolves would attack, for even a gopher will make a fierce defense when he is cornered in his den.
> The wolves did not even growl.[5]

---

[4]Canadian Wild Life Service, *Wolf.* Text by Douglas Pimlott (Dept. of Fisheries and Environment), unpaged.

[5]Mowat, p. 174.

Wolves constitute absolutely no danger to man. Dr. Pimlott observes: "The wolf is probably one of the safest animals in the world to be in the bush with."[6] For all the terror which their image conveys, and the blood-thirsty tales of ambush and attack, there has been only one authenticated case of a human being attacked by a wolf in all of North America. That occurred near Sudbury, Ontario, in 1940, when a railway worker was mauled, though not fatally, by what must be regarded as a very unusual wolf.[7] Wolves, in fact, are extremely shy and wary of man. Many trappers live a lifetime in the bush without every seeing a wolf. This, then, is the animal which through the ages has been dreaded and reviled by populations of men, women and children, hounded and abused by hunters, and immortalized in poetry, prose and song as the devil incarnate. Why?

The wolf is the modern survivor of a fierce prehistoric beast of prey, along with such others as the bear and hyena. He has always been a predator and, as such, in competition with man. Because of his intelligence and strength he survived, but little factual data was ever recorded. Stories and legends, however, abound. In early Nordic myth, the wolf was called Fenris, a monstrous demon, a destroyer, who was imprisoned in the bowels of the Earth awaiting the end of the world and his chance to break out and devour the Sun. In classical writing the wolf represented ferocity, evil appetite, and lust. He has variously symbolized night, winter, storm, stress, death, and, particularly, the Devil. In T.H. White's translation of the 12th century book of natural history, the *Bestiary,* the wolf symbolizes the Devil. (It is worth noting that this same book casts two other predators in quite a different light: the bear is a rather lovable licker of honey, while the lion is seen as courageous and compassionate.) The sources of the *Bestiary* include a 3rd century Greek work, the *Physiologus,* as well as the moral and scientific gleanings of centuries of scholars. It was translated from the original Greek into Latin by monks in Lincolnshire, England. The book contains description, illustration, and moral exhortation, and it has had a profound effect on literature. Here is its final word on the wolf: "The Devil bears the similitude of the wolf: he who is always looking over the human race with his evil eye, and darkly prowling around the sheepfolds of the faithful so that he may afflict and ruin their souls."[8] The only other devil-figure of the one hundred and forty-four animals described in the book is the dragon.

The wolf, of course, has been maligned for posterity in the Bible. The Biblical scholars pictured the wolf as a persecutor of Christians: "Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matthew 10: 16); as a hypocrite who deceives others by false religion: "Beware of false

---

[6] Ottawa *Citizen,* Jan. 24, 1970.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] T.H. White, trans., *Bestiary* (London: Cape, 1954), p. 59.

prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7: 15); and, naturally, as Satan: "He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them" (John 10: 12).

Through the centuries as the legends grew, the myth became entrenched in the cultures of the world. There were times, before the gun and before urbanization, when the wolf was indeed a menace. He killed livestock, terrorized shepherds, and undoubtedly took human life. It is a curious fact that by the time of the rise of the novel and the birth of children's literature in the 18th century, the wolf threat had diminished. Still, the myth was firmly established, and the stereotype of the wolf as evil persisted. It is worth noting a few of the egregious notions which existed concerning the wolf. D.B. Beard, an author and naturalist writing in the 1940's, discovered that wolves were believed to fill their stomachs with mud, to eat their own dung, to become fat at the full moon and thin at the waning, to keep alive by sucking the right paw, and to drink only the blood of a victim.[9] Furthermore, Bergen Evans, author of *The Natural History of Nonsense,* noted that wolves were reputed to travel in single file when on the hunt, treading in the steps of the animal ahead so as to conceal their numbers. Wolves were understood to lust after human flesh, especially brides; they were believed to lay siege to towns, to attack infantry on the march, and to board moving trains.[10] These ideas served to perpetuate the myth.

Ernest Thompson Seton, in his book of stories *Mainly About Wolves,* has recorded two notable legends concerning the wolf. They are important, not only because they illustrate a ridiculous degree of exaggeration, but also because they were believed and became part of folklore. Seton regarded these legends as the ultimate extremity in literary stereotyping. His personal bias favoured the wolf, whom he believed was cruelly maligned. From his observations he concluded that the wolf was sagacious, adventuresome, loyal, and fastidious.

The first legend concerns a wolf named La Bête, born in the Rhone Valley about 1760. Hunters killed his mate, and La Bête swore vengeance. After he had devoured his one hundredth victim, Louis XV put the entire French standing army to the hunt under the Marquis d'Enneval. Twenty-three thousand peasants and hunters and two thousand dogs joined the army. Although they were in his territory, it took the combined forces seven weeks to corner their prey—thirty-three thousand men and dogs against one wolf! La Bête was not yet finished; the son of his first victim became his last. Someone finally thrust a steel spear through his brain, and only

---

[9] C.B. Moore, *Ways of Mammals* (New York: Ronald Press Co. 1953), p. 73.

[10] Moore, p. 74.

then was La Bête vanquished.

The second legend deals with Courtrand, the wolf-king of France. He is said to have held jurisdiction over the great city of Paris for some time in the early part of the 15th century. He began his malevolent reign by raiding the cattle pens of Paris, along with his pack of three hundred wolves. The residents armed themselves, joined with the militia, and eventually Courtrand was brought down. In the end, he was pitted against a brave knight and sportsman named Baisselier, who succeeded in doing to the Paris wolves what the "God-sent maid was soon to do to the English wolves."[11]

With tales such as these to chill the blood, is it any wonder that the wolf became the victim of man? The last two British wolves were killed by hunters in Ireland on a winter night in 1658. A generous bounty of 25 pounds was the reward for thus rendering the wolf extinct in the British Isles.

It is important to heed the psycho-sexual aspect of the myth before concluding the rationale of the stereotype. There are two aberrations relating to the wolf: the occurrence of the werewolf, and the mental condition known as lycanthropy. They differ in degree. Through magic, the werewolf becomes, temporarily, a wolf whose sole motivation is to drink blood. The victim of lycanthropy believes he has actually become a wolf, takes on its characteristics, and howls. Both conditions involve serious manifestations of evil. There is a sense of depravity and dark magic, and the unfortunate wolf again becomes the vehicle of expiation.

Reports of werewolves and lycanthropy have diminished since the numbers of wolves has lessened, and the aura of terror surrounding the animal has become attenuated. The most famous case of a werewolf ever recorded, however, was that of Elizabeth Bathoroy, of an Hungarian noble family. Her abnormality was classified as werewolf; though its authenticity is in doubt, she is said to have killed six hundred virgins in order to bathe in their blood and thus renew her youth. She died in prison in 1647.

Medical history records Sigmund Freud's remarkable case of a wealthy young Russian afflicted with a severe neurosis, caused by an infantile animal phobia. It is a fascinating example of the psycho-sexual aspect of the myth working on an individual. The patient, referred to in text books as Wolfman, was treated by Freud between 1910 and 1914 in Vienna.[12] At the age of four he dreamed that he was awakened suddenly. He viewed seven staring white wolves sitting passively on the branches of a walnut tree outside his window. The dream, Freud discovered, was the consequence of a frightening illustration of a rapacious, upright wolf accompanying the

---

[11] E.T. Seton, *Mainly About Wolves* (London: Methuen, 1937), p. 146.

[12] Sigmund Freud, *Complete Works Vol. XVII* (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 7.

fairy tale "The Seven Little Goats", as well as "Little Red Riding Hood", and another story of wolves told to the child by his grandfather. Freud traced the dream back two and a half years to what he called the "primal scene". This was the patient's observation of his parents copulating (in white undergarments) from the rear, the father in the erect, wolf-like posture of the illustration. The case had many other manifestations, but it is important to this study because one of the principal causes of the Wolfman's neurosis involved a wolf phobia, and in particular, the frightening stereotyped wolf of the fairy tale.

There have been few halcyon days for the wolf; history has dealt harshly with him. The stereotype developed in early myth and legend continued in literature. From the earliest references in classical writing, through the centuries to medieval English and Renaissance writing, to the dawn of children's literature in the 18th century, the stereotype has held firm.[13]

A late 16th century poet, John Webster, describes a fiendish creature who robs graves:

> And when gay tombs are robbed, sustain no harm!
> But keep the wolf far thence, that's foe to man!
> For with his nails he'll dig them up again.

The apparent wanton and bloodthirsty destruction of his natural prey, the sheep, is seen in the poetry of Thomson (a poet well known to Anne Shirley in L.M. Montgomery's classic, *Anne of Green Gables*), Byron, and Blake as the symbolic lusting after the lamb of God. Thomson's poem, *The Seasons*, contains this vituperative comment in the section entitled "Winter":

> Cruel as death, and hungry as the grave!
> Burning for blood, bony and gaunt and grim!
> Assembling wolves in raging troops descend;
> And pouring o'er the country, bear along,
> Keen as the north wind sweeps the glossy snow
> All is their prize.

Blake's poetry contains numerous wolf references, all of them predictably unsympathetic. Among them are "When wolves and tygers howl for prey" ("Night"), "Nor fear the wolvish howl" ("Little Girl Found"), "Every Wolf and Lion's Howl/Raises From Hell a Human Soul" ("Auguries of Innocence"), and "Painting over the prisoners like a wolf gorg'd" (the first book of "The French Revolution").

In much of the poetry and prose written for children, the wolf's established image holds. The 19th century poet Adelaide O'Keeffe tells her

---

[13]For example: *The Merchant of Venice,* Act *IV, Sc. i,* lines 137-138; *Henry IV, Part 2,* Act 1, Sc. ii, lines 174-175; Swinburne's "Chorus" from *Atlanta in Calydon,* line 62; Dante's *Divine Comedy,* Cantos 1 & 3.

young reader: "The wolf would eat you in a trice."[14]Coleridge describes in "The Swallows" a wild domain where: "Wolves prowl round the flocks of Spain." A radio serial called *The Box of Delights,* broadcast on the B.B.C. during the war, started each scary episode with the words: "The wolves are running."

The wolf has been cast as the principal villian in a popular musical for children, "Peter and the Wolf". In this production the victim is a duck which the wolf eats up for lunch; however, the wolf is soon captured by hunters, strung up, and relieved of his meal. In the Perrault version of the fairy story "Little Red Riding Hood", on the other hand, both Red Riding Hood and the grannie are gobbled up in a rather abrupt finale. Perrault offers no compromise. The wolf is humanized with a view to warn maidens of the dangers inherent in too close an association with the "lonewolf" who, in Perrault's own words, was: "of all creatures the most dangerous."[15]The wolf appears as principal antagonist in such fairy tales as "The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing", "The Three Little Pigs", "Never Cry Wolf", and "The Seven Little Goats". The illustrations for many of these tales show him in human clothing and stance, and at least one famous illustrator, Leslie Brooke, was careful to preserve the image of a beast both "cynical and worldly looking".[16]With his bloodthirsty stereotype already firmly established, the wolf serves to embody the dire consequences of amoral or anti-social behaviour. The threat of his fangs is the principal function of the wolf in fairy tales.

Though not intended as cautionary tales, the stories of at least two turn-of-the-century authors have served to perpetuate the evil personality of the wolf in literature. Jack London wrote *White Fang,* the account of an exceptionally ferocious wolf-dog whose salvation came only when the blood lusts of the wolf were sublimated, and the dog in him allowed domestication to occur. London spent one mysterious winter in the Yukon in 1897, during which time he wrote nothing and is said to have spent a considerable amount of time in a beer parlor in Dawson City. He later became a prolific and popular "nature" writer, but his knowledge of the northern wilds and its animal inhabitants was, at best, scanty.[17]It is little wonder that he described the wolf in these now stock terms: "He was a monstrous tyrant. His mastery was rigid as steel. He oppressed the weak with a vengeance."[18]

---

[14]Adelaide O'Keefe, Beasts and Birds, from the Opie *Oxford Book of Children's Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 125.

[15]Margaret Blount, *Animal World* (London: Hutchinson, 1974), p. 28.

[16]Blount, p. 133.

[17]Franklin Walker, *Jack London and the Klondike* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1966), pp. 14-15.

[18]London, p. 151.

The Outcasts by Canadian writer W.A. Fraser tells the story of A'Tim, another wolf-dog who early renounces his wolf heritage, describing the "gray runners" as mean, bloodthirsty, and foul-toothed. Circumstances, however, transform him, and as wolf, not dog, he plots the murder of his only friend, an old buffalo. In the subsequent battle, A'Tim is defeated, and the magnanimous buffalo spares his life. What a contrast in personality: the buffalo, noble and generous in victory; the wolf, whining and despicable in defeat! Fraser has the dubious honour of having clung, singlemindedly, to a remarkably rigid portrayal of the stereotyped wolf.

There are three well-known authors of children's books who have cast the wolf in the familiar stereotyped role. It is a curious fact that C.S. Lewis, L.F. Baum, and J.R.R. Tolkien, writing in this century and surely aware that the myth is no longer applicable in fact, should persist in perpetuating a false image. All three use the wolf to symbolize evil. Is it possible that they are being both unoriginal and lazy? Or, in fact, does the wolf, with his elusive ways and his primeval howl, still represent for some, by his very mystery, the unfathomable depths of evil? Perhaps, in the minds of these writers at least, the wolf continues to be the most awesome representation of the Devil.

In C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe,* the wolf is called Maugrim and is Chief of the White Witch's Secret Police. He is the snapping and snarling monster who chases Susan and Lucy, and who finally confronts Peter in a struggle to the death. With his sword and a valour born of his necessity, Peter thrusts his blade deep into the heart of the "devil", symbolically conquering evil and "winning his spurs"[19] and the title "Sir Peter Wolf's Bane", from Aslan.

Similarly, the Wicked Witch of the West, in L.F. Baum's classic *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* has at her command a truculent pack of wolves. There are forty of these Satanic beasts, a number inevitably associated with the Bible, especially the forty days spent by Jesus in the wilderness when he was tempted by the Devil. They are dispatched to intercept the travellers and are summarily executed by the Tin Woodman with as much ease, and as little emotion, as if he were swatting flies. Next morning Dorothy is naturally frightened by the grisly sight, though much relieved and hungry enough to enjoy a hearty breadfast before they all depart.

The evil wolves called "wargs", who live in the shadow of the goblin-infested mountains in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit,* are particularly dreadful. They travel at night in huge packs, "eyes blazing and tongues hanging out",[20] and seem to be immune to ordinary magic. Furthermore, they are in league with the goblins, and are known to have taken part in slave raids and

---

[19]C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* (Middlesex: Puffin, 1959), p. 119.

[20]J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (London: Unwin, 1966), p. 93.

forays of destruction and cruelty. These are the beasts who tree Gandalf, Bilbo and the dwarves, causing them to spend many tremulous moments until their rescue by the eagles. Tolkien shows no mercy. The reader is left with an impression of a most horribly vicious and bloodcurdling animal, a true denizen of the forest.

Among the tangible results of the centuries of relentless persecution of the wolf has been a body of literature replete with false notions, as well as generations of readers ignorant and fearful of this little understood animal. Fortunately the wolf has had a few defenders in literature. Along with Ernest Thompson Seton, author and poet Charles G.D. Roberts championed the wolf and treated him with honesty long before it was popular to do so. In *Kindred of the Wild,* Roberts discusses the development of the animal story and, in particular, his own predilection for a close harmony between author and subject. The animal story should "lead us back to the old kinship of earth, without asking us to relinquish by way of toll any part of the wisdom of the ages, any fine essential of the large result of time."[21] His wolf heroes are intelligent, brave, stoic. They encounter life's difficulties with what can only be termed "grace". Perhaps his empathetic views once seemed highly out of tune; however, what is now known about the wolf not only supports but enhances Roberts' insights. Inevitably Roberts' wolves confront man, and invariably they lose. Their dignity, however, remains inviolate. His stories, told through the point of view of the wolf, reflect the author's admiration and compassion. There are three of Roberts' stories worth noting because in each one the wolf-hero (representing the best of his breed) faces, as the author says, "the truth that man is one master animal." [22]

"The White Wolf" deals with a rather mystical relationship between a young Indian and the massive white wolf who has been his protector and, in the ways of his ancestors, his personal totem. Wind-in-the-Night is forced to kill the beast in defense of an old man, and, "in a sort of frenzy at the sacrilege of which in his own eyes, he had just been guilty,"[23] he throws himself on the corpse of his warder and declares: "We will take him with us and give him the burial of a chief."[24] The young man thus bestows upon this erstwhile "demon" the highest honour of his tribe.

In "Lone Wolf", Roberts concerns himself with the question of the wolf's ability to obey man and adapt to his ways. He awards his wolf-hero a high degree of intelligence and loyalty. Lone Wolf, born in the

---

[21] Charles G.D. Roberts, *Kindred of the Wild* (Boston: Page 1902), p. 29.

[22] Charles G.D. Roberts, *The Watchers of the Trails* (Boston: Page, 1904), p. 340.

[23] Charles G.D. Roberts, *Hoof and Claw* (New York: MacMillan, 1927), p. 87.

[24] Roberts, *Hoof,* p. 89.

captivity of a circus cage, enjoys, briefly, a taste of the freedom of the wild, but returns willingly to his keeper, Toomey, when he is confronted in the forest by his captor. "Both touch and voice conveyed very clearly to Lone Wolf's disciplined instinct the impression that this man, like Toomey, was a being who had to be obeyed, whose mastery was inevitable and beyond the reach of question."[25] He is returned to the circus, but with the sense that this abrupt finale to his sojourn in the wild is not an unhappy termination.

In "The Passing of the Black Whelps", the reader is again treated to the picture of a large, noble, intelligent wolf, again singled out because of his special attributes, and again pitted against man. This time, the wolf, in defence of his mate (a dog), turns against his own "unnatural whelps"[26] and in so doing saves the life of a woodsman. Again, Roberts describes the respect between man and beast, as the old man, in a gesture of gratitude, allows the proud animal to escape.

Roberts denied that he had ever ascribed to his wolves the motives or the mental processes of man. In his stories he worked to produce an honest and balanced picture and to avoid, in his words: "the melodramatic, the visionary, and the sentimental."[27] He did, however, grant them a kind of "sagacity" (as he invariably termed it) that was less than reason, but more than mere animal instinct.

The wolf has also had his modern advocates. Authors, conservationists, film makers, and government agencies have all contributed to a more knowledgeable and sympathetic public awareness. Recent children's books illustrate this trend. Among them is a 1973 Newbery Award winner, *Julie and the Wolves,* where perhaps for the first time the wolf is cast not only as a friend but also as a protective father-figure.

There is an interesting modern variant of the stereotyped wolf in the work of Farley Mowat and Claude Aubry. Mowat's intelligent, industrious, and gregarious wolves in their tidy family groups are very much like a middle-class family in the suburbs, complete with aging grandparents and fond uncles. They lead an ordered life, working hard to provide the essentials for their families, while respecting property boundaries and the privacy of other family units. Claude Aubry has taken his humanized wolf one step further to illustrate a sensitive political issue in the province of Quebec.

The Christmas Wolf tells the story of Griboux, an old lone-wolf, drawn one Christmas Eve by hunger to the crèche within the village church. Medieval symbolism works here as the "demon" wolf leaps at the throat of the sacred figure of the infant Jesus, only to find, of course, that the object is made of wax. Instead of the retribution expected, the priest encourages the

---

[25]Charles G.D. Roberts, *Kings in Exile* (New York: MacMillan, 1910), p. 261.

[26]Roberts, *Watchers,* p. 346.

[27]Roberts, *Watchers,* p. ix.

the villagers to tame, feed, use, and in every way domesticate the wild animal. Griboux becomes a docile, subservient creature utterly dependent upon the good will of the village: a sycophant in wolf's clothing. Aubry understands this misdirected kindness and closes the book with this warning: "Here you see the finest vengeance that man could take upon the wolf: to make a meek servant of a former enemy, once so cruelly savage, and so savagely free."[28]It is possible that Aubry is using the wolf, once the invincible champion of the wild, to represent the French Canadian rustic. Like Griboux, the meek and accepting peasant has been domesticated, and like Griboux he is fed, used, and protected, his life dominated by a benevolent but imperious master: the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec.

Aubry, with his humanized wolf, developed in his story a pattern of taming the wild. This was not the case with Charles G.D. Roberts and Ernest T. Seton whose wolves remain firmly within the pattern of primitive existence. Mowat, on the other hand, has concentrated on the close observation found in Roberts and Seton, but has taken his response one step further. Laudably, it is polemical; he argues for the wolf.

Perhaps because our country is so vast, the "wolf-menace" has never been an acute problem historically. Roberts and Seton rightly regarded our wild life as a precious natural resource. Their pioneering in the field of nature fiction led the way to a more realistic and sympathetic view of all animals. Their dedication to truth, and their compassionate zeal to interpret the mind of the animal, is without precedent in animal stories. This tradition of respect, combined with precise scientific investigation, has continued today in the writings of Mowat and others, and has gone a long way towards reversing the false image of this enduring animal.

Religious mythology tells us that once, before the Fall, man and beast enjoyed God's bounty as equals, bound together in mutual trust and love. Mowat speaks hauntingly about that time in the conclusion of his book, *Never Cry Wolf:* "Somewhere to the eastward a wolf howled, sounding the wasteland for an echo from members of his family. . .it was a voice which spoke of the lost world which once was ours before we chose the alien role."[29]

---

[28]Claude Aubry, *The Christmas Wolf* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), p. 41.

[29]Mowat, p. 175.

Mary Huband Ford, a previous contributor to Canadian Children's Literature, *has studied children's literature at Carleton University, and she is preparing a thesis on Victorian Poetry.*