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ERNEST THOMPSON SETON: THE ROMANTIC IMAGINATION

Jean F. Smyth

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 1978

ABSTRACT

ERNEST THOMPSON SETON: THE ROMANTIC IMAGINATION

Jean F. Smyth

The objective of this thesis is to isolate and discuss various aspects of romanticism in the early work of Ernest Thompson Seton. Seton's intrinsic romanticism is illustrated through his realistic animal stories in his preoccupation with the world of nature and the freedom he saw embodied there, in his conception of man's place in that world, in his focus on actual wilderness landscapes and, ultimately, in his choice of remarkable animal individuals as his protagonists. In addition, Seton's scientific theories are considered as yet another facet of his romanticism. These aspects of Seton's romantic sensibility are considered within the framework of his life, with particular emphasis on his formative years in Canada. This biographical background illustrates his development as a naturalist and as a romantic and clarifies his stature as scientist, artist, and writer in his own era.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks are due to my supervisor, Dr. Patricia Morley, for her invaluable help in accomplishing this thesis. Particular thanks also go to John Wadland of Trent University for his generosity in sharing his extensive research on Seton.

Thanks are also due to my husband Richard and my three daughters for their support during the preparation of this thesis, and to Maureen Quinn for typing the manuscript.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ernest Thompson Seton was born more than thirty years after the close of the historical period that produced the Romantic movement, yet his animal stories were distinguished by an intrinsic romanticism. Seton's romanticism lay first in his passion for the world of nature and in his rejection of urban, technological civilization as stultifying. He was a romantic in his emphasis on the outstanding individual, represented by his animal heroes; he was a romantic in his search for a religious faith, in his striving for a truth which he saw could only be achieved through dynamic personal experience. These various aspects of Seton's romantic vision will be explored in detail in the following early works: Wild Animals I Have Known (1898), The Trail of the Sandhill Stag (1899), The Biography of a Grizzly (1900), Lives of the Hunted (1901), Monarch, The Big Bear of Tallac (1904), Animal Heroes (1905), and The Biography of a Silver-Fox (1909).

Since no study of Seton would be complete without the biographical background which helped to shape the unique character of the man, Seton's Two Little Savages (1906), Trail of an Artist-Naturalist (1940), and Julia M. Seton's By a Thousand Fires (1967) will also form part of my discussion.

These books illustrate Seton's development as a naturalist and as a romantic. His energies were channelled toward natural history partly because of his love for the outdoors, but also because he found in the wilderness landscape the freedom he had been denied as a child. In addition, such an examination clarifies Seton's stature as a naturalist, writer and artist in his own era, which from our present standpoint has been somewhat blurred.

From his childhood and youth in Canada until his death in New Mexico at the age of eighty-six, Seton was driven by an insatiable curiosity concerning the many creatures that share this earth with man; every aspect of Seton's multi-faceted career centered upon this interest in the birds and the beasts whom he saw as man's kin. As one of the foremost nature writers of his time, Seton presented a sympathetic view of this world in his romantic reshaping of the animal story. How the general characteristics of Seton's work relate to romanticism itself will be discussed here, together with a consideration of the development of the animal story, since it would otherwise be difficult to appreciate Seton's achievement in the area of nature writing.

The period known as the Romantic Era is usually defined in history as the interval between 1790 and 1830.[1] Historical

[1] See Northrop Frye, "The Drunken Boat: The Revolutionary Element in Romanticism," in The Stubborn Structure: Essays on Criticism and Society (London: Methuen, 1974), p. 200.

romanticism occurred in an age of revolution. Against the background of the French and American revolutions and the birth of industrialism there occurred an intellectual reaction against the constricting tradition of classicism that had dominated the previous century. That reaction, the Romantic movement, was distinguished by an emphasis on the heroic individual, the potential of that individual, and the necessity for creative freedom in order for that potential to be fulfilled.

Seton focused on the heroic individual, but as a naturalist he chose animals for his protagonists. Explaining his choice of these remarkable individual animals rather than the species as his subject, Seton wrote that more could be gained from the study of one great man than from an examination of man in general; thus he used as his theme the personality and point of view of one particular animal.[2]

Romanticism was also characterized by the Rousseauistic "Back to Nature" philosophy; Rousseau saw civilization as a negative influence, preventing man from fulfilling his potential. Man is symbolized by the tree which seeks only to grow upward and suffers if its growth is thwarted. Seton also shared this dissatisfaction with society and its restrictions; he rejected what he saw as a stultifying civil-

[2] See Ernest Seton Thompson, "Note to the Reader," in Wild Animals I Have Known (New York: Scribner's, 1898), pp. 9-10: "The real personality of the individual, and his view of life are my theme, rather than the ways of the race in general, as viewed by a casual and hostile human eye." Subsequent references will be cited hereafter as WA.

ization epitomized by the large cities of the world. Like his own wild creatures, city life filled him with an overwhelming desire for the freedom of the open country.

In the romantics' rejection of a distorting society, nature took on a new significance. The former subject-object relationship between man and nature no longer seemed viable; both began to be seen as integral parts of an organic whole. Man's full potential could only be realized if he was in frequent sympathetic contact with the natural world.[3]

Conscious of man's coexistence with nature in an organic whole, Seton wrote in Wild Animals I Have Known, his first published collection of animal stories: "I hope some will herein find emphasized a moral as old as Scripture - we and the beasts are kin. Man has nothing that the animals have not at least a vestige of, the animals have nothing that man does not in some degree share" (p.12). Seton's romanticism is illustrated in his early work by his involvement in the natural world, his concern for its creatures, and his desire for the freedom and fulfillment he saw embodied in that world.

While the Romantic era was an age of political

[3] See Northrop Frye, "The Romantic Myth," in A Study of English Romanticism (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 12: "Once the heavenly bodies come to be seen as a dead and mechanical part of creation, the highest aspect of nature that man can perceive becomes the living part of it, the world of organisms, of animals and plants, and of man so far as man is an organic and vital being. One's relationship to the rest of life then becomes a participating relationship, an identity of process rather than a separation of subjective and objective creatures or products."

revolution, the mid-Victorian years in which Seton was born were marked by religious controversy. In 1859, the year prior to Seton's birth, Charles Darwin's Origin of Species was published. This major work contained Darwin's revolutionary theory of evolution through natural selection. Faith was shaken because the biblical theory of creation seemed to be no longer valid. The Victorians' world view in which man held a superior position was suddenly shattered. In Darwin's scheme, man was not only relegated to a minor position but was irrevocably linked to nature. With the subsequent rise of anthropology, what was seen as the true history of mankind began to be written. The Origin of Species was followed in 1871 by Darwin's The Descent of Man in which man was even more closely identified with the animals; the historic gulf separating man from the beasts no longer existed.

The onslaught against established religion did not halt with Darwin. As R.V. Sampson points out, the attack took other forms as well: "On the one hand, the growth of Biblical criticism challenged the authority of the Scriptures and led to the denial not merely of miracle as history, but also of the fact of inspiration itself. On the other hand, the growing interest in scientific discovery led to the questioning of the possibility of miracle, of the rationality of prayer to request intervention in a fixed natural order, of the egocentricity of the doctrine of Atonement in such a vastly enlarged universe,

and of the compatibility of 'sin' with scientific determinism."[4]

As a reaction against this sudden rupture in the foundations of faith, there was a rise in evangelicalism, a religious reform movement which stressed faith and rejected scientific evidence. In the evangelical movement the truth could only be found through close study of the Bible.

Seton's parents were part of this generation so badly shaken by new developments in science. As a fundamentalist strongly opposed to Darwinism, Seton's father found solace in dour Scottish Presbyterianism. The naturalist had vivid memories of grim Sundays spent in Bible study and readings, and in later life he deplored a religion in which God was depicted as implacable, terrible and destructive. In his own way Seton became part of the evangelical movement in the development of his particular religious vision, incorporating aspects of Buddhism and Indian beliefs. Unlike the wrathful God of his childhood, Seton's deity was the great All-Father, personifying kindness, understanding and love.

Although Seton discussed his father briefly in his autobiography, it was Seton's second wife Julia who disclosed her husband's intense and uncompromising hatred of his father. In By A Thousand Fires, Joseph Thompson emerges as a model of the dictatorial Victorian father. His numerous offspring

[4] R.V. Sampson, "Darwinism," 1859: Entering an Age of Crisis, ed. Philip Appleman, William A. Madden, and Michael Wolff (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1959), p. 64.

were forced to treat him with the deference normally accorded royalty; flogging was the usual punishment for any misdemeanor and even the smallest members of the family were not exempt.

Young Seton was a frail lad with badly crossed eyes, the result of an early childhood accident; although he was sensitive and artistic, he also had a stubborn streak and was often on the receiving end of his father's wrath. While his father approved of the boy's artistic interest, he strongly disapproved of Seton's desire to become a naturalist, which he saw as a futile pursuit. Thompson père expected his sons to get out into the world as quickly as possible in order to support him and repay the great debt they owed him in sustaining them from birth. Upon Seton's coming of age, his father presented him with an itemized bill for every disbursement made on the boy's behalf since his birth.

Since Seton describes his father as a classicist, one can see the son's romanticism as another reaction against his father's tyranny. For the most part, these two individuals were the antithesis of each other in temperament and philosophy. Certainly the son's rejection in later life of the family name of Thompson and his adoption of the name Seton, based on a rather tenuous claim to the Scottish title, Earl of Winton, can be seen as an overt expression of Seton's antipathy toward his father. Seton obviously saw himself as the valiant little kingbird, the hero of his first poem, battling triumphantly against his father,

the hawk.[5]

Seton's relationship with his mother was better than that which he shared with his father. During one of the boy's illnesses, he and his mother were brought together, but in Two Little Savages, Seton suggests that his mother's piousness kept them from a truly close relationship. Her blind adherence to the strict letter of God's law prevented her from understanding or sympathizing with her son's love of nature. Seton saw her as a joyful martyr to motherhood.

Seton was born Ernest Evan Thompson in South Shields, an industrial port in Durham, a mining region of Northern England. His family on both sides were of Scottish origin, successful shipowners in the Merchant Marine. For many years, the Thompsons were financially secure, but following the loss of several vessels at sea, combined with imprudent investment, the business went bankrupt. The large Thompson family was thus forced to emigrate to Canada in 1866, when Seton was almost six years old.

The family settled on a hundred-acre farm in the woods near Lindsay, Ontario, where Seton's lifelong romance with nature began. But the Thompson family were less successful

[5]See Patricia Morley, "Seton's Animals," in Journal of Canadian Fiction, 11 (Summer 1973), p. 195: "I have long been suspicious of psychological criticism, but I must confess that Seton's admiration for the little kingbird and other such animal heroes strikes me as not entirely unconnected with his personal experience as a sickly, sensitive but courageous little boy standing up to his tyrannical father."

farmers than they were shipowners, and in April, 1870, they left the woods of Lindsay and moved to Toronto. Here Seton began to develop his artistic talent, while his interest in nature continued to grow, despite the transition to city life and his father's outspoken disapproval. The boy continued to seek out every opportunity that would enable him to study animal life: a taxidermist's store, the home of a neighbour who kept rattlesnakes, or the Don Flats where live birds were kept for trapshooting.

Since Seton's father still insisted that his son pursue a career as an artist, not a naturalist, Seton was apprenticed at the age of sixteen to a successful portraitist. This artist churned out paintings according to formula, never varying his palette, and Seton soon realized he would learn little. He enrolled in evening classes at the Ontario School of Art where he won a gold medal, coming first in every category. Using this award as leverage, he persuaded his father to send him to London in order to pursue his artistic studies. A triumphant Seton sailed for London on June 12, 1879, the date on which he marked the end of his childhood.

After arriving in London, Seton's drawing of Michelangelo's "Satyr" won him a seven-year scholarship to the prestigious Royal Academy. In addition, his dogged perserverence won him a Life Member's ticket to the library of the British Museum, which held the greatest selection of natural history in the world. The daily grind of hard work was relieved by visits to a cousin who lived in the country, where

Seton could satisfy his thirst for nature with long walks through the woodlands. Later, Seton would consider these country rambles as a preparation for his Manitoba days.

Seton's father did not live up to his promise of a regular allowance; during the whole two-year period, the young man received only eighty pounds from Canada. Forced to lead a frugal existance, Seton also struggled to overcome his awakening sexual instincts. In order to curb his sexual appetite Seton avoided all sources of temptation, including the nudes in the National Gallery. He considered that he was able to triumph over the flesh with the aid of an invincible, silent ally, the memory of his pious mother. It was during this monastic existence that Seton began to have visions in which he heard his "Buffalo Wind," a mystical voice that he felt guiding his life. On this occasion the voice directed him to return to Canada where he would regain his strength, but his ultimate destination was to be New York.

Upon returning to Toronto, Seton continued his study of natural history, particularly birds. In London he had dissected dead dogs muscle by muscle; now each bird he shot was measured, examined, dissected and recorded. Seton was beginning to practice the precise methodology that was to be the foundation for his great scientific works, Lives of Game Animals and Life Histories of Northern Animals. At this time Seton also began to record his observations in a journal on the advice of another naturalist, Dr. William Brodie. Seton was to maintain these journals throughout his long life and

the voluminous details recorded therein were the source of all his later work.

In March of 1882 Seton set out to join his brother Arthur in Manitoba; at last he had come to the land of his dreams and here he began his work as a naturalist in earnest. Every spare moment was dedicated to the exploration of the vegetation and wild life abounding in this wilderness. Here he drew up numerous charts for the identification of birds, many of which were to be published in later years; he continued to record and identify the great varieties of bird life and their distinctive songs; he became an expert tracker, acquiring much of the knowledge that he later recorded in Animal Tracks and Hunter Signs.

After a brief trip to Chicago in 1883 for minor surgery, Seton returned to Manitoba to begin that phase of his life he would later call his "golden days." Gone forever was the cowed, sickly boy; like his own heroic animals he was at the peak of his physical health and strength. He had broken at last with the oppressive environment at home. Life for him now was joyful, every day filled with the work he loved. Having made the decision not to return to London, Seton considered that he was at the beginning of a new life: "From that time I have gone my own way, not knowing, or asking, indeed, if it was the best way or a high way, but very certain that it was my way."[6]

[6]Ernest Thompson Seton, Trail of an Artist-Naturalist: The Autobiography of Ernest Thompson Seton (New York: Scribner's 1940), p. 234. Subsequent references will be cited hereafter as TAN.

With his London life now behind him, Seton's guiding voice, the Buffalo Wind, spoke again to remind him that New York was his true destination. He arrived in that city in November, 1883, alone and almost penniless, but with his talent for survival he settled down and began to write nature stories for various popular magazines. One of Seton's first major assignments was an order for one thousand drawings at five dollars each, illustrations for The Century Dictionary, commissioned by W. Lewis Fraser, Art Manager of The Century. Among the other contacts that Seton made at this time were Dan Beard the artist who would later work with Seton in his Woodcraft movement, and C. Hart Merriam of the American Ornithologists' Union.

Seton returned to Manitoba in 1884, having proved to himself that he could make a decent living in his chosen field. He spent that summer sketching the wild animals of the region; many of these sketches were used to illustrate the Biological Survey Reports in Washington. It was also at this time that he met Chaska, a Cree Indian, whose fine qualities and vast woodcraft knowledge so impressed Seton that he named a lake after him.

Seton's ideal, like Rousseau's, was primitive man, the human in his natural state unaffected by urban society. Throughout his life, Seton continued to revere and emulate the Indian and his simple way of life; Indian lore and religion became major components in the lifestyle of Seton's New Mexico home, Seton Village. In addition, it was this

ideal image of the Indian as a noble savage, possessing all the finer qualities of mankind, which Seton chose as the model-hero for the boys of his Woodcraft movement.

In 1887, after being afflicted by acute arthritis, Seton joined his brother Joseph on his farm near Lake Ontario, a mile from Port Credit. Here Seton observed many of the animal heroes who were to become the central characters of his stories. However, he was not truly content and, upon his brother's loss of the farm in 1890, Seton decided that it was time to return to his art studies. He was thirty years old.

After a few months in London during which he completed his manuscript Birds of Manitoba for the Smithsonian Institute, Seton arrived in Paris, where he enrolled at Julian's Academy on the Faubourg St. Denis. In the spring of 1891 he submitted "The Sleeping Wolf," his first painting, to the annual Grand Salon. The painting was accepted and Seton was jubilant.

The following spring Seton submitted a larger canvas, "The Triumph of the Wolves," to the Grand Salon. His great hopes for this painting were crushed when it was rejected because of its gruesome subject; somewhat reminiscent of the great romantic artist Delacroix's "The Lion Devouring a Horse," Seton's painting depicted wolves devouring the remains of a human corpse. Seton had used an actual incident from the French newspapers; a wolf-hunter in the Pyrennees had been found partly devoured by the very creatures he had preyed upon. Seton considered the act proper retribution; in his

painting, as in his later writing, his sympathies were always with the animals.

One year later this same painting was again rejected, this time by the Toronto Selection Committee for the Chicago World's Fair. Despite the actual source of the incident depicted, it was felt that the painting would give a false impression of life in Canada. Seton fought for his painting, and after some controversy in the press, "The Triumph of the Wolves" was finally accepted and exhibited at the World's Fair.

Seton's interest in wolves was further stimulated during a hunting trip to New Mexico at the request of a New York businessman whose cattle ranch was being plagued by wolves. That successful hunt, during which Seton encountered the great-hearted wolf Lobo, was recorded in "Lobo, the King of Currumpaw" from Wild Animals I Have Known . This also marked Seton's first visit to New Mexico, where he was to make his home in the latter years of his life.

During a return trip to Paris in 1894, Seton met Grace Gallatin, the young college-educated socialite who became his wife two years later. Grace Gallatin was to have a literary career in her own right as the author of several books. One of these, A Woman Tenderfoot in Egypt, was chosen one of the best one hundred books by American women of that century. Seton often acknowledged his first wife's considerable influence on his work, from the choice of physical layout and

illustration to the actual revision of the text.[7]

Throughout his years of study in Paris, Seton remained in contact with New York through frequent visits. Upon his return to New York after his marriage, Seton renewed old acquaintances and continued to make new ones. He worked closely with Professor S.F. Baird of the Smithsonian Institute; he became a firm friend of Frank B. Chapman who later was to become the Curator of Birds of the American Museum of Natural History. Chapman so admired Seton's work that he asked him to illustrate his well-known book, Bird Life. It was also at this time that Seton and Theodore Roosevelt became friends through their mutual interests.

In 1898 Seton offered eight of his animal stories to Scribner's. Since the publisher was reluctant to take the risk on such a book, Seton offered to waive all royalties on the first two thousand copies if Scribner would double the royalties thereafter. Wild Animals I Have Known was published in October, 1898. By Christmas of that year the book had gone into three more printings. This was the first of more than thirty books that Seton was to produce in his lifetime.

Shortly after the publication of Wild Animals I Have

[7] See Ernest Thompson Seton, "Note to the Reader," in Lives of the Hunted (London: David Nutt, 1906), p. 11: "The public has not fully understood the part that Grace Gallatin Thompson Seton does in my work. The stories are written by myself, and all the pictures including the marginals, are my own handiwork; but in choice of subject to illustrate, in ideas of its treatment, in the technical book making, and the preliminary designs for cover and title-page, and in the literary revision of the text, her assistance has been essential." Subsequent references will be cited hereafter as LOH.

Known, Seton began the Woodcraft Indians, an organisation for boys which merits him the rarely acknowledged title of founder of the first outdoor youth movement. With the passing of time, Seton's key role as initiator of the movement has been overlooked and Lord Baden-Powell has been credited with the creation of the widely popular Boy Scouts.

The Woodcraft movement originated in 1900 when Seton organized a weekend camp at his country estate for local boys who had been trespassing on his property. He outlined his ideas in a series of articles in the Ladies Home Journal in May, 1902; his autobiographical Two Little Savages (1902) also contained the basic principles of the movement. Seton's great respect for the Indian was reflected in his choice of Tecumseh as model-hero for the boys of the movement. The aims of the organization as set out in The Birch Bark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians were "the promotion of interest in out-of-doors life and woodcraft, the preservation of wildlife and landscape and the promotion of good fellowship among its members . . . The plan aims to give the young people something to do, something to think about, something to enjoy in the woods, with the view always to character building, for manhood not scholarship is the aim of education . . . My foundation thought was to discover, preserve, develop and diffuse the culture of the Redman".[8]

[8] Brian Morris, "Ernest Thompson Seton and the Origins of the Woodcraft Movement," The Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 5, No. 2(1970), p. 187.

On a trip to London in 1906 Seton met Baden-Powell, the hero of Mafeking. Aware of Baden-Powell's interest in the Boys' Brigade, Seton had written, requesting him to chair a publicity meeting for the Woodcraft movement. With much in common, Seton and Baden-Powell became firm friends; they exchanged ideas and offers of aid, with Seton giving permission for Baden-Powell to incorporate some Woodcraft Indian games in his impending book.

Baden-Powell's Scouting for Boys was published in 1908; by 1910 scouting had spread to numerous other countries, and Seton's Woodcraft movement, with its idealization of the American Indian, was swallowed up by the American Scouting Organization. Although he remained as Chief Scout until 1915, Seton was not in sympathy with the aims or spirit of the Boy Scouts; he particularly objected to the strong military and authoritarian aspects of the new movement.

Because the facts have been blurred by time, Seton has been denied his due as the originator of the outdoor youth movement; Baden-Powell took the movement, which he saw as a means of maintaining the best elements of the British Empire, and widely popularized it. In a recent article entitled "Ernest Thompson Seton and the origins of the Woodcraft Movement," Brian Morris points out that the Woodcraft movement was an anachronism: "It was at best an unwanted, illegitimate child of industrialism, a reaction against spreading urbanization. Like the German wandervogel, its ideology was influenced by the romantic movement, with its

longing for 'community' and its emphasis on asceticism and folk tradition . . . The Rousseauan educational tradition culminated in the Woodcraft movement, and the latter failed as a social movement primarily because it offered no solution to the ills that beset a technological world." [9]

In 1904 Seton was involved in the famous "Nature-fakers" controversy; an article in the Atlantic Monthly by John Burroughs, a well known American essayist and literary naturalist, accused Seton and an imitator, the Reverend William J. Long, of creating sham natural history. Burroughs stated bluntly that Seton mislead his readers by distorting truth in order to profit from the popular demand for nature-books; he particularly deplored Seton's insistence upon the truth of his stories. While they might be true as romance, true in artistic effect and true in their power to entertain, Burroughs maintained that the stories were certainly not true as natural history.

Although he was deeply hurt, Seton steadfastly refused to respond to Burroughs' attack. Later, in "The Literary Treatment of Nature" Burroughs softened the blow somewhat. The men became better acquainted and Burroughs was to become a great admirer of Seton's work with boys in the Woodcraft movement. Theodore Roosevelt urged Seton to publish the

[9] Ibid., p. 194.

facts that he had accumulated over the years to illustrate the detailed research and scientific knowledge that lay behind each of Seton's stories. In 1919 Seton produced his Life Histories of Northern Animals, the forerunner of his great work, Lives of Game Animals.

Seton's animal stories marked the appearance of a new literary genre, the realistic animal story. His true-to-life presentation of animal individuals broke with the traditional treatment of nature in literature. Animals were portrayed realistically in the earliest art, the cave drawings, but as civilization advanced, man was distanced from the beasts he had once hunted; those beasts became metamorphosed into myth and legend. The growth of Christianity further increased the gulf between man and beast by emphasizing the inferiority of nature and denying to animals the possibility of immortality.[10]

In the middle ages unrealistic animals abounded in allegory and fable; medieval bestiaries were filled with dragons and other fantastic beasts. But, more frequently, animals were employed in moral tales; Aesop used animals as an entertaining means of transmitting his moral lesson to the reader. Like Aesop's creatures, the animals of Chaucer's "The Nun's Priest's Tale" spoke with the voices of men and were endowed with men's failings. In "The Animal Story"

[10] See Charles G.D. Roberts, "The Animal Story", in The Kindred of the Wild (Boston: Page, 1935), p. 20: "The advent of Christianity ... did not make for a closer understanding between man and the lower animals. While it was militant, fighting for its life against the forces of paganism, its effort was to set man at odds with the natural world, and fill his eyes with the wonders of the spiritual."

Sir Charles G.D. Roberts stated: "The characters in that great beast-epic of the middle ages, Reynard the Fox, though far more elaborately limned than those which play their succinct roles in the fables of Aesop, are at the same time in their elaboration far more alien to the truths of wild nature. Reynard, Isegrim, Bruin and Greybeard have little resemblance to the fox, the wolf, the bear and the badger, as patience, sympathy, and the camera reveal them to us today."[11]

The satiric or didactic use of animals in medieval literature was continued by La Fontaine, who utilized talking animals to illustrate the foibles of his fellow man. In the same vein Swift trotted out the Houyhnhnms, but once again the author's didacticism prevented a realistic representation of these animals. Two changes had to occur before animals once again came into general use in literature: the creatures had to live for their own ends, not to serve human interests, and a new literary technique had to be found that would truly represent the animals.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, literature was gradually moving in the direction of these changes. The growing humanitarianism of the era brought a flood of animal stories while Darwinism closed the gap

[11] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

between the beasts and man.[12] The most famous of these stories is Anna Sewell's Black Beauty, published in 1877, a thinly disguised plea for more humane treatment of domestic animals. The highly moralistic tone, another characteristic of the age, again prevented a realistic animal representation. The importance of Black Beauty lay not in the moral but in the author's choice of an animal as the central character together with the technique of unfolding the narrative through the animal's consciousness.

Canada produced a very popular successor to Black Beauty in Margaret Marshall Saunders' Beautiful Joe (1893). This book won a Humane Society competition for a companion piece to Black Beauty. Saunders dedicated her book to the President of the American Humane Society and the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Beautiful Joe is the melodramatic "autobiography" of a dog, in which Saunders reiterates Sewell's lesson on the necessity for more humanitarian treatment of domestic animals.

In 1894 and 1895 Rudyard Kipling, a contemporary of Seton's, produced the romantic Jungle Books which focused on a human being, the Wolf-boy Mowgli, in an animal world.

[12] See Patricia Morley, "We and the Beasts Are Kin: Attitudes Towards Nature in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Canadian Literature," World Literature Written in English, 15 (Nov., 1977), p. 345: "The publication of Darwin's On the Origin of Species in 1859 was merely a focal point for nineteenth-century controversy. Darwin's ideas were quickly taken up as symbol and analogue in ethics and religion, politics and sociology. British poets led the way towards an evolutionary mysticism while orthodox clerics and materialistic scientists remained at loggerheads."

Kipling did not attempt the realism of Seton's stories; his talking jungle beasts appear to have a high level of intelligence and erudition. Neither are the Jungle Books free of moralizing; the law of the Jungle can be seen as Kipling's vision of how man should ideally behave in the human jungle.[13]

The appearance of the realistic animal story in Canada is obviously related to the country's vastness and its sparse population. People were living in close contact with the wilderness and both Seton and his contemporary Charles G.D. Roberts drew from the landscape to create a realistic environment for their animal biographies. Added to this was their own particular knowledge of animal ways, Seton as naturalist and Roberts, as careful observer. At last there existed a literature in which distinct animal herpes were brought vividly to life for their own sake.

Seton's name has been largely forgotten through the years and until recently his books were out of print, but his influence on man's literary interpretation of the natural world should not be ignored. Charles G.D. Roberts himself acknowledged the importance of Seton's contribution, crediting

[13] See John Rowe Townsend, "Articulate Animals," in Written for Children: An Outline of English-Language Children's Literature (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1976), p. 126: "The Law of the Jungle - of which Kipling gives specimen clauses, appears really to indicate how men must fend for themselves in a dangerous world: how they must hunt together and must be bold, but bold in obedience to their leaders. In his own disconcerting way, Kipling is as didactic as any Victorian moralist."

him with initiating the vogue of the modern animal story, in which animals were seen as interesting personalities, not as creatures to be hunted or displayed. The result of this sympathetic approach was a more humane attitude toward man's non-human kin. Thus Roberts declared: "If there is one man since St. Francis of Assisi whom all the kindreds of the wild have cause to bless, it is Ernest Thompson Seton."[14] Having touched the familiar animal story with his love, artistry and romanticism, Seton changed its character for all time.

[14] Charles G.D. Roberts, "Ernest Thompson Seton," The Bookman, 45 (December, 1913), p. 147.

CHAPTER II

IN THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM : THE WILDERNESS

The wilderness was a dominant factor in the life of Ernest Thompson Seton; his perceptions of natural environments in both Canada and the United States together with his literary interpretation of them reflect some of the major characteristics of romanticism. This chapter will examine those romantic qualities in Seton's work, particularly his inclination toward the natural world and his aversion for urban living; his organic world view of man existing in harmony with nature; his ideal, epitomized by the Indian; and finally, his search for a religious faith that would enable man to achieve his full potential as an integral part of the universe.

Historical romanticism was marked by a return to nature movement, an attempt to remedy the ills created by existing society. Seton however did not need to return to nature. Throughout his life he was never spiritually or physically very far from the forests and plains of North America. His contact with nature was for the most part continuous, except for periods of city living which were necessitated by study or business.

In The Bush Garden, Northrop Frye discusses garrisons in Canadian society, tightly-knit beleaguered groups, an anti-

cultural phenomenon in our society. Frye also remarks on the tone of terror in regard to nature which he sees throughout Canadian poetry: "It is not terror of the dangers or discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest. The human mind has nothing but human and moral values to cling to if it is to preserve its integrity or even its sanity, yet the vast unconsciousness of nature in front of it seems an unanswerable denial of those values."[1]

Yet for Seton the romantic, those human and moral values were embodied in nature rather than being denied by it. The wilderness held no terror for him. On the contrary, he embraced it with relish and found fulfillment there that had been denied him in Toronto, one of the civilized garrisons of Canada.

The landscapes of Eastern and Western Canada provided the backdrop for Seton's most formative years and thus were a major influence on his work. That Canadian influence first began in 1866 with the Thompson family's immigration to a homestead near Lindsay, Ontario. Here the future naturalist's first observations of nature were made. In those childhood days, Seton's life was encompassed by the living forest; for the boy, nothing existed beyond that magic circle. Seton later recaptured that time in his autobiographical Two Little Savages (1906), and even at the age of eighty, his memory of those

[1] Northrop Frye, "Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada," in The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. 225.

happy days in the woods remained vivid.

With the family's move to Toronto, the woods were left behind for the constricting environment of the city. Despite the fact that the boy had been removed from his beloved wild creatures, he was filled with an indomitable will to know more about animal life. Finding no native Canadian wild life included in the only resource available to him, his father's copy of Knight's Pictorial Museum of Animated Nature, through his own determination he discovered enough animal life in the Toronto area to satisfy his naturalist's curiosity.

Toronto Island and the Don Valley became Seton's retreats, where he continued his wildlife observations and found the freedom of spirit that was denied him at home because of his father's domination. The Marsh on Toronto Island was a bird paradise, the air filled with a multitude of calls which Seton learned to identify. Almost half of the known species of Canadian birds, from red-winged blackbirds to shore larks, frequented this region at various times of the year. Throughout his Toronto years, this marsh was a source of great satisfaction and joy to Seton in his first tentative steps in his life's work.

The Don Valley was Seton's other Eden; "Glenyan" was his name for the small secret dale where he could fulfill his imaginative life. There in the cabin he built with his own hands, Indian-style, Seton could play any role he wished: woodsman, hunter, Indian or naturalist. He was naive enough to believe that these woods were his own special domain. One

day when he discovered tramps there, destroying his handiwork, he was sickened; they had trespassed not only upon his "property", but upon his dreams. In By A Thousand Fires, Julia Seton recalled that throughout his life, Seton could not speak of those days without emotion.

In later life Seton was to draw on his experiences and observations of the Ontario landscape to create a background for several of his stories. Two Little Savages takes place in Lindsay, thinly disguised as Sanger, a predominantly Irish backwoods settlement. Silverspot the crow and Redruff the partridge, two characters from Wild Animals I Have Known, act out their roles in Seton's old haunt, the Don Valley. "Raggylug" and "The Springfield Fox", from the same collection, take place in the Port Credit area, near Lake Ontario, where Seton spent some time with his brother Joseph.

After returning from his art studies in London, Seton left his home in Toronto for the wilds of Manitoba, where he was to discover the land of his dreams. The Manitoba of Seton's day was unsettled territory of great beauty, rich in animal and bird life. Seton flourished physically and mentally. He became not merely a careful observer of nature but in his detailed journals he was developing the skills of the dedicated naturalist.

Seton developed a special fondness for an area near Carberry, Manitoba, bordering the Sandhills. This was the location of his brother Arthur's farm. The lake there was rich in a variety of bird life, while the nearby hills and

aspen forests served as a sanctuary for wolves, badgers, deer and moose. Neighbours called this place "Seton's Kingdom." Here Seton spent what he would recall in later life as his happiest days. He became acquainted with an Indian named Chaska and he hunted down his first and only moose. Those "golden days," as Seton called them, are recorded in The Trail of The Sandhill Stag.

The American West was to be the next influence on Seton's life. His first contact with the legendary West was in 1893, when he arrived in New Mexico to hunt wolves. He spent approximately six months near Clayton on the high plains of north-eastern New Mexico. These prairies near the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains teemed with wildlife: antelope, prairie dogs, birds and wolves. The beauty of the area drew Seton back in later life when he settled upon Santa Fe as the location for Seton Village in 1930.

Many stories grew from this western landscape where Seton was to spend the latter part of his life. The first and perhaps the most famous of these was "Lobo, The King of Currumpaw," from Wild Animals I Have Known. This was the story of that first New Mexico wolf hunt, in which Seton succeeded in capturing the magnificent four-footed renegade, Lobo. Seton later adopted the wolf-track as his insignia, and was often called "Wolf" himself.

Bordering New Mexico to the north are the Dakota Badlands which Seton also utilized as background for several

of his stories. In Lives of the Hunted and Animal Heroes, Tito the Coyote and Billy the Wolf inhabit this setting, which Seton saw with a romantic's eye. To him it was a radiant land of fantastic hills, brimming lakes and sculptured buttes and he gently chides man who, in his blindness, has found no better name for this paradise than "the road to it is hard" (LOH 317).

This intense perception of nature was a faculty that Seton shared with the romantics. Wordsworth, the great romantic poet, experienced moments of primal sympathy, a heightened awareness of communion with nature, reflected in such lines as "My heart leaps up when I behold/A rainbow in the sky." Seton also felt these moments of ecstatic union with nature, as he recounts in his autobiography. He recalls hearing the musical song of a thrasher one day in Manitoba: "Spiritually, I kneeled before him, and when at last he climaxed, bowed, and dived into the greenery, I stood as rapt. He had me full possessed; and on my two-mile homeward sprint, my very soul seemed but the organ on which the singer king had played" (TAN 220).

Seton also shared with the romantics their antipathy toward urban society. He too rejected the artificiality of city life, feeling that the individual was only vitalized and fulfilled under the open skies of prairie and plain. Time spent in the cities of Toronto, New York, London and Paris was merely a waiting period until his next sojourn in the wilderness. Although Seton was enough of a businessman to

realize the importance of his city contacts, his romantic side found urban existence a kind of death. He once wrote to a friend: "New York life goes hard against the grain with me; in fact, it is not life at all in my estimation. Life is feeling one's limbs and the blood in your veins, knowing you are alive."[2]

This idea that life is only fulfilled when men is in touch with the natural world grew out of Seton's basic romantic belief that men and the beasts are "kin". He re-echoes the concept of organicism that was held by the romantics from Rousseau to Emerson: the interrelatedness of all living things in the universe. If man was to reach his full potential, he could not isolate himself from nature. Seton himself saw man as simply another wheel in the great machine called the universe; in order to know himself, man must study all the creatures to which he is related.[3]

To Seton, as to Rousseau, the primitive was the individual who alone in the world was still in sympathetic touch with the natural environment. Seton's primitive was the noble Redman or Indian, represented by the Cree, Chaska, whom

[2] Julia M. Seton, By a Thousand Fires: Nature Notes and Extracts From the Life and Unpublished Journals of Ernest Thompson Seton (New York: Doubleday, 1967), p. 101.

[3] Ibid., p. 170. In an unpublished manuscript, Seton wrote: "each animal is in itself an inexhaustible volume of facts that man must have in order to solve the great problem of knowing himself".

Seton met during his days in Manitoba. As a boy Seton had read the novels of James Fenimore Cooper and he found in Chaska all the finer qualities that marked the Indians of those adventure stories. Seton's admiration and respect for the Indian race lasted throughout his life and when he came to choose a model-hero for the Woodcraft Indians, he did not hesitate to select the ideal Indian of Fenimore Cooper: "Tecumseh, the great Shawnee - physically perfect, wise, brave, picturesque, unselfish, dignified" (TAN 376).

This idealized vision of the unspoiled Indian is illustrated in several of Seton's works. In The Trail of the Sandhill Stag the patient and wise Cree, Chaska, who teaches Yan the ways of the hunter, is modelled on Seton's own Indian friend in Manitoba. S.E. Read discusses Seton's literary treatment of the Indian in "Flight to the Primitive":

> This ideal is partially developed in the character of Quonab, "the last of the Myanos Sinawa," the profoundly religious, highly moral, and friendly Indian, who teaches Rolf Kittering, an abandoned white orphan, the true way of life;[4] it is deeply imbedded in Two Little Savages, when Yan and Sam are brought to maturity and wisdom through studying and practising Indian manners and customs; and it reaches full bloom in The Gospel of the Red Man; An Indian Bible, a work compiled by Seton and his second wife towards the end of Seton's life.[5]

Like the Indians and unlike civilized man who has lost

[4] See Ernest Thompson Seton, Rolf in the Woods. (New York: Doubleday, 1911). This later work is not discussed here.

[5] S.E. Read, "Flight to the Primitive," Canadian Literature, 13 (Summer, 1962), p. 48.

touch with the realities of the outdoor environment, Seton's animals are an organic part of the natural landscape. Rather than merely inhabiting a specific area, these creatures became an integral part of it; they live in communion with their surroundings and are protected by them. In Seton's work this protective aspect of nature is sometimes personified by a being called the Angel of the Wild Things. Seton defines this spirit as something that cherishes and protects the creatures of the wild, something that for lack of a better name he calls their Angel.[6] Seton often addresses this Angel or her agents, the elements of nature, in the form of an apostrophe when the animal hero is in distress or danger.

In The Biography of a Silver-Fox one of these natural elements is the Shawban River, which acts for the watching Angel by protecting and preserving the life of Domino, who grew up on the river bank. This same river in turn destroys the domestic hound, Hekla, the fox's arch enemy. The story concludes happily, having come full circle: under the watchful eye of their father, a new generation of foxes frolic on the banks of the Shawban.

Another of Seton's animal heroes, Krag the Kootenay

[6] See James Polk, "Lives of The Hunted," Canadian Literature, 53 (Summer, 1972), p. 56. Discussing Seton's use of the Angel of the Wild Things, Polk writes: "There is an unconvincing 'Angel of the Wild Things' who flits into the occasional story to guide the animal on the right path . . . However he is too professional a naturalist to depend on angels and Christian teaching in his best stories, and usually goes out of his way to deny his animals a metaphysical aura."

ram, lives out his life on the rugged cliffs surrounding the Gunder Peak. Despite the apparent hazardousness of this environment, it nevertheless provides a safe refuge for the fleet-footed mountain sheep, while the pastures below the timber line hold only peril for them. On two occasions Krag is saved from Scotty, a demonically persistent hunter, by the intervention of nature in the form of the Chinook wind, depicted by Seton as the ram's spiritual mother. Despite the fact that he is hunted down by his pursuer, Krag achieves the final victory through the harsh landscape, which is less kind to its human inhabitants. An avalanche created by the Chinook smashes Scotty's shanty and its occupant.[7]

"Raggylug, the Story of a Cottontail Rabbit" takes place in Ontario. Raggylug and his mother Molly live out their lives in the relative safety of Old Olifant's Swamp. The nearby stream and the briarbush are special protective features of the rabbit's environment. With the guidance of the Angel of the Wild Things, hunted animals can conceal their trail by following the flow of the stream. Seton creates a legend to explain why the Brier affords the rabbit sanctuary. Because of the rabbit's gentleness it is taken into special friendship; whenever a cottontail is in danger, it flees to

[7] Ibid., p. 56: "Nature prevails, but not a friendly Mother Nature or even a Thornton W. Burgess Mother West Wind; rather it is chilling Mother White Wind, a personification of the kind of natural world Warren Tallman finds a dominant presence elsewhere in Canadian fiction".

the protection of the bush, which defends him with its myriad barbs.

In The Biography of a Grizzly, the natural environment provides the ultimate peace for Wahb the bear: a painless, merciful death. At the end of his life and strength, the old bear seeks only a place of rest and peace. He is led by the Angel of the Wild Things to a small enclosed valley which is filled with a deadly gas. In earlier days the bear had always avoided this place, but now through the Angel's power, he feels irresistibly drawn to it. He breathes in the deadly vapours and falls into everlasting sleep as gently as he did in the days of his cubhood.

Seton also bestows on his creatures their own deity, the All-Mother, a cross between a female God and Mother Nature. This All-Mother does not intervene on behalf of the animals, like the Angel, but governs the seasons and their accompanying cycles of mating, birth and death. Seton explains that in addition, this All-Mother offers to each of her creatures twin cups, one of gall and one of balm. However much they drink, the animals must drink equally from each of these metaphorical cups, so that in Seton's view, each creature's life is balanced equally between trial and happiness.

One of the creatures whose life is so balanced is Monarch, the bear of Tallac. This story is set in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California, a landscape which Seton endows with a religious quality and which is the location of the bear's birth. The passage of the bear's life is paralleled

by chapter headings which follow the progression of a river from Mount Tallac to San Francisco Bay. The beginning is compared to the river's source, a bubbling spring, filled with promise and hope. Then Monarch's life takes its course, fluctuating like the river. In the conclusion, although both have gained strength and momentum, they are thwarted. The great bear is captured and caged in Golden Gate Park instead of living out his life in the mountains; the river is imprisoned in Golden Gate Bay, unable to reach its true destination, the sea. Ironically both must live out their captivity in the city named for St. Francis, the patron saint of the wild things.

Having bestowed a deity on his animals, Seton went in search of his own. While the romantics sought a new religion or faith as a means to achieve equilibrium in an age of turmoil and as a reaction against the religious aridity of the previous century, Seton's striving for his own religious vision can be seen as a reaction against the oppressive doctrines imposed on him as a child. His youth was so shadowed by unforgiving Scottish Presbyterianism, or the worship of Moloch, as he called it, that he retained a life-long aversion to churches. He and his brothers were only taught the total depravity of human nature.[8]

[8] See Julia M. Seton, By A Thousand Fires, p. 43: Seton wrote in his journal that his early religious education attempted to teach him that everything human derived from the Devil, that the heart was deceitful, and hence human nature was essentially wicked.

Having rejected the faith of his parents, Seton sought a spiritual view that would reflect the virtues he found in the natural world. In Two Little Savages, the boy Yan explains to his mother that while he cannot be moved by biblical scripture, each creature of the woodland filled his heart with joy: "Every bird and flower I see stirs me to the heart with something, I do not know what it is; only I love them: I love them with all my strength and they make me feel like praying when your Bible does not. They are my Bible. This is my nature."[9]

Seton's religious vision grew out of this empathy for the natural world and his admiration for the Indian and his ways. This religion held a positive view, that mankind was essentially good, as opposed to the negative view instilled in Seton as a child. Based on high moral principles rather than rigid doctrines, Seton's religion was non-sectarian and non-theological.[10] His primary belief that man must seek joy of being alive reflects the religious thinking of the romantics to whom religion was energy - the energy that is essential to

[9] Ernest Thompson Seton, Two Little Savages (London: Constable, 1906), pp. 96-97.

[10] See Read, "Flight to the Primitive," p.49. Discussing Seton's The Gospel of the Red Man, Read points out that "this work Seton expressly hoped, was to have a universal religious appeal; it would bring unity and peace into a world fraught by dissension and torn by fears; it would satisfy Christian and Buddhist, Catholic and Protestant, Presbyterian and Methodist -- all alike."

vitalize both man and nature.[11]

The God of Seton's interdependent universe was not a "hideous child-devouring monster" but a kindly paternal figure, the All-Father, creator and sustainer of every living thing. Seton's deity was the source and the end of everything on earth. In this belief in a Great Spirit of which everything is a part, Seton echoes Emerson, who wrote in "The Over-Soul" that all things are bound together in a Unity, the Over-Soul, and that within man himself is the Soul of the whole.[12]

Seton's religion did not remain a strictly private dream. It was put into practice at Seton Village in Santa Fe, New Mexico where Seton and his second wife Julia settled in 1930. This location was chosen because of its great beauty and definite spiritual quality. To Seton Santa Fe was truly the city of Holy Faith, the spiritual capital of America. Julia Seton considered their choice inspired since everything she and her husband had sought had been found there, and every theory of life they held had been fulfilled.

[11] See Jacques Barzun, Classic, Romantic and Modern (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947), p. 56: "As a romanticist, [man's] task is to reconcile the contraries within himself by finding some entity outside himself vast enough to hold all his facts. He has become once again a religious thinker. For religion is more than a description of the Unseen. It is a theory of energy - the energy that animates nature and that animates him".

[12] See Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Over-Soul," in The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York:Random House, 1940), p. 262.

Like the great romantics, Seton considered that man came into the world in touch with God and nature, but was quickly deformed by society. He believed that man must look to the primitives and the higher animals for direction and he incorporated this view in his own brand of mysticism. Through his religion and his writing Seton sought to set man back on the right path, toward the wilderness, to live in harmony with God's creatures on God's world.

This philosophy of Seton's is embodied in his illustrations, as Morley points out in "Seton's Animals": A small two-inch square drawing on the title page of Wild Animals I Have Known depicts the Peaceable Kingdom. A man, seated at the foot of a giant tree, is surrounded by birds and animals: a horse, two foxes, a rabbit, dog, wolf, partridge, crow -- a Canadian version of the lion lying down with the lamb."[13] Similarly, on the title page of Lives of the Hunted, Seton depicts St. Francis preaching to an assortment of animals and birds. This illustration is decorated with the motto:"All the world to every creature."

Seton's vision of the Peaceable Kingdom was strongly romantic and also particularly Canadian. In The Bush Garden, Northrop Frye describes a painting, "The Peaceable Kingdom," by Edward Hicks, depicting a treaty between the Indians and settlers: "In the foreground is a group of animals, lions,

[13] Morley, "Seton's Animals," p. 196.

tigers, bears, oxen, illustrating the prophecy of Isaiah about the recovery of innocence in nature. Like the animals of the Douanier Rousseau, they stare past us with the serenity that transcends consciousness . . . This mood is closer to the haunting vision of a serenity that is both human and natural which we have been struggling to identify in the Canadian tradition. If we had to characterize a distinctive emphasis in that tradition we might call it a quest for the peaceable kingdom."[14]

If one takes into account the evidence of Seton's writings, his own brand of mysticism and his deep involvement with nature, one would have to conclude that his life was shaped by his personal quest.

[14] Frye, "Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada," p. 249.

CHAPTER III

IN SEARCH OF THE LIGHT UNGUESSED : THE HUNTER.

While Seton's animals have been shown as integral aspects of the natural landscape, mankind's appearance in this world takes on a different character. Seton's humans usually assume the role of trespasser or hunter when they venture into the territory of the wild creatures. A further reflection of Seton's romanticism, these hunter figures are questors in pursuit of animal prey. They are drawn not only by the thrill of the hunt but, like the Indians, are also attracted by the totemic qualities, such as strength and wisdom, embodied by these animals.

As will be illustrated here, man's inner struggle against the more brutal aspects of his nature is clearly reflected in Seton's own ambivalence towards the hunt as revealed in his fictional hunters. These characters may be placed on a scale at the lower level of which is the relentless pursuer with little or no sympathy for his quarry and who succumbs to his lower nature with the kill. At the opposite extreme, the naturalist delineates the hunter in sympathy with nature, whose search for a particular animal parallels a romantic inward quest, man's journey toward some indefinable good through subjugation of his lesser sinful self.

Frye describes this type of "downward quest" in "The Romantic Myth" as follows: "For the quest of the soul, the attaining of man's ultimate identity, the traditional metaphors were upward ones, following the movement of the ascension of Christ, though they were there even before the Psalmist lifted up his eyes to the hills. In Romanticism the main direction of the quest of identity tends increasingly to be downward and inward, towards a hidden basis or ground of identity between man and nature."[1] Some characters who do not undergo spiritual combat with their lesser natures are the "un-hunters" as Seton calls them, children who, like the primitives, are still in harmony with nature because of their essential innocence.

Seton often liked to point out that no animal story had a happy conclusion. Each moment of a creature's life was spent in a constant struggle for existence, with no prospect of a peaceful old age at its end.[2] One of the major factors that hastens this violent end is the human element - the head-hunting sportsman who specializes in destroying the finest

[1] Northrop Frye, "The Romantic Myth," p. 33.

[2] See Seton, Lives of the Hunted, p. 11: "For the wild animal there is no such thing as a gentle decline in peaceful old age. Its life is spent at the front, in line of battle, and as soon as its powers begin to wane in the least, its enemies become too strong for it; it falls. There is only one way to make an animal's history un-tragic, and that is to stop before the last chapter."

specimens of wildlife. Seton believed that the hunt served to trigger the savage that lay under the surface of civilized man: "Just a little while ago we were hunting brutes - our bellies were our only thought, that telltale line of dots was the road to food. No man can follow it far without feeling a wild beast prickling in his hair and down his spine."[3]

Seton's own divided attitude toward hunting is revealed early in his own life. He started hunting as a boy primarily to satisfy his thirst for wildlife knowledge. The difficulty of studying the elusive birds was overcome by the rifle since the bodies of the birds could be examined and dissected by the young naturalist. In his autobiography, however, Seton describes an incident in his childhood when he gave in to the pure blood instinct by killing some barnyard fowl.[4]

This duality continued into Seton's adult years. In 1884, he hunted and killed a moose and upon seeing the great beast reduced to butcher's meat vowed never again to kill any North American big game as long as they were threatened

[3] Ernest Thompson Seton, The Trail of the Sandhill Stag (London: David Nutt, 1904), pp. 70-71. Subsequent references will be cited hereafter as TSS.

[4] See Morley, "We and the Beasts are Kin," p. 351: "A passage in his autobiography helps to explain his [Seton's] lifelong ambivalence towards hunting while commenting indirectly on the Victorian controversy over evolution and ethics. At the age of five, Ernest and his cousin attacked and joyously speared some neighbouring hens. Adult reproof, and the smell of blood, brought a feeling of contrition as powerful as the earlier instinct to kill had been."

by extinction. 1894 found Seton setting out to kill the wolf Lobo in New Mexico, a hunt which is described at length in "Lobo, the King of Currumpaw." Wolves were fair game since they were not in danger of extinction then. Years later in a speech to the Canadian Club in Ottawa, the naturalist deplored the disappearance of much prairie wildlife through indiscriminate hunting, while in the same breath he advocated the setting up of game sanctuaries to which young men would have hunting rights for a few days a year.[5]

As has been mentioned, at the lower end of our scale, Seton presents hunters in an unsympathetic light, as aggressors with little understanding of the environment or the creatures they pursue. In these older characters there is never any interior progression toward self-knowledge. Two examples of these hunters are Cuddy in "Redruff" and Tom Turkeytrack in "The Pacing Mustang." Both stories are included in the collection Wild Animals I Have Known.

Cuddy is described as having no wealth, no taxes, no social pretensions, and no property. This squatter does very little work and entertains himself by hunting out of season. It is this disreputable tramp who shadows the partridge from his birth until his death.

Since the hunts described by Seton take place over a period of time, anywhere from one week to several years, a

[5] See Julia M. Seton, By a Thousand Fires, pp. 148-157. Seton concluded this speech by asking that the young men of Canada be given the right to an annual outing with the gun ". . . without fear that they are depleting the game, that they are robbing the country, that they are robbing the children of their fair and joyful heritage."

strange relationship grows between the hunter and his intended victim. They become familiar to one another through intermittent glimpses; it is as if an invisible thread connects them until one, usually the hunter, breaks that contact. This symbiotic relationship, which recurs throughout Seton's work, grows between Redruff and Cuddy, as the bird comes to recognize and be wary of his enemy, while Cuddy's determination to kill increases with each sighting of his splendid quarry.

Although Cuddy lives in the Don Valley, he is not an integral part of it. Instead he is a disruptive and destructive force in the lives of all the wild creatures in the vicinity. Inevitably the last surviving partridge, Redruff, is caught in one of the poacher's snares and dangles for hours before he is killed by a horned owl. At the conclusion, Seton's elegiac tone suggests that Cuddy's intervention has consequences reaching far beyond the elimination of one family of game birds. Man's insensitivity to the world of nature around him, as demonstrated by this hunter, threatens the very survival of many species.[6]

The freedom-loving wild stallion whose story is told in in "The Pacing Mustang" also lives out his life pursued by man.

[6] See Polk, "Lives of the Hunted," p. 55: "The elegiac endings to many of these Canadian stories, particularly Seton's, remind us that the human world in a larger sense and as a whole is gradually obliterating the animals' domain".

The worst of these is ugly old Tom Turkeytrack, a camp cook. With one eye on the five thousand dollar bounty, Tom sets out to lure the elusive stallion with a mare and he succeeds where everyone else has failed. At last the old man leads the hobbled and branded creature towards inevitable captivity but, in a romantic gesture, Seton has the mustang plunge over a cliff rather than face that living death. Thus man brings about the pointless destruction of a wild animal that to Seton embodied freedom and nobility.

Ascending the scale, at the next level we find Scotty MacDougall from "Krag," and Lan Kellyan from Monarch, the Big Bear of Tallac. Not so hardened as Cuddy and Turkeytrack, these hunters struggle against their weaker selves, however briefly, but ultimately lose. In "Krag," Scotty MacDougall is the aggressor, a figure who shadows the ram throughout his life. Scotty picks off the occasional sheep but always keeps his eye on their magnificent leader, Krag. When the hunter leaves the area temporarily, Seton describes that period as a time of prosperity for the herd. When Scotty returns, he finds that Krag has matured into a perfect specimen and he vows to capture the ram's horns. After several unsuccessful attempts, the hunter is spurred on to prepare for one final pursuit when city dealers offer a bounty for the famous horns.

This winter hunt assumes marathon proportions as Scotty follows Krag relentlessly over a period of three months and across a total distance of five hundred miles. During this ordeal the odds are heavily in the hunter's favour since he is

well supplied with food while the ram must stop to forage in the snow. Seton emphasizes the inhuman aspect of Scotty's character as he pursues his intended victim: "For added to his tireless strength was the Saxon understreak of brutish grit, of senseless, pig-dogged pertinacity - the inflexible determination that still sticks to its purpose long after sense, reason and honor have abandoned the attempt" (LOH 88).

The filament that connects hunter and prey begins to emerge as Krag comes to accept the presence of his foe as a necessary evil. The animal maintains a distance of five hundred yards between himself and Scotty so that they are in sight of each other but out of rifle range. So accustomed has the ram become to his pursuer that on several occasions he seems to flirt with death as he signals that he is changing his route.

The hunt comes full circle to Krag's birthplace where Scotty finally tricks the ram by exploiting the animal's acceptance of his presence. Faced with the living creature, the prize he has sought for so long, the hunter's hands tremble as if his dual natures were warring within him but his lesser self predominates as he shoots. Before removing the ram's great horns, Scotty feels a terrible pang of remorse for robbing Krag of life and says "I'd give it back to him if I could" (LOH 98).

The climax of the long hunt marks the end for Scotty as he too dies, albeit symbolically, with his victim. He returns to his shanty, never to hunt again. Like Coleridge's

Ancient Mariner, he lives under the ram's reproachful gaze, waiting with foreboding for the animal's revenge. Scotty's nemesis takes the form of a Chinook wind which creates an avalanche and blots out the hunter.

On the same level as Scotty MacDougall we find Lan Kellyan, the hunter in Monarch, The Big Bear of Tallac, a hunter who gains too late some sense of kinship with animals. Lan places no value on animal life since his living is derived from destroying it. After killing a mother grizzly, the hunter adopts her two cubs. He becomes particularly fond of the male cub but sells the animals to a passing stranger for fifty dollars. This new owner is considerably harsher in his treatment of the bears; subsequently one cub is killed while the other survives to become Monarch.

Seton employs a technique characteristic of the Romance genre in which the true identity of the hero is concealed until the denouement.[7] Monarch possesses such strength and intelligence that his many exploits are thought to be the work of several bears. Kellyan and his partner discover the truth and resolve to capture the animal alive, unaware that this bear is the hunter's old pet.

Monarch is captured and taken to San Francisco to be displayed. As the great beast languishes in captivity, near death, Kellyan recognizes the animal from his past. Although

[7] See Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), p. 4.

his presence stirs some long-buried memory in Monarch, who rallies and lives, Kellyan's intrusion in the life of the great bear has been largely damaging. From Monarch's early days until his final hopeless existence as a captive in Golden Gate Park, man's interference once again has brought tragedy.

Continuing up the scale of Seton's hunters, next we find a few romantics, idealistic young men who feel some accord with nature and who bear certain similarities to the youthful Seton as he is described in his autobiography and in Two Little Savages. Although hunters, these characters do not commit the final act of violence against the animal protagonists, not because of lack of opportunity but because they have been brought to some sense of sympathy with their quarry.

In "Krag," one of these hunters appears as a contrast to Scotty MacDougall. Lee is a warm-hearted impulsive cattleman who visits Scotty with his three Russian wolf-hounds in order to hunt the great ram. During one such hunt, Lee's hounds are destroyed through Krag's ingenuity at the peak of the chase. The young huntsman seeks revenge until he witnesses an incident in which the courageous ram fights off five wolves in order to defend his ewes. Although Krag is in rifle range, Lee finds it impossible now to harm him, his hatred for the old warrior turned to admiration.

Abner Jukes in The Biography of a Silver-Fox is a New England boy, a budding naturalist, like the young Seton. Despite the fact that Abner is the owner of the hound Hekla,

archenemy of the silver fox Domino, the boy displays a sympathetic interest in wild creatures. As the story begins, it is significant that Abner alone is privileged to witness the fox family at play, a sight which Seton points out would awaken in any man an awareness of the similarity between the affections of animals and those of man.[8] Abner is contrasted with his neighbours, whose brutal acts include using dynamite to destroy the foxes' den.

This boy has grown to young manhood when the climax of the story takes place. In another incidence of mistaken identity, the silver fox is thought guilty of Hekla's sheep-killing and is captured. He is deliberately released by the farmers for the sport of one last cruel chase. When the fox takes refuge on an ice floe in the river, Abner deflects the aim of a hunter sighting this perfect target. As the silver-fox and his pursuer, the hound, are swept toward their inevitable deaths, Abner mourns the valiant wild creature as much as he mourns his dog, wishing that he could save them both. The young hunter is unaware that the fox is able to leap ashore to freedom while the hound is drowned.

At the highest point of our scale is the individual whose hunt can be seen as analogous to the romantics' quest

[8] See Ernest Thompson Seton, The Biography of a Silver-Fox (New York: Century, 1909), pp. 21-22. Seton writes that "not more than one man in every hundred thousand has the good luck to see this family group that charms us by its appeal to the eye, and touches our hearts by showing how very near these creatures are to us in their affections and their trials." Subsequent references will be cited hereafter as BSF.

inward to some secret area of the heart where man can possibly achieve some unity with the natural world. Such a hunter is Yan in The Trail of the Sandhill Stag, another representation of Seton himself, an older version of the boy in Two Little Savages. Based upon an actual experience from his Manitoba days, Seton likens this hunt to Galahad's quest for the Grail as Yan is drawn irrevocably forward in pursuit of the great stag which can be seen as the embodiment of some indefinable good, and against whom any crime would be sacrilege. At the climax of this hunt/quest, the life of the quarry is spared because the hunter has found instead what he was unconsciously seeking, realization of his kinship with nature.

This story is unique in that the focus is on the human, rather than animal, protagonist although Seton's sympathies are clearly with the latter. Yan is a neophyte hunter, a tall raw youth in his late teens. At the peak of his physical powers, he glories in the freedom of the outdoor life. Fittingly, he pits himself against the noblest stag in the Manitoba Sandhills, a mighty buck of great size and speed with marvellous antlers.

Although Yan enters the Sandhills as a trespasser at odds with the environment, he grows and changes during his months on the stag's trail. Through experience he acquires more knowledge of the ways of the wild, especially after meeting Chaska. Trailed by a pack of wolves, Yan learns what the hunted beast feels, and on bitterly cold nights in the open, he curls up wishing that he had fur. Eventually, even the prairie

creatures come to accept him as one of their own.

Throughout the story, nature, represented by the stag, is endowed with numinous powers as Seton surrounds the animal with an aura that is strongly religious in tone. Yan is rewarded with moments of sheer joy merely observing the deer so that his early failures as a hunter, or killer, are "bright, unsad failures." Seeing the Sandhill stag at close range for the first time, he is so moved by the animal's vital, kingly appearance that it seems to him a precious, sacred thing. The set of tracks that leads the hunter onward is a mystic chain forged by the great beast: "A million roods of hills had he overlaid with its links, had scribbled over in this oldest script with the story of his life. If only our eyes were bright enough to follow up that twenty thousand miles of trail, what light unguessed we might obtain where the wisest now are groping" (TSS 70).

Yet within Yan a battle is raging between that aspect of himself which regards the stag with reverence, and that which has only to see a perfect set of tracks to long for the kill. After witnessing his first kill, the butchering of the stag's mate, the young hunter is sickened for hours, but his qualms are gradually forgotten as the excitement of the chase takes over. Irresistibly drawn onward, he continues his solitary guest, a "hunter-brute" again.

Using the deer's awareness of his dogged presence, as Scotty did with Krag, Yan at last stands face to face with his noble adversary. Gazing into the creature's eyes, all thought

of violence fades as he and the stag seem to think as one. In those moments, a consolidation of all Yan's previous experiences occurs as he recalls his own fear as the wolf pack pursued him, and as he remembers the agonized gaze of the wounded doe. The beast within the young hunter recedes as he grasps the nature of his relationship to this regal animal. The story concludes with Yan addressing the stag: "I may never see you again. But if only you would come sometimes and look me in the eyes and make me feel as you have done to-day, you would drive the wild beast wholly from my heart, and then the veil would be a little drawn and I should know more of the things that wise men have prayed for knowledge of. And yet I feel it never will be . . . I have found the Grail. I have learned what Buddha learned. I shall never see you again. Farewell" (TSS 92-93).[9]

Thus at the culmination of this hunt, Yan is gifted with the sensation of union with the organic world so that his perspective on his fellow creatures becomes that of sympathetic kinsman, rather than aggressor. His journey in pursuit of the stag has been paralleled by an inward quest as he penetrates through the darkness of his own soul to glimpse that ground of identity that the romantics envisioned

[9] See Polk, "Lives of the Hunted," p. 57: "Even here, Seton's usual elegiac tone is evident: the stag will not return to drive 'the wild beast' wholly from the hunter's heart, and in spite of having learned what Buddha learned, Yan accepts the limitations on his knowledge rather fatalistically."

existing between man and nature.[10]

There are other human characters in some of Seton's stories who do not need to be brought to any revelation of their fellowship to the animal world since they already possess an inherent sympathy for, and understanding of, their furred and feathered friends. Dubbed by Seton the "un-hunters," they are children, or child-like persons, whose innocence maintains for them the ability to empathize with even the fiercest members of the animal world. Included in By a Thousand Fires is the naturalist's tale of a small boy quieting a ferocious mastiff with a gentle admonition. Remarking on man's ignorance on the field of animal behaviour, Seton adds: "So far, our little brothers have proved inscrutable mysteries to all these wise men: but not to the children, for they have kept on instinctively, unquestioningly, accepting the animal as a creature of like passions with themselves." [11]

Discussing the new form that Romanticism imposed on the myth of creation, which told of man's fall from grace and his subsequent redemption, Frye writes: "What corresponds to the older myth of an unfallen state, or lost paradise of Eden, is now a sense of an original identity between the individual man

[10] See Frye, "The Romantic Myth," p. 33: "It is in a hidden region, often described in images of underground caves and streams like those of Kubla Khan, that the final unity between man and his nature is most often achieved."

[11] See Julia M. Seton. By A Thousand Fires, p. 71.

and nature which has been lost. It may have been something lost in childhood, as in Wordsworth's Ode on Intimations of Immortality or it may be something hazier like a racial or collective memory but it haunts the mind with the same sense of dispossession that the original Eden myth did." [12] These blameless children, then, can be seen as another expression of Seton's romanticism; they are able to maintain their intuitive rapport with nature because they have not yet been corrupted by the world. Wordsworth's "shades of the prison-house" have not yet begun to close upon them.[13]

One such character is Little Jim Hogan in "The Winnipeg Wolf," from Animal Heroes. Jim is a young boy whose father is a saloon keeper who displays the captive wolf for the amusement of his customers. Since both the child and the wolf receive somewhat harsh treatment at the hands of Hogan Senior, a warm friendship develops between the two, although the creature is quick to demonstrate his antagonism towards any other members of the human race.

One incident in particular demonstrates the boy's protectiveness towards his friend. Hogan decides to release the beast in order to test the hunting skills of two Great

[12] Frye, "The Romantic Myth," p. 17.

[13] In his "Ode, Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," Wordsworth wrote that children came from God "trailing clouds of glory." Seton expressed the same idea more prosaically in explaining the philosophy underlying his Woodcraft Movement: "I began with the assumption that all children come here from God and are pure as God can make them. We do not have to reform them, but rather keep them from being deformed" (TAN 375).

Danes and, unsuspecting, Jimmy is sent away. Although the wolf proves to be more than a match for the dogs, reinforcements are brought in to ensure his defeat and death. The child appears in time to halt the fight and take his "pet" home. When his companion dies of a fever, the wolf mourns with an almost human sensibility. Once free, he spends his remaining days haunting the streets of Winnipeg rather than taking to the wild, and although he becomes infamous as the legendary "Loup Garou," he is never known to harm a child.

Another "un-hunter" appears in The Biography of a Silver-Fox. This school girl first comes upon the fox in the woods. The two feel an immediate warmth towards one another as she delights in this rare glimpse of a wild animal, while the fox receives an instinctive message that this human means him no harm. Her protectiveness toward the fox, and indeed to all living beings, is evidenced when she interrupts Domino stalking a wild turkey. Learning that the scent of metal would serve as a deterrent to the fox, she sets out iron implements near the nest to protect the bird without harming the fox.

Unwillingly, the girl becomes the instrument of Domino's capture when the hunted creature turns in his exhaustion to his old friend, taking refuge in her house. It is her father who, over her protests, proposes the final hunt in which the silver fox is swept down the river.

At the conclusion of the story, the lives of the girl and the fox are again linked. It is three years later and she

and her young man sit overlooking the river. Fittingly, her companion is Abner Jukes. The memory of Domino's "death" is a shadow that lingers between the two, but that darkness is lifted as they are granted another privileged view of fox life. They both recognize "their" silver fox playing with his offspring and all past wounds are healed as they are joined in peaceful communion with nature.

Given Seton's literary interpretation of hunters, how then does one explain his divided attitude towards hunting? When he was criticized for capturing Lobo, then publishing the story of the hunt, Seton's defense was to point out that the predominant emotion left with his readers was not sympathy for the hunter but for the noble wolf. Through the sympathy elicited by these stories, the author sought to end the indiscriminate destruction of wild creatures since he believed them to be the precious heritage of each new generation. However, the fact remains that the naturalist was involved in the hunting and killing of wildlife for some years.

While hunting was obviously an important means of gathering specimens for Seton the naturalist, it was also an acceptable masculine pursuit that enabled him to spend long periods of time in the bush. In his previously mentioned speech to the gentlemen of the Canadian Club in 1924, Seton emphasized the value of training with the gun in developing self-reliance, courage and manhood. That the naturalist was concerned with virility is illustrated in a remarkable display of his male ego when, at the age of 78, he attempted to pass

an adopted baby daughter as his own child.[14]

Given Seton's concept of the innocent young child in possession of a spontaneous rapport with nature, his hunters then are the dispossessed or fallen. As these men age, they grow further away from their original ideal state of sympathetic participation in the great cycle of living things. Hence the moment of revelation for young Yan, which can be contrasted with the violent retribution against old Scotty. Of this romantic concept of the fall, Frye writes: "Man has 'fallen,' not so much into sin as into the original sin of self-consciousness, into his present subject-object relation to nature, where, because his consciousness is what separates him from nature, the primary conscious feeling is one of separation. The alienated man cut off from nature by his consciousness is the Romantic equivalent of post-Edenic Adam. He is forcefully presented in Coleridge's figure of the Ancient Mariner, compelled recurrently to tell a story whose moral is reintegration with nature. The Romantic redemption myth then

[14] In November, 1938, Seton and his second wife, Julia, arrived in New York on business accompanied by their five-month-old "daughter," Beulah. Since Seton was 78 at the time, and Julia 48, this phenomenon was widely publicized in the press. Julia is reported to have said: "People do look askance at us, and want to know if Beulah isn't our adopted daughter. They do not understand that Mr. Seton, despite his age, is just as youthful mentally, physically and spiritually as he has ever been." Several days later it was reported that Seton and his wife had returned to New Mexico chuckling over the hoax they had pulled on New York. Julia then said of her new daughter: "We know everything about her parentage and the adoption papers become final Dec. 6. We intended to make the adoption public at that time" (Toronto Star, Nov. 24, 1938).

becomes a recovery of the original identity." [15]

Although Seton himself occasionally succumbed to this subject-object view of nature in his role as hunter, the predominant perspective conveyed in these stories of the hunt is that of the romantic naturalist who saw the necessity for man's reintegration with nature. Man therefore must enter the realm of the wild creatures not as trespasser but as sympathetic observer, armed only with a reverence for all living things.

[15] Frye, "The Romantic Myth," pp. 17-18.

CHAPTER IV

SETON AS SCIENTIST

Julia Seton wrote of her husband that he was a strange combination of imaginative romancer and exact scientist. Indeed, while a romantic sensibility shapes Seton's animal stories, these portraits are based upon his studies in natural science. Yet even in his scientific explorations, Seton displayed another aspect of the romantic spirit. As Frye has observed: "Many Romantic writers, both philosophical and literary, were deeply interested in contemporary science, and made herioc efforts to unify the humanistic and scientific perspectives, usually on some basis of a philosophy of organism."[1]

Through independent study, Seton evolved and incorporated into his work a theory of animal psychology that predated the modern behaviorists by decades. In 1913, Roberts stressed the importance of Seton's innovative approach which involved a psychology simpler and more limited than that of man, but one no less worthy of consideration. Roberts says of his fellow nature writer: "He spurns the theory that all

[1] Frye, "The Romantic Myth," p. 15.

animal life below the human plane is the blind and helpless slave of reflex action."[2]

John Burroughs, the American naturist and poet, provoked the "nature fakers" controversy when he rejected Seton's insistence that his animal portraits were based upon natural science. While Burroughs' objections will be discussed briefly here, the primary focus will be on Seton as scientist. His relationship to the romantics in this respect will be explored, together with some of his avant garde theories of animal behavior.

Not only has the term "romantic" come to be thought of, erroneously, as precluding any interest in the scientific world, but romantics are often classified as being hostile to science. In fact, many famous names of the romantic era displayed a lively interest in science. At the time, science was opening up whole new areas that beckoned irresistibly to romantic artists and poets seeking a fresh perspective on life. Since the boundaries of the disciplines were less clearly defined, such overlapping of interests was natural. As Barzun states in Classic, Romantic and Modern: "On the whole it seems fair to say that the romantic artists were respectful admirers and sometimes active propagandists of science . . . writers such as Victor Hugo, Vigny, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Novalis, Buchner, Berlioz, Schiller, Schopenhauer,

[2] Roberts, "Ernest Thompson Seton," p. 147.

Stendhal and Balzac, come to mind as friends or students of science" (p. 65).

Seton's lifelong interest in natural science is proved by his journals, photographs, drawings and wildlife specimens, permanent records of his tireless studies. Apart from his own observations in the field, he also consulted whatever other sources were available to him. A faithful reader of the journals of the Smithsonian Institute, Seton would often send the Institute unusual specimens in exchange for their most recent publications. Fellow naturalists were another resource, such as R. Miller Christy, who introduced Seton to Darwin's theory of evolution in Manitoba in 1883.[3]

In keeping detailed records, Seton was following the romantics, who kept accounts of their feelings and personal experiences in order to present a realistic view of the world. The romantics perceived every aspect of life in sharper perspective, then proceeded to set down that close-grained view in their work. In this way, they were working like scientific researchers. Barzun writes that theirs was the very method of scientific induction: "They entertained the reasonable hope that individual reports on reality would lead to generalized and probable truths" (p. 68).

Truth was of paramount importance to Seton also. To him, the enduring strength of the animal story lay in its

[3] See Trail of an Artist-Naturalist, p. 226: "He it was who first led me into the fairyland of science opened to the world by Darwin's wonderful discoveries in the working of evolution."

essential authenticity. He frequently pointed out that that fact lay at the core of his work, his theories of animal behaviour in turn growing out of his personal observations. Seeing each fact as a tiny fragment of a larger mosaic, Seton considered that those who kept honest records were preparing the way for those who would follow, all contributing to the discovery of truth.[4]

Seton theorized that in the social structure of the animal kingdom there were two primary aids to survival: the early educative process, during which the mother played a dominant role; and the strong protective leadership of certain socially dominant individuals. To deal with the first of these points, Seton's wild animals are threatened by their fellow creatures as well as by man so they must learn the rules by which to live if they are to survive, rules governing such things as hunting and tracking. These rules of the vital contest Seton entitles the "life-game" must never be forgotten, for the game is difficult and unending.[5]

According to Seton, an animal had three sources of wisdom available to it in learning the "life-game": the experience of its ancestors, also known as instinct; the

[4] See Julia M. Seton, By A Thousand Fires, P. 89.

[5] See "Badlands Billy: The Wolf That Won" in Animal Heroes (London: Constable, 1905), p. 130. Seton concludes that we may win ten thousand times, and if we fail but once, our gain is gone. Subsequent references will be cited hereafter as AH.

experience of its parents and friends; and, finally, its own experience. Despite the value of these sources of learning, each had its weakness. Instinct was of primary importance since it was the result of generations of shaping through natural selection, but its weakness lay in the fact that it was fixed and therefore could not adapt to changing circumstances. Parental experience was transmitted at an early age through example, but was limited by the creatures' inability to communicate verbally. As an animal aged, the value of personal experience increased although the weakness here lay in the dangers inherent in its acquisition. Thus, Seton considered all three sources of wisdom invaluable (LOH 284-285).

Next to instinct, Seton maintained that gifted parents provided the best start in life for any wild creature; consequently the parent-child relationship is an important aspect of many of his early animal stories, such as "Raggylug," "Redruff," and "Tito: The Story of the Coyote that Learned How." Seton's interest in science notwithstanding, his animal stories are shaded by his own family experiences. However, unlike Seton's own childhood, the parent-child relationship in these works is always of beneficial nature, no matter how brief its duration in a precarious world.

In his discussion of Romanticism, Frye suggests that the mother figure is the obvious symbol for the sense of original unity with nature which is lost as man progresses in the world: "As a result something of the ancient mother-centered

symbolism comes back into poetry. Wordsworth leaves no doubt that he thinks of nature as Mother Nature, and that he associates her with other maternal images."[6] Maternal symbols such as the Angel of the Wild Things appear often in Seton's work, while maternal figures dominate his descriptions of animal family life.

Because of the very nature of animal parenthood, the maternal presence dominates here since the bearing and rearing of the young are largely the responsibility of the female. Also, because of the hazardous nature of existence in the wild, females with young are frequently left without a mate. In addition, the influential role that Seton's own mother played in his life gives his maternal portraits another dimension. Seton saw his mother as unselfish and kind, a martyr for her family. Often the naturalist's four-footed mothers sacrifice themselves in order to save their young or, more exposed and vulnerable because of their responsibilities, become martyr/victims who rarely live to see their young mature.

Among these animal mothers who are so important in the education of their young is Molly Cottontail from "Raggylug." Molly rears Raggylug alone and teaches him from her own experience all that he needs to know in order to survive in the swamp which is their home. There are no specific times for these lessons, since each moment is a learning experience

[6] Frye, "The Romantic Myth," p. 18.

for the young creature. The lessons cover all aspects of woodcraft, including signalling, tracking and recognizing snares.

At the conclusion of the story, Molly sacrifices herself in order to lead her enemy, the fox, away from the winter burrow she shares with her son. Seton eulogizes the little heroine, a mother who has done her job well: "She was good stuff; the stuff that never dies. For flesh of her flesh and brain of her brain was Rag. She lives in him, and through him transmits a finer fibre to her race" (WA 143).

A similar theme of the transference of wisdom and strength through the maternal figure appears in "Tito." This coyote's mother is shot while it is very young. Subsequently, the young animal is reared in captivity, which gives Tito an advantage in Seton's third source of animal wisdom, personal experience. The coyote's wild brothers would have been killed in the process of becoming familiar with man's ways. She alone recognizes, and is wary of, guns, poison bait, traps and dogs, knowledge that she is soon to pass on to her pups.

When Tito produces a litter, her instinct for self-preservation gives way to concern for the survival of her young. Time and again she eludes the bounty hunter who haunts their trail, until at last she is confronted by her enemy the hound. Tito courageously holds him at bay until her mate arrives to transport the pups to safety and continued education: "There they lived in peace till their mother had finished their training, and every one of them grew up wise in the ancient

learning of the plains, wise in the later wisdom that the rancher's war had forced on them, and not only they, but their children's children too" (LOH 350).

Occasionally in Seton's stories, when the mother has been killed, her role is filled by a foster mother, in much the same way as Mrs. Blackwell substituted for Seton's mother during the boy's visits to Lindsay. In "Badlands Billy, the Wolf that Won," Billy's family is killed by a hunter and the orphan is taken in by a strange mother-wolf. She assumes the task of training the young wolf, teaching him how to attack his prey and warning him never to attack man. Unfortunately the old wolf is trapped so Badlands Billy sadly loses two mothers but benefits because his foster-mother had outstanding qualities and wisdom of which he has been the recipient.

These animal mothers sometimes act harshly for the good of their offspring. One even acts as an agent of nature, aiding the fittest to survive. This is the leader doe in "The Legend of the White Reindeer," who gives birth to twin calves, one strong and one weak. When the mother leaves the place of birth, she is accompanied by only one calf, having killed the other. Seton's only comment is: "Strange things happen, and hard things are done when they needs must . . . The mother was wise: better one strongling that two weaklings" (AH 334).

In "The Springfield Fox" the vixen of the title has lost all her young except the weakest, who is held captive by

a farmer. This mother tries every means to release her cub and when all else fails, she brings him poisoned bait in order to free him at last through death. Seton explains that given the choice of a miserable captive life, or death for her child, the softer mother side was repressed and the hard decision was taken.

The fathers in these stories reflect not Seton's own tyrannical father, but a gentler father-figure similar to William Blackwell of Lindsay, whom the young Seton idolized. Like Domino the silver fox and Redruff the partridge, Seton's animal fathers are ideal parents, loving and protective in addition to being experts in the art of survival. In the story of "Redruff" it is the father who is left without a mate and who assumes the task of training the young: "The brood grew and were trained by their father just as his mother had trained him; though wider knowledge and experience gave him many advantages. He knew so well the country round and all the feeding-grounds, and how to meet the ills that harass partridge-life, that the summer passed and not a chick was lost" (WA 345).

Besides the early educative process, Seton sees animal leaders as another important means of survival in the wild. These leaders are frequently the strongest and the wisest. However, these animals preside over a large group, such as a flock of sheep or a pack of wolves. Among these characters, Silverspot the crow and Lobo the wolf stand out as leaders of great cunning and initiative.

"King" Lobo was the great old wolf Seton came to know through first-hand observation in New Mexico, the wolf he later immortalized in Wild Animals I Have Known. The leader of a remarkable pack of outlaw wolves that terrorized the region for five years, Lobo was exceptional in size and strength. While most wolves that had risen to his rank had many followers, Lobo had only a select few, each one a wolf of superior abilities. The lives of these wolves had been preserved for so many years by the firm control wielded over them by their leader, and by his loyalty to them. It is this loyalty to one of his pack, Blanca, that leads to Lobo's capture and death.

Silverspot, a quick-witted old crow, is another of Seton's animals that displays great leadership ability. Like Lobo, Silverspot had reached the highest rank not only through his great age and wisdom, but also through his strength and bravery. In the crow world, a young bird's failure means almost certain death, so Silverspot is entrusted with the task of teaching the coming generation. With the killing of Silverspot by his old enemy, the horned owl, a long life of usefulness to his race is ended. Again Seton points out that there are farther-reaching consequences than this immediate loss, since the crow population now dwindles without their great leader.

Given the context of Romanticism, in which the realization of each individual's potential was of paramount importance, Seton's animal parents and leaders can be seen as

aids to that end. Despite the daily struggle for existence, the young are cared for physically and benefit from the experience of their elders, who teach them the cunning that will ready them for the "life-game." The skills they have acquired will assist them to survive to full strength and maturity, when the cycle begins again with the next generation.

In 1903, John Burroughs publicly found fault with Seton's theories of animal learning and leadership, casting doubt on the truth of Seton's stories. Burroughs felt that Seton's first volume of collected works might more aptly be entitled: Wild Animals I Alone Have Known.[7] In his article "Real and Sham Natural History," Burroughs ridiculed Seton's idea that the wild creatures instruct their young. Seton's senior by more than two decades, Burroughs' thinking was still firmly rooted in the nineteenth century, thus the American naturist believed that animals were guided by instinct alone. In an article written to defend his stand against those whom he felt manipulated natural history for their own ends, Burroughs stated: "We have only to think of the animals as habitually in a condition analogous to, or identical with, the unthinking and involuntary character of much of our own lives. They are creatures of routine. They are wholly immersed in the unconscious, involuntary nature out of which we rise, and above which our higher lives go on."[8]

[7] See John Burroughs, "Real and Sham Natural History," Atlantic Monthly, 91 (March, 1903), p. 298.

[8] Burroughs, "A Pinch of Salt," in Ways of Nature (Boston: Houghton, 1905), p. 190.

While it has been shown that the romantic in Seton did cause him to anthropomorphize his animal characters to some extent, his ideas on animal learning, first outlined at the beginning of the twentieth century, bear striking similarities to theories of animal behaviour which were not formulated until decades later. For example, psychologists today still accept instinct as a major component of animal behavior, as both Seton and Burroughs did, but the modern theory of imprinting was foreshadowed by Seton alone in his stress on the importance of parental influence in the lives of very young animals.

First documented by Konrad Lorenz in 1936, this phenomenon consisted in the strong attraction of the infant organism for its natural mother, or, in her absence, for any large moving object. First discovered in birds, imprinting is now thought to be widespread throughout the animal kingdom. While Seton may have placed more emphasis on his parent-figures, his belief in the importance of the interaction between animal parent, or foster parent, and child was correct. In the same way, Seton's belief in the importance of personal experience is reflected in the modern theory of habituation, in which the environment plays an important role in shaping the responses of a young animal.[9]

[9] See James Deese, The Psychology of Learning (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), p. 318: "Habituation is learning not to respond to stimuli which tend to be without significance in the life of the animal."

A realization of the importance of learning in animal behavior has been a major contribution of ethology, the science which studies the relationship between animal behavior and biological problems involving ecology and evolution. Ethologists have also discovered the great variety of learning techniques that occur in animals in their struggle for survival. Like Seton's theories, those of modern ethologists involve not only instinct, but the inseparability of instinct and learning.[10]

Similarly, Seton's theory of the vital role of leaders within animal groups proved to be correct. Behaviorists now acknowledge the superior qualities of animal leaders and stress the responsibility borne by those leaders toward the members of their social group, responsibility that sometimes demands self-sacrifice on the part of the leader.[11] Seton's belief in the value of personal experience in animal leadership is

[10]Ibid., pp. 320-321: Deese points out the difficulty in separating learning from the influence of instinct: "Only now are we beginning to understand how these things interact in the natural world. Most animal behavior is a complicated interweaving of instinctive and learned components. Once an instinctive act has been released, it has opened the way for possible modification. Certain kinds of learning depend upon instinctlike mechanisms, and so it is safe to say that learning is modified by instinct as much as instinct is modified by learning."

[11]See Vitus B. Droscher, The Friendly Beast: Latest Discoveries in Animal Behavior (New York: Dutton, 1971), p.73. Droscher discusses the tasks undertaken by raven leaders on behalf of their flocks and states that there are similar demands upon leaders in other animal societies.

echoed by Konrad Lorenz in On Aggression when the behaviorist points out that the higher the evolution of a species, the less important instinct becomes and the more weight that is given to personal experience. Lorenz continues: "With this general trend in evolution, the significance attached to the experienced old animal becomes greater all the time, and it may be said that the social co-existence of the intelligent mammals has achieved a new survival value by the use it makes of the handing down of individually acquired information."[12]

In his autobiography Seton reports that he and John Burroughs eventually became friends after Burroughs became aware of the extensive documentation that Seton had accumulated throughout his many years of nature study. Still, Burroughs's past accusations lingered in the public's memory and President Roosevelt, a personal friend of Seton, urged the naturalist to publish the facts that lay behind Seton's popular animal stories. In 1909 Seton's two volume work Life Histories of Northern Animals appeared and was awarded the Camp-Fire gold medal as the most valuable contribution of that year to popular natural history.

Seton continued to elaborate on this work and in 1925 he produced the first volume of his comprehensive scientific study, Lives of Game Animals. Ironically, the second volume of Lives was awarded the John Burroughs medal in 1926, an award named after Seton's old adversary who died in 1921. The third

[12]Konrad Lorenz, On Aggression, trans. Marjorie Kerr Wilson (New York: Harcourt, 1966), p. 45.

volume, published in 1927, received the prestigous Daniel Giraud Elliott medal from the National Academy of Sciences.[13]

In discussing the development of the animal story, Seton describes what he sees as two kinds of parallel and distinctive literature, "the purely scientific study of the animal's life history, and the sympathetic expression of that history in the biographical form, with as little humanizing as is possible in preparing it for human understanding."[14] He himself contributed to both classifications. As has been discussed, his popular animal stories were based on fact, drawn from his many years of nature study. The theories that he evolved from this study, and which he incorporated into his work, were in harmony with scientific truth in the light of discoveries in the field of animal behavior over the last fifty years.

In his introduction to The Kindred of the Wild, Roberts wrote: "The animal story at its highest point of development is a psychological romance constructed on a framework of natural science" (p. 24). Seton, then, ranks among the best since he displays a romantic dualism, maintaining a balance between scientific fact and his own imaginative processes and achieving that ideal unification that the Romantics sought.

[13]Elliot was an American Zoologist who died in 1915. Curator at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago for twelve years, he was also one of the founders of the American Ornithologists' Union.

[14]Julia M. Seton, By A Thousand Fires, p. 71.

CHAPTER V

HEROES, ROGUES, AND THE ROMANTIC SENSIBILITY

Seton was best known for his detailed portrayals of the personalities of unique heroic creatures, a choice of subject that grew out of his dissatisfaction with the vague general treatment that natural history had received in the past. In his introduction to Animal Heroes Seton wrote: "A Hero is an individual of unusual gifts and achievements. Whether it be man or animal, this definition applies; and it is the histories of such that appeal to the imagination and to the hearts of those who hear him" (p. 9). Ultimately it was in his depiction of these outstanding animal individuals that Seton best illustrated his close affinity to the Romantics.

During the Romantic era, great emphasis was placed on the individual and on the freedom that was necessary for that personality to achieve complete fulfillment as a unique being. Consequently the Romantic hero emerged as a central characteristic of this movement. Seton's choice of the remarkable creature as his primary topic grew out of his own romantic temperament,[1] particularly his desire for freedom,

[1]See Morley, "Seton's Animals," p. 195: "Seton's interest in animals as in men lay not in the species but in the individual, the individual hero. It is a romantic bias, and Seton was a romantic by temperament and by choice."

a preoccupation that was also to shape his life. Besides admirable animals, Seton described those that illustrate the other polarity, weakness and evil. This discussion will touch on these rogue animals but is more concerned with Seton's heroes as Romantic figures seen against the various urban and wilderness landscapes they inhabit. In addition, since the Romantic vision was inevitably shaped by the perceptions of the artist, Seton's later life will be considered in the light of his own vision.

With its concern for a sense of prudence and balance, the period prior to the advent of Romanticism was characterized by a view of man in which the individual was regarded as a limited being neither expected nor encouraged to explore the outer reaches of his own being. In seeking a new world, the Romantics presented instead an active, energetic view of humanity, one in which the individual was seen to have endless potential, together with the responsibility for fulfilling that potential.[2] This emphasis on self-realization brought a concentration on the outstanding individual embodied in the

[2] See Lilian R. Furst, Romanticism in Perspective: A Comparative Study of Aspects of the Romantic Movements in England, France and Germany (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 55: "Such individualism lies at the core of the European 'crise de conscience' of the late eighteenth century and forms the basis for the development of the specifically Romantic outlook. The affirmation of the overriding importance of the individual represents indeed the crucial turning-point in the history of society as well as of literature. From this belief in the rights of individuals sprang the ideals of liberty, fraternity and equality that inspired the French Revolution."

Romantic hero.

Seton shared this view that the primary necessity was for man to develop himself, as he illustrated in his work. Using the analogy that each man is like a different species of tree, Seton wrote: "I have something which no one else in the world has. It may be a little thing, but it is me. It is my pine tree, and I shall grow it, though it never exceed a foot in height. It will always be at least a living thing."[3]

Like the heroes of the romance form who are set apart because of their great courage, strength and nobility, Seton's heroes are distinguished by similar characteristics. Stronger, more courageous, and more intelligent that their fellows, these creatures are the doers of the animal world and as a consequence they frequently rise to become leaders. Seton felt that a focus on such individuals was preferable to a general view of the species, which would be of little satisfaction to his readers. Thus the courage of these animals is exhibited in acts which are aspects of individual heroism.

These characters are distinguished by an energy that is also characteristic of the Romantics and their heroes to whom dynamic action became the means to achieve their concept of life. As well as sharing this vitality with the romantic heroes, Seton's animals usually share their tragic end. In The Secular Scripture, Frye points out the ultimately tragic

[3] Julia M. Seton, By A Thousand Fires, p. 136.

end of active heroes in the romance genre: "Often a hero seems to be trying to achieve some kind of liberation for himself through his physical strength. Such liberation may be symbolized by invulnerability, as in the stories of Achilles, Samson, Hercules and Grettir the Strong. But sooner or later some chink in the armor opens up and the hero is destroyed" (p. 67).

Read states that in Seton's work "the line of demarcation setting man apart from animals was a slight one. He even endowed his heroes and heroines with human virtues -- dignity, sagacity, mother-love, love of liberty, obedience, fidelity -- and encouraged man to look closely at the beasts of the fields and the birds of the air, so that he, man, might learn from them ways to a better life" (p. 51). This humanization of the animals was often a target for Seton's critics. However, given Seton's consciousness of the relationship between all living things, and given his primary aim, which was to promote sympathy and understanding of the animals, he had no other option. In the literary expression of the lives of these creatures, there was no better means available to Seton than the equation of the finer aspects of animal behavior to familiar human concepts of beauty, dignity and wisdom.

As has been discussed previously, various landscapes served as background for Seton's animal stories. He did not limit himself merely to the wilderness but also described creatures living in urban areas, in close proximity to man.

While these stories are of interest, they do not convey the same sense of grandeur with which the animal who dwells in the wider landscape is endowed. It is as if the city context detracts from or overpowers the character. As Seton's animal stories move out from the city, the central characters increase in majesty with the geographical change. "The Slum Cat" and "Arnaux: The Chronicle of a Homing Pigeon," both from Animal Heroes, illustrate the modest heroes of an urban environment.

For these creatures there is a reversal of the concept that the natural landscape is equated with freedom. The slum cat is born in a refuse dump in New York where the struggle for survival is as hazardous as life in the open country. Because of her quick wits, the cat survives to maturity. Her remarkable appearance attracts the attention of a confidence man who enters her in a cat show where she wins the most prestigious award. Sold as a pedigree to a wealthy family, the cat pines in her pastoral surroundings for the pungent odours of the city. As Morley points out in "Seton's Animals," the description of the cat's disgust is leavened with humour: "The very Horses and Dogs had the wrong smells; the whole country round was a repellent desert of lifeless, disgusting gardens and hay-fields without a single tenement or smoke-stack in sight" (AH 54).

Guided by her memory and her senses the cat miraculously returns to her true home after swimming the East River. At the conclusion, she is living a pampered life under the wing

of her old protector. Her greatest pleasure is still to stalk the alleys and although her invulnerability has been maintained up to this point, she has used up three of her nine lives, suggesting an eventual tragic end.

Another of these animal heroes from a city environment is Arnaux, a homing pigeon whose owner houses him in a New York loft. This bird shows his outstanding qualities early by winning his first race, proving himself the best of fifty birds. Arnaux's uniqueness is further illustrated when he and two other birds are placed on a European-bound steamer from which they are to be released once out at sea. When the ship breaks down in heavy fog, the pigeons are let loose in an attempt to get a message ashore. Only Arnaux succeeds in getting through since he alone is unhampered by fear.

Eventually Arnaux is entered in a race from Chicago to New York. During the nine-hundred-mile flight, he stops to drink at a pigeon loft where the owner, recognizing the bird's exceptional qualities, captures him. Held prisoner for two years, the pigeon escapes at last to unhesitatingly resume his interrupted flight towards the city. Near his destination Arnaux is attacked in flight by two peregrine falcons. Ironically, he is killed by these creatures of the wild as he strives vainly toward his urban home.

Moving out to gentler landscapes like the Don Valley, not too far removed from the urban areas, Seton located three of his more social animal heroes, Silverspot, Redruff and Domino. In "Silverspot," Seton asks how many of us have any

insight into the life of a wild animal since one fox or crow seems much like another to the human eye: "But once in a while 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" (WA 59). An embodiment of wisdom, Silverspot is one of these outstanding creatures, an old crow whose leadership abilities have been touched on in Chapter IV. With military efficiency, Silverspot passes on his knowledge to the younger birds, in this way benefitting generations. When this unique bird is killed by an owl, Seton sees his death as a great loss to his social group and his species.

Both Redruff and Domino are also social animals, parents whose intelligence and courage are placed into service for the protection of their families. Both the partridge and the silver fox stand out from their siblings at birth in size, strength and appearance; thus they are the survivors, growing into perfect specimens of their kind, as Seton's description of Domino illustrates: "His parents may have been the commonest of Red Foxes, yet nature in extravagant mood may have showered all her gifts on this favored one of the offspring, and not only clad him in a marvelous coat, but gifted him with speed and wind and brains above his kind, to guard his perilous wealth" (BSF 51-52).

Both these animals must deal with human as well as animal predators as they care for their respective families and there are differing results for each creature. Not only does Domino survive, but his strengths are passed on to his

cubs, thus ensuring the continuation of his race. But despite Redruff's concern for his chicks (a concern unusual in the grouse world), they die or are killed off one by one, until he too falls victim to the snare. Domino's race lives on while that of the partridge is one step closer to extinction. In these two stories Seton illustrated through his heroes not only the concept of the survival of the fittest, but the serious implications of man's interference in the lives of the animals.

Seton wrote two separate biographies of grizzlies both set in more majestic landscapes, far from urban society. The grandeur of the Sierra Nevada and the Rocky Mountains is matched by the solitary dignity of these creatures, Whab and Monarch. In their isolation, these bears are closer to the Romantic concept of the hero separated from society by an introverted quality of mind. Frye says of these solitary heroes: "Byron's Childe Harold, the Ancient Mariner, and Shelley's Alastor and Wandering Jew figures show us, in very different contexts, aspects of the tragic situation, from the Romantic point of view, of being detached from society and its conventional values."[4] Like these heroes, Seton's bears live out the larger part of their lives alone, unsoftened by the usual contacts with their fellow creatures.

In "Monarch," Seton is again presenting a remarkable animal individual. Monarch is a grizzly of such energy that

[4]Frye, "The Romantic Myth," p. 41.

his frequent raids are considered the work of several bears. King of his territory, his infrequent contacts with his own breed are contests of strength. He gradually absorbs such experiences, augmenting his already formidable powers.

Monarch's one brief relationship with a female grizzly ends tragically when she is killed by a hunter. The great bear turns man-killer and becomes the target of a final hunt in which he is trapped and taken to San Francisco, which is presented in a negative light as the scene of the animal's captivity. Although Monarch's story does not end in death, Seton's final tone suggests that the bear's loss of freedom is equally tragic: "The wound-spots long ago have left his shaggy coat, but the earmarks still are there, the ponderous strength, the elephantine dignity. His eyes are dull . . . but they seem not vacant, and most often fixed on the Golden Gate where the river seeks the sea."[5]

In Seton's melancholy Biography of a Grizzly, orphaned Whab grows into a sullen and morose creature, a dangerous grizzly. This bear is a symbol of strength, but his is a strength in isolation since he avoids contact with man and beast. Seton says of the bear's loneliness: "So he lived on year after year, unsoftened by mate or companion, sullen, fearing nothing, ready to fight, but asking only to be let alone -- quite alone."[6] As he ages, the grizzly's strength

[5] Ernest Thompson Seton, Monarch the Big Bear of Tallac (New York: Scribner's, 1919), p. 214.

[6] Ernest Seton-Thompson, The Biography of a Grizzly (Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1900), p. 104.

begins to wane and he is terrorized by a younger bear until at last he chooses to die. Entering a ravine filled with poisonous gas, Whab is granted peace in what Read calls "a truly Roman end." For the grizzly, loss of health and strength is equated with loss of freedom, thus the conclusion is fittingly heroic.

The rolling plains of New Mexico, yet another wilderness landscape, provide the backdrop for two of Seton's most memorable heroic characters, the Pacing Mustang and Lobo. Seton imbues these particular animals with such spirit that they can be seen as extensions of the untamed wilderness they inhabit. The Pacing Mustang is an exceptional black stallion whose magnetism is such that he is not only able to lure nine mares away from their corral, but he also maintains them in his herd despite the best efforts of the local cowboys at recapturing their stock. This apparently invulnerable horse avoids capture until he is trapped by Turkeytrack, the old man whose crooked ugliness contrasts with the wild beauty of his captive. Here as with Monarch, captivity is equated with death; thus the noble mustang, Seton's embodiment of freedom, chooses instead his own tragic end.

The story of Lobo takes place in the same New Mexican setting as "The Pacing Mustang" and this wolf is endowed with the same nobility that distinguishes the stallion. Lobo is such a giant among wolves in size, cunning and strength that the role of leader falls naturally upon his shoulders. Through his ingenuity, he and his pack survive for years terrorizing

their district.

When all attempts at capture have failed, Seton is called in to aid the hunt. Considering poison or traps as the surest methods of achieving his goal, he opts for poison. Despite Seton's expertise in the ways of the wolf, Lobo scorns the deadly bait, knowing it for what it is. Seton then tries traps, with similar results. After each failure, the hunter's precautions become more elaborate in an effort to outwit the wolf. Lobo is finally captured through his admirable loyalty to his mate Blanca, whom Seton kills.

The theme of a captive animal's escape through death is echoed once again. Even as a prisoner, Lobo's dignity is preserved until he escapes his ignominious bonds through death: "A lion shorn of his strength, an eagle robbed of his freedom, or a dove, bereft of his mate, all die, it is said, of a broken heart; and who will aver that this grim bandit could bear the three-fold brunt, heart whole? This only I know, that when the morning dawned, he was lying there still in his position of calm repose, but his spirit was gone -- the old king-wolf was dead" (WA 53-54). With this elegiac conclusion, Seton raises Lobo from the level of pathetic victim to that of tragic hero.

"Krag the Kootenay Ram" is perhaps the best romantic expression of Seton's heroic animal. This story takes place in the barren reaches of the Kootenay Rockies, the majesty of the location equalling that of Seton's noble ram. Since Krag's mother is a creature of distinction, a leader, he is

given an advantage over his peers by birth. In addition, his obedience to his mother enables him to benefit from her wide experience without undergoing any risk. As the ram matures, displaying the talents of his inheritance, he assumes the role of leader. A perfect specimen, Krag is supple and fleet-footed, his magnificent curved horns a record of his robust growth. It is these horns which come to symbolize for Scotty the unattainable, the unique spirit of the ram himself.

While ingeniously protecting his flock, Krag strengthens it with his offspring, thereby ensuring the future of his species. However, despite his responsibilities, he is a free spirit, exhibiting a dazzling romantic energy as he revels in the joy of being alive: "It was a joy for him to set the Mountain Lions at naught by a supple ricochet from rock to rock or to turn and drive the bounding Blacktail band down pell-mell backward to their own, the lower levels. There was a subtle pleasure in every move and a glorying in his glorious strength, which, after all, is beauty" (LOH 6).

Krag's courage is illustrated in one episode in which he and his flock are pursued by Lee's hounds to the brink of a ravine. In a brilliant gamble, the ram leaps over the edge, dynamic action his immediate response in the face of danger. Krag is followed down the cliff from ledge to ledge by a "cascade" of sheep, his confidence and poise ensuring their success.

When a bounty is placed on Krag's horns, Scotty takes up the long winter hunt during which he and the ram traverse

the Kootenay range. Separated from his flock, the ram must face this ordeal alone. Keeping in sight his goal, the splendid horns, Scotty clings to Krag's trail like the shadow of Death. At the climax the hunter sees the vital animal at close range for the first time. He hesitates only a moment before shooting to kill. Scotty is eventually destroyed through the forces of nature, but the ram's horns remain, symbol of his unique powers, destined to be enshrined with other "kingly treasures." Krag's dignity has not been diminished by the hunter's violent act. Instead it is heightened as the ram is metamorphosed into legend by his tragic end, becoming in the process as enduring as the very mountains that were his birthplace.

Seton did not limit himself solely to the depiction of admirable creatures. In many of his stories, a darker side of the animal world is presented, as criminal or base characters contrast with their nobler fellows. In The Biography of a Silver-Fox, the hound Hekla, a cowardly sheep-killer, provides a contrast to the fox Domino; a large buck rabbit in "Raggylug" terrorizes young Rag and his gentle mother, stooping to the "worst crime known among rabbits";[7] faithful Arnaux's mate is stolen by the pigeon Big Blue, who is a coward and a bully.

In "Wully: The Story of a Yaller Dog," Seton focuses

[7] See Seton, Wild Animals, pp. 131-32: "However much they may hate each other, all good rabbits forget their feuds when their common enemy appears. Yet one day when a great goshawk came swooping over the Swamp, the stranger, keeping well under cover himself, tried again and again to drive Rag into the open."

solely on one of these rogue animals. This dog is a Jekyll and Hyde character, an apparently noble animal whose criminal aspect is not revealed until the denouement. Even Wully's lineage is disreputable as Seton points out that the sheep dog is related to the jackal: "There is a strange wild streak in his nature too, that under cruelty or long adversity may develop into deadliest treachery, in spite of the better traits that are the foundation of man's love for the dog" (WA 276). This story is of particular interest since it is the only one in which Seton utilized the landscape of his birthplace, Northern England.

Wully is an intelligent sheep dog, a contrast to his absent-minded old master who abandons him at the South Shields Ferry as the two are transporting sheep to Manchester. For two years the dog haunts the ferry awaiting his master's return in a striking display of faithfulness reminiscent of the historic Greyfriars Bobby.[8] The shepherd does not return so Wully attaches himself to Dorley, an acquaintance who once borrowed his friend's scarf and gloves and thus bears the scent of the dog's master.

Once settled in his new home in Derbyshire, Wully resumes his familiar duties with the usual efficiency. Although a fox roams the neighbourhood, killing sheep, Dorley's flock escapes harm. While the dog shows hatred of outsiders,

[8] A statue still stands in Edinburgh today, a tribute to the faithfulness of this Skye Terrier who kept vigil for fourteen years beside his master's grave in the Kirk of the Greyfriars.

he is at ease with his new owners, particularly Huldah the daughter, who shows a particular fondness for the newcomer.

As the hunt for the killer fox intensifies, the local farmers converge on Dorley's house, claiming to have tracked down Wully as the criminal. Huldah refuses to believe the evidence but as she observes the dog during the night, she sees him slip out and return, spattered with blood. While Wully's crime of sheep killing was serious enough, he commits an ever graver offense as he attacks his only friends, Huldah and her father, in turn. Whatever defense might have been made for the dog in light of his previous trail, there is no hope for him now. Retribution is swift and Wully is struck dead by his master, dishonored forever by his own treachery.

Seton's other rogue animals usually meet violent ends. Hekla is swept down-river on an ice floe to his death; the buck rabbit in "Raggylug" is killed by a hound. However, because of Wully's dual nature, a quality is added to his death that is missing elsewhere. Since Wully cannot be dismissed as a total villain, Seton has added a dimension of tragedy to the death of this animal that raises him to the level of fallen hero.

It has been pointed out elsewhere in this discussion that Seton's life influenced his work in many respects. Seton acknowledged this fact in Trail of an Artist-Naturalist when he wrote: "No man can write of another personality without

adding a suggestion of his own. The personal touch may be the poison of science, but may also be the making of literature, and is absolutely inevitable" (p. 73). Here again Seton was allying himself with the Romantics who were presenting their own perceptions of the world in their creative work. As Barzun says of the romantic artist: "Though it be but one ego, a mere subjective self, that does the recording, he is able to record the feelings and perceptions of others as well as his own. The single consciousness of the subject turns dramatist and uses the self as a sensitive plate to catch whatever molecular or spiritual motions the outer world may supply" (pp. 69-70).

The young romantics were often studious youths who, upon rejecting what they saw as their bankrupt inheritance, attempted self-realization by becoming men of action. This description might have been made of Seton. Under the thumb of his overbearing and often brutal father, he found solace in nature. Later, as he submitted outwardly to his father's demand that he become an artist, he quietly persisted in his wildlife studies. Seton's final declaration of independence came with his move to Manitoba, by which he literally and symbolically turned his back on his unhappy past. To Seton from that time on, the wilderness became synonymous with freedom.

Once he was of age, Seton's rejection of his father and all he represented was made absolute by a gesture of romantic rebelliousness, his decision to change his name from

Ernest Evan Thompson to Ernest Evan Thompson Seton. This claim to the name "Seton" is traced back rather vaguely by the naturalist to a Scottish earldom. Since Seton's mother came to feel that her son's choice of name reflected negatively on the family, he acceded to her wishes, going by the name Seton-Thompson until her death in 1897. Since Seton's work was published at various times under these three different names, a confusion over copyright ensued until the matter was settled in the Supreme Court when the naturalist was finally designated Ernest Thompson Seton.

In their choice of such subjects as the Middle Ages, the Romantics displayed a nostalgia for the past that Seton shared. However, his nostalgia was for the early days of the West. In 1897 at Yellowstone National Park he recorded the following: "Here I am gathering the fragments of . . . past history, recalling my own early days in the Northwest; and while harkening to the wild tales of the mountains and of the past, there comes over me a strange feeling of sadness that almost shapes itself into the question, 'Why was I born too late?'"[9]

Seton's own life was marked by the same vitality that characterizes the lives of his animal heroes. The sense of freedom that he found in Manitoba after 1883 was heightened by his own physical condition. No longer the sickly boy, he was at the peak of his health and strength: "Most men are at their

[9] Julia M. Seton, By a Thousand Fires, pp. 248-49.

physical best from twenty to twenty-five. This was especially true in my case, for I was twenty-three; and the inevitable reaction of physical vigor on mental exuberance was evident to all. It did seem to me that there were more joyous things in life now, more to be seen, comprehend and revelled in, than ever before" (TAN 219). These romantic attributes of heightened perception, of joy in living, of dynamic mental and physical activity were to remain aspects of Seton's personality until his death.

Seton's immense creative energy is evidenced by more than thirty works, including a play for children and a novel, The Preacher of Cedar Mountain (New York: Doubleday, 1917). Having expended a great deal of time and energy in the preparation of his Lives of Game Animals, many of Seton's later publications were compilations of related stories from existing works. Considering himself vindicated as a naturalist with the award-winning Lives, he began to direct his energies elsewhere.

Following the great success of Seton's early work, he was frequently requested to appear as a speaker. Always the raconteur, he was so successful in this lucrative new role that he continued in it for some years. Roberts reported Seton's romantic appearance during these lectures as follows: "He went on the lecture platform; and hundreds of thousands who had been left cold by the printed page were reached and roused to interest by his magnetic personality. With his tall, lithe form, sinewy from much following of the trails, his lean

and swarthy face, his wavy black hair worn rather longer than convention prescribes, his dark and watchful eyes, his head held somewhat up as if to sniff the air and search the hillside, he looks his part as interpreter of the wilds."[10]

As for his personal life, Seton and his wife had become estranged over a period of years. Their daughter Ann was married so there was little to keep them together.[11] Subsequently an attachment grew up between the elderly Seton and Julia Moss, who had worked with him on Lives of Game Animals and who was twenty-nine years his junior. Seton and Julia together chose the acreage in Santa Fe that would later become the site of Seton Village. When the naturalist finally moved West to this location, he filed for a divorce, and he and Julia married. Their daughter Beulah was adopted in 1938. Since Julia does not mention Seton's first family in By A Thousand Fires, her credibility as a reliable reporter of that aspect of Seton's life is dubious.

At Seton Village, the Setons ran an Adult Institute or school for youth leaders, as well as a children's summer camp. Thus the naturalist maintained the contact with young people that had begun with his Woodcraft Movement, itself a romantic phenomenon. According to Julia, by 1940 there was a staff of fifty at the Institute in addition to two hundred students. Once America was at war, the school was disbanded

[10] Roberts, "Ernest Thompson Seton," p. 148.

[11] Ann was to become a best-selling novelist in her own right under the name Anya Seton.

although the Setons continued to provide facilities for groups interested in their unique way of life, which incorporated aspects of woodcraft, Indian lore and Seton's own mystical religion.

Above all Seton maintained his romantic interest in nature. Since his life spanned eight decades, during which he travelled extensively, he was struck by the contrast between the natural world as he had known it in his youth and as he saw it in his old age. Over time, he had seen how landscapes were altered by pollution, how species were becoming extinct through indiscriminate hunting. During his lecture tours throughout North America he became an articulate advocate for the wild creatures, stressing man's inter-relatedness to all living things, and warning that man's actions had serious implications for all. Years before man began to think in terms of "Spaceship Earth," Seton was recommending the preservation of what he called the "precious heritage" of future generations.

Seton remained active to the end. Prior to his death he was planning a six-month, ten thousand-mile lecture tour of the United States. Whatever his human foibles, one could not deny that as a unique individual he had fulfilled his potential in all ways, becoming in the process like one of his own heroic animals. All that was lacking was the inevitable end, which came on October 23, 1946. Seton was eighty-six years old.

The animal story as Seton created it was the product

of his romantic imagination combined with his scientific powers of observation. Through Seton's artistry, this unusual literary form is raised to the level of what Roberts calls a potent emancipator:

> It frees us for a little from the world of shop-worn utilities, and from the mean tenement of self of which we do well to grow weary. It helps us to return to nature, without requiring that we at the same time return to barbarism. It leads 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." The clear and candid life to which it re-initiates us, far behind though it lies in the long upward march of being, holds for us this quality. It has ever the significance, it has ever the richer gift of refreshment and renewal, the more humane the heart and spiritual the understanding which we bring to the intimacy of it.[12]

[12] Roberts, "The Animal Story," p. 29.

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