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"A Dog's Life": Pet-Keeping in Canadian and American Animal Autobiographies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Abstract: The article focuses on generic conventions of sentimental "animal autobiographies" published by Canadian and American authors at the turn of the twentieth century. *Beautiful Joe* (1893) by M. M. Saunders and *Pussy Meow: The Autobiography of a Cat* (1903) by S. L. Patteson were first-person accounts of animal lives propagating humane treatment of domestic animals. By presenting dogs and cats as sentient, intelligent and articulate, such works aimed to evoke the young readers' interest in animals' inner lives and stress their emotional kinship with humans. In these books pet-keeping was presented as a socially meaningful practice as it provided daily exercise in "the domestic ethic of kindness" teaching empathy and responsibility for creatures dependent on humans. At the same time, abuse and cruelty towards animals indicated lack of moral principles. However, in some early twentieth-century stories, which explored darker side of pet-keeping ("A Dog's Tale" by Mark Twain [1903] and "Memoirs of the Yellow Dog" by O'Henry [1906]), certain conventions of sentimental animal autobiographies were modified and Victorian ideals of domesticity questioned.

Keywords: animal autobiography, sentimentality, domesticity, Margaret Marshall Saunders, Sarah Louise Patteson, Mark Twain, O'Henry

"I don't suppose it will knock any of you people off your perch to read a contribution from an animal. Mr. Kipling and a good many others have demonstrated the fact that animals can express themselves in remunerative English, and no magazine goes to press nowadays without an animal story in it"—so said the dog-narrator of O'Henry's "Memoirs of a Yellow Dog" and he was essentially right (55). By the turn of the twentieth century, animal stories had become a stock feature of American magazines. Realistic wild animal stories—a new genre, developed by two Canadian writers, Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G. D. Roberts and later on continued by Jack London—enjoyed great popularity. Such stories combined fiction and natural history in order to present animals in their natural environment, living independently of humans (Lutts ix). Their authors emphasized fidelity to natural history and assured the readers that they described lives of real animals they themselves have known or

observed. This, as they believed, set their stories apart from works narrated by heavily anthropomorphized "talking animals" also widely read at that time. As Roberts asserted:

> The real psychology of animals, as far as we are able to grope our way toward it by deduction and induction combined, is a very different thing from the psychology of certain stories of animals which paved the way for the present vogue. Of these, such books as *Beautiful Joe* and *Black Beauty* are deservedly conspicuous examples. (qtd. in Lutts 28)

The books mentioned and dismissed by Roberts were sentimental animal autobiographies, i.e. stories in which domestic animals gave first-person accounts of their lives among humans (Cosslett 63). Although Roberts saw such works as a necessary stage in the evolution of prose about animals and appreciated their role in awakening "a sympathetic understanding of the animals and sharpening our sense of kinship with all that breathe" he simultaneously criticized their authors for relying on human psychology in descriptions of animal mental processes and motivations (qtd. in Lutts 28).

The best known work of the genre was certainly Anne Sewell's *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse* (1877). Though now classified as a classic of children's fiction, Sewell's book was originally addressed to professionals who took care of horses in Victorian England: grooms, carriage drivers, cab horse owners and jockeys. Its aim was to propagate proper handling of working animals, evoke sympathy for their hard lot, instill ethics of kindness to animals in the readers. The author's narrative strategy—to tell the story of the horse's life from his own point of view—proved very effective as the book immediately became a bestseller and was instrumental in abolishing a fashionable but painful practice of bearing rein in England.[1] The success of *Black Beauty* confirmed that fiction can be an effective tool for changing human attitudes towards domestic animals, which was not lost on activists engaged in the anti-cruelty movement on both sides of the Atlantic.[2]

Popular success of *Black Beauty* inspired Margaret Marshall Saunders, a Canadian, to write a similar autobiography of a dog. Her *Beautiful Joe* (1893) was in turn followed by *Pussy Meow: The Autobiography of a Cat* (1901) by an American author and activist Sarah Louise Patteson. Both books played a significant role in populariz-

1 Bearing reins or checkreins were a type of horse tack commonly used on stylish carriage horses in England in the 1800s. Their function was to keep a horse's head up, the practice that was not only uncomfortable and painful for the horse but also caused chronic problems with breathing and spine.

2 George T. Angell, the founder of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, who called *Black Beauty* "the equine Uncle Tom's Cabin" ordered ten thousand copies to be published and distributed among the people who worked with horses (Beierl 214).

ing the tenets of American humanitarian movement, which was gaining momentum after the Civil War. *Beautiful Joe* won a competition organized by *American Humane Education Society* for a book which "shall *teach* the reader *how* to live in sympathy with the animal world; how to understand the languages of the creatures that we have long been accustomed to call 'dumb'" (qtd. in Saunders v). The idea to write a cat's life story was born during the National Convention of the S.P.C.A in 1895 in Cleveland when Patteson was encouraged by other participants to speak for a creature "misunderstood and much maligned," which deserved a "public hearing" after the horse and the dog had had a chance to speak about their misery (Patteson 3). It is noteworthy that both Saunders and Patteson openly acknowledged their debt to Sewell and expressed hope that their books would be as effective in promoting humane treatment of animals in North America as *Black Beauty* was in Great Britain.[3]

In their works, Saunders and Patteson obeyed the conventions of animal representation developed by Sewell's sentimental autobiography, modifying them but slightly for the sake of the more egalitarian American audience. In the Victorian culture, which influenced the worldview of the middle class on both sides of the Atlantic, domestic animals were valued for their beauty, good character and utility for humans. Working animals were expected to be strong and obedient, eager to help humans in their daily toil, whereas the role of pets was to serve their masters as objects of aesthetic admiration, pleasurable companions, playmates for children and guardians of property.

On the one hand, human relationship with pets resembled the bond between parents and children. The analogy was appropriate, since pets, like children, occupied the lowest position in the patriarchal family and could not control their lives, so their welfare depended wholly on responsible, caring adults. On the other, the human-animal relationship was also perceived in terms of master-servant dependence (Cosslett 91). Having a competent and benevolent master, dogs, cats and horses prospered but in the hands of a brute they pined and suffered. Thus, animal narrators often emphasize the importance of proper human stewardship. The old dog in *Beautiful Joe* ends his life story with the words addressed directly to young readers: "If in my feeble way I have been able to impress you with the fact that dogs and many other animals love their masters and mistresses, and live only to please them, my story will not have been written in vain" (Saunders 303). Animals live to please their good masters, the dog asserts, yet it is not in their power to rebel against the bad ones.

3 Transatlantic success of Sewell's and Saunders's books testifies to the existence of global market for literary production in English in the late nineteenth century. Soon after its publication in Canada and the United Sates, *Beautiful Joe* was also issued as a companion piece to *Black Beauty* by the London publisher Jarrold's (Gerson 15). Like *Black Beauty*, *Beautiful Joe* quickly became a bestseller and is now recognized as the first English-Canadian novel "to sell more than a million copies in the author's lifetime" (Devereux 165).

In nineteenth-century animal autobiographies a dog, a horse or a cat tells his individual life story but, at the same time, acts as a representative of his species. Thus, animal experiences described in these narratives are quite typical even though the story's narrator is frequently represented as special, because of his origins, appearance or character. For example, the main protagonist of *Black Beauty* is a "well-bred and well-born" horse whose ancestors have been prized for speed, stamina, and temper. As a prospective racing champion he enjoys a privileged position among ordinary working animals and for that reason should avoid playing with "cart-horse colts [who] have not learned manners," as his mother reminds him early in the story (Sewell 10). Obviously, a social hierarchy among the horses reflects class divisions in Victorian England. To Sewell's readers, Beauty's story must have seemed all the more poignant because adverse circumstances forced the well-born horse to live and work below his status, though in the end his true nobility was recognized and he was spared the dreary lot of an old cab horse.

In contrast, in American books there are no class divisions between purebred animals and plebeian, mixed breed cats and dogs. In consequence, the animal's worth does not depend on his origins. Beautiful Joe is "only a cur," neither well-born nor physically attractive. His body has been mutilated by the first owner—milkman Jenkins—who in rage cut the dog's tail and ears close to the head. In spite of that, Joe is called beautiful when he is saved by a compassionate young man. At first, this name is considered ironic and funny but with time Joe proves himself worthy of the name through his love and devotion to Laura Morris—a new mistress. Meow, a feline heroine of *Pussy Meow,* is quite vain about her appearance but her origins, like Joe's, are also humble. As she recollects her mistress reading stories about purebred cats she becomes determined to narrate lives of "tigers and Maltese and black cats, because they are considered to be of so very little importance" (Patteson 28). By their choice of animal protagonists Saunders and Patteson wish to attract the readers' attention to the welfare of ordinary underprivileged dogs and cats that, unlike the prized purebred pets, often end up on the streets abandoned, sick and starving.

Since the main aim of animal autobiographies was didactic, their authors did not strive to achieve artistic originality, relying instead on an episodic plot and stock characters. Respectable people who are kind to animals and concerned with their welfare are presented as role models, while cruel villains are condemned by the public opinion and punished for their misdeeds. The main villain in *Beautiful Joe* is milkman Jenkins who mutilated Joe, starved the dog's mother to death and killed all the other puppies. Jenkins is neglectful and cruel both towards his own family and farm animals. His house is shabby, his children thin and ragged, his cows hungry and dirty. Jenkins's indifference towards animals also indicates his lack of moral principles in dealings with other people. Neither he nor his wife are concerned with the quality of milk they sell or any standards of hygiene. When the town authorities start in-

vestigating the appalling conditions on the farm and discover Jenkins cheats on his customers, he loses his business and eventually ends up in jail. In contrast to Jenkins, the Morrises, especially their adolescent daughter Laura, are paragons of virtue. Mr. and Mrs. Morris have four children who keep hens and rabbits. The family also owns numerous pets: canaries, three dogs, a cat, and a parrot. All these animals are properly fed and nursed when sick. For Joe, who has never been kindly treated, their middle-class home is a real haven, a place where humans and animals love and respect each other.

Pet-keeping in *Beautiful Joe* and *Pussy Meow* is not just a hobby, it is a socially meaningful practice which plays a significant role in children's proper socialization and education. Though the beginnings of pet-keeping can be traced back to prehistoric times, until the late eighteenth century it was criticized rather than praised in the Western world; love for dogs or cats being treated as a personal indulgence or weakness of character. Social perception of pet-keeping changed in the nineteenth century because domestic animals came to be seen as integral part of a middle class Victorian family with its strictly defined gender roles and underlying idea of domesticity. A middle-class family home presided over by self-sacrificing wife and mother, an "angel in the house," was seen as a fundamentally feminine space where kindness and benevolence ruled. As Catherine Grier observes,

> The domestic ethic of kindness evolved from ideas that defined middle-class, or 'Victorian,' culture in America: Gentility, liberal evangelical Protestant religion, and domesticity. Each idea helped to define the other two, and all converged in promoting self-cultivation and self-control in individuals, and in their articulation of such principles as social hierarchy and progress. (131)

It was proper stewardship of domestic animals that indicated that the family was functioning as it should, whereas any abusive treatment of them pointed to the lack of moral principles in its members, either children or parents. Therefore, it was essential, as the nineteenth-century pedagogues believed, to eradicate cruelty towards animals and, ideally, at a young age because "all the larger cruelties of mankind have their origins in the cruelties of infancy and youth" (qtd. in Grier 140). Pet-keeping was seen by educational authorities and parents as a school of character, a practical daily exercise in "the domestic ethic of kindness," producing such desirable qualities in children as empathy and responsibility. Mrs. Morris in *Beautiful Joe* explains its benefits to a neighbor: "in caring for these dumb creatures [my boys] have become unselfish and thoughtful. They would rather go to school without their own breakfast than have the inmates of the stable go hungry. They are getting a heart education, added to the intellectual education of their schools" (Saunders 39). A similar opinion is also expressed by the owner of Pussy Meow, who thinks that a child should be brought up in "a home with lawn and

garden, with room for pets and tools and playthings, affording his ample opportunity to give wholesome expression to his feelings. It is the life lived day by day in the home that moulds and fashions a child's character, rather than any training he receives in school" (Patteson 89). Both women extol the benefits of pet-keeping in conversations with their neighbors and advocate its numerous advantages.

Though pet-keeping was considered beneficial for children of any sex, it was believed that boys and girls profited from it differently. The nineteenth-century educational discourse presented the boys as energetic and prone to violence, while the girls, gentle and sympathetic by nature, were often expected to teach the boys kindness to animals (Grier 146–147). What the children learned from taking care of pets was also determined by their gender roles. Thomas Wentworth Higginson explained to the readers of *Harper's Bazaar* that "those petted dogs we see carried in the arms of young girls in fashionable equipages are rarely a substitute for the natural object of such emotion [i.e. a child], they are rather a preparation or intermediate possession that precedes it; something that is more than a doll and less than a human child" (qtd. in Mason 14). The boys, in turn, learned how to be responsible, conscientious, self-disciplined and even entrepreneurial. Mrs. Morris was convinced that thanks to their rabbits and hens her sons had become "men of business," no longer lingering about street corners with other boys but "always hammering at boxes and partitions out there in the stable, or cleaning up, and if they are sent out on an errand they do it and come right home" (Saunders 39). Thus, pet-keeping prepared both girls and boys for their future social roles, the former destined to become loving, dedicated mothers, the latter to fulfill the role of responsible fathers.

Animal family life resembled closely human family relations and animal parents, just like human ones, instructed and educated their children. This motif is employed, for example, in Mark Twain's "A Dog's Tale" (1903). The narrator of the story is a dog called Aileen Mavourneen, who early in the story recollects her mother's lessons:

> She had a kind heart and gentle ways, and never harbored resentments for injuries done her, but put them easily out of her mind and forgot them; and she taught her children her kindly way, and from her we learned also to be brave and prompt in time of danger, and not to run away, but face the peril that threatened friend or stranger, and help him the best we could without stopping to think what the cost might be to us. (51)

Aileen is owned by the Greys, a prosperous middle-class family with two small daughters. One day, true to her mother's teachings, she saves a baby from the fire. Unfortunately, alarmed Mr. Gray misjudges the whole situation and is convinced that the dog wants to harm rather than save the child. He hits Aileen with a cane, crippling her leg. Terrified, Aileen escapes to the attic and for a few days refuses to leave a dark hiding place in spite of hunger and thirst. She is finally found by Mrs. Gray and her older daughter, who cannot praise her enough for the sagacity and courage.

However, Aileen's happy life of a cherished pet ends unexpectedly when, during Mrs. Gray and children's holiday absence she and her puppy—Robin—happen to attract, again, Mr. Gray's attention. Mr. Gray is an amateur scholar interested in optics, who wishes to test "whether a certain injury to the brain would produce blindness or not" (61). Eager to check this hypothesis he experiments on the puppy who goes blind and eventually dies in pain. Unmoved, Mr. Grey orders the servant to bury the dog in the garden. "When the footman had finished and covered little Robin up, he patted my head, and there were tears in his eyes, and he said; "Poor little doggie, you saved his child!" (63). Aileen who does not understand what has really happened waits patiently, expecting the buried puppy "to grow" out of the ground. When she finally realizes her only baby is dead, she refuses to eat and waits for death.

In his interpretation of "A Dog's Tale," Gay S. Herzberg pointed out parallels between the fate of a family dog and a family slave (20). Aileen is taught by her mother how to be a loyal, devoted servant, she leaves her mother never to see her again, in the new house she is loved by the children but badly treated by the master. Such reading is certainly legitimate, given Twain's anti-slavery views, yet Herzberg's approach disregards a primary motivation behind writing this story. Apparently, Twain wrote the tale as a protest against vivisection, at the bequest of his daughter Jean, who was an avid supporter of the anti-vivisection movement (Messent 194). In 1904 "A Dog's Tale" was printed by *The National Anti-Vivisectionist Society* in Britain in a form of pamphlet and given out on the streets of London (Messent 256).

Yet, apart from advocating the right cause in an unashamedly sentimental way—quite surprisingly for the author who was a declared enemy of kitsch sentimentality—Twain also questions in the story Victorian belief in the power of ethic of kindness. The main conflict in "A Dog's Tale" is between heart and mind, home and laboratory, or, to put it differently, between the private realm of women and the public realm of men. Mrs. Gray and her daughter treat the dog affectionately and are sincerely thankful to her for saving the baby. Yet, the father of the family rejects such sentiments in the name of science, progress and "suffering humanity" (62). The dog for him is not a partner in the net of moral obligations, but merely a mean creature lacking in reason and language, which can be, therefore, sacrificed without any qualms. As a prosperous, respectable citizen, husband and father, Mr. Grey seems to embody the middle-class norms of propriety, and yet, apparently, he has not internalized childhood lessons on empathy towards animals. In Mr. Grey, Twain condemns both scientists indifferent to animal suffering as well as those who break the unwritten contract with a helpless pet totally dependent on human stewardship.

The typical sentimental animal autobiography ends happily—after many trials and tribulations the main protagonist either returns to its old home and master or finds a new one. Though both Beautiful Joe and Pussy Meow have experienced pain,

hunger and human cruelty, at the end of their lives they find themselves happy. Twain in "A Dog's Tale" departs from such a conventional happy ending. The villain goes unpunished and the good dog is about to die. Such a radical modification of the generic conventions in the story serves a purpose—victimization of Aileen and her puppy is to make the readers more indignant about those who, like Mr. Gray, treat animals as animated objects, denying them the ability to feel and suffer.

Another early twentieth-century story to show the darker side of pet-keeping (although in a much more light-hearted manner) focuses on a different set of problems. For a comic purpose, O'Henry's "Memoirs of the Yellow Dog" parodies many generic conventions of animal autobiography. To begin with, his animal narrator is a proverbial "yellow dog", neither beautiful nor particularly noble, and there is nothing special in his life story.[4] As a puppy he is bought by a fat lady to become her pet. As the story unfolds, he spends his days "in a cheap New York flat, sleeping in a corner on an old sateen underskirt," bored, frustrated and utterly miserable (O'Henry 55). "I led a dog's life in that flat," the narrator confesses to the reader (56), but the story ironically redefines the meaning of that popular expression.

The yellow dog—or Lovey—for this is the name given to him by the lady (the name he is ashamed of) is not unhappy because of neglect or abuse. Just the opposite, his problem is not the lack of tender feelings but rather excessive love manifested by constant petting, kissing and baby talk. Such treatment, the narrator feels, is stupefying and demeaning to a respectable dog. After all, the mutt should not spend his life as a sweet, cuddly lap-dog: "I slept sometimes and had pipe dreams about being out chasing cats into basements and growling at old ladies with black mittens, as a dog was intended to do. Then she would pounce upon me with a lot of that drivelling poodle palaver and kiss me on the nose—but what could I do?" (56). In the typical sentimental animal autobiography, the relationship between a good master and his favorite pet is based on mutual love and respect. Beautiful Joe admires Laura for her tender heart and willingness to help others while she, in turn, values his attachment and devotion to her. This is not the case in "Memoirs of the Yellow Dog" since Lovey sincerely dislikes his mistress and her ways, repeatedly referring to her as "the fat woman" and never even revealing her proper name. He feels much more sympathy for a fellow victim i.e. his mistress's husband, who is as much oppressed as the dog and functions in the story as Lovey's alter ego.

Similarly to Twain, O'Henry examines pet-keeping to probe Victorian ideals of domesticity. While the former exposed them as weak and ineffective, the latter pres-

4 At the turn of the century this American slang expression denoted a despised, worthless individual, a cringing coward, ready to serve anyone who has more power. See "Yellow Dog" in *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York, 1989).

ents them as false and oppressive for the male characters. Lovey's quarrelsome and fat owner is a caricature of the subtle, self-sacrificing "angel in the house." She wants to appear well-mannered and refined but in reality she is uncultivated, selfish, and idle. Her homemaking and housekeeping skills leave much to be desired. While the husband is at work the wife spends most of her days reading magazines and spying on neighbors. Even though her New York flat pretends to middle-class respectability it is furnished with "the regular things—1903 antique upholstered parlour set, oil chromo of geishas in a Harlem tea house, rubber plant and husband" (O'Henry 56). This ironic description reveals both the wife's lack of originality and the husband's diminished authority at home. Placed by the dog-narrator at the end of the list, henpecked Benedick does not function as the head of the family but rather as his wife's servant: he patiently listens to her tirades, washes the dishes and walks the dog. Indeed, in this pretentious, excessively feminine space, both the dog and the husband feel emasculated, forced to act on the woman's whims and lead unexciting lives. Their male self-esteem and joy of life is in danger and so they urgently need to be saved.

As already mentioned, dogs in animal autobiographies frequently act as guardians of their humans: Beautiful Joe wakes up the inhabitants as the burglar breaks into the house, Aileen saves the baby from the fire. In "Memoirs of a Yellow Dog" this popular motif is used with a twist. Lovey saves the husband (as well as himself) not from death but rather from a boring life by… leading the man to the bar where, after a few drinks, Benedick does not only realize the utter misery of their existence but also comes up with a plan for a new life. "Me and my doggie, we are bound for the Rocky Mountains"—he proudly declares to a stranger (59). The symbolic significance of this decision, which evokes Huck Finn's famous declaration "to light out for the territory" is clear to any American reader. The civilized East, dominated by women, is not a place for real men who need danger, challenge and adventure. However, the tale's open ending leaves the reader unsure whether the man and his dog—now called Pete—will ever get to the American West. By the end of the story they have only reached Jersey. It is quite possible the whole expedition will end as soon as Benedick gets sober and decides to head back home.

The above cursory analysis of the-turn-of-the-century animal autobiographies manifests that their authors gave voice to animals to take a stand on two interconnected issues: pet keeping and protection of animals against cruelty. By presenting dogs and cats as sentient, intelligent and articulate such works aimed to evoke the young readers' interest in animals' inner lives and stress their emotional kinship with humans. One of the aims of early animal welfare activists was to communicate—through images, pamphlets, stories and articles—"the idea of animal agency and voice" (Cronin 209). Animal autobiographies were motivated by a similar impulse since a story written by a "talking animal" possesses certain "disruptive potential" that can make readers question the idea of animal inferiority. Moreover, domestic animals were represented

as "civilized creatures," which meant that they lived according to the same system of values the middle-class parents wished to inculcate in their children. Family dogs and cats were well-behaved, obedient and loyal. They loved their masters and, in return, were valued by them for good character and utility. In these works kindness shown to the weak, abused or maltreated animals indicated proper moral development. The formation of such worthy citizens started early in childhood and it was believed that pet keeping can be of great help to parents, creating an opportunity to enroll in "the school of heart".

In Victorian culture, domestic "civilized creatures" were closely associated with women and with such feminine attributes as sensitivity, gentleness, humility and service to others. However, in the first decades of the twentieth century the perception of domestic animals started to change, and it was their latent wildness rather than ability to lead civilized existence that began to be admired (Mason 159). At the same time, shift in the cultural perception of masculinity influenced the way some middle-class men wished to assert their identity: "These Americans found a source of powerful manhood in a primal, untamed, 'masculinity,' the opposite of civilized manliness'" (Bederman 74). An ideal Victorian gentleman was cultivated and restrained, yet his self-control now came to be seen as repression of natural masculinity manifested in powerful, primitive instincts.

In 1903 Jack London published one of the most popular dog books ever written—*Call of the Wild*.[5] Even though *Beautiful Joe* came out just a few years earlier, fictional dogs created by Saunders and London belonged to two different worlds and their life trajectories reflected a fundamental difference in the attitude to civilization. Joe is a proper Victorian pet, never aggressive or violent, pleased with his civilized existence. London's Buck also begins his life as a pet on a Californian ranch but then, in Alaska, he rediscovers his primitive instincts and eventually turns into a wild wolf. Thus, these two contemporary dog books point to the existence of two competing trends in the American way of looking at wilderness and civilization. Undoubtedly, their underlying ideology was different and it can be assumed they were not addressed to the same audience. Sentimental, didactic stories like *Black Beauty* and *Beautiful Joe* were originally written to promote ethics of kindness among adults and children alike. In the twentieth century they came to be treated as "part of the vast corpus of children's

5 *Call of the Wild* first appeared serially in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1903 and was later on published as a book by the Macmillan Company. According to Johnson "within the first forty-three years of its publication, 6 million copies were sold in the United States alone" (xii). Its worldwide success has been also phenomenal. So far, *Call of the Wild* has been translated into more than ninety foreign languages. It went through more printings in France and Germany than in the United States, and it was "one of the most popular American books read in China and Japan, and… the most widely read American book in Russia" (Durst Johnson xii).

stories" and continued to be read by successive generations of younger readers (Grier 133).[6] Even though Jack London's naturalistic dog stories also showed cruelty towards animals they were not created to generate support for animal protection or promote the ideas of humane education. London's works alongside other contemporary texts and images which "endorsed qualities being constructed at that time as specifically masculine" were addressed mainly to boys and men (Mason 161). Cruelty presented in these works was a part of life in the wild, these dogs which gave up "the law of love and fellowship" for the sake of "the law of club and fang" proved their survival skills and prospered while the gentle and the weak perished (London 21). In the early twentieth century the American cultural pendulum moved again to the side of the natural and the wild. The symbolic identification of wild animals with such quintessential American values and attributes as (male) power, freedom, and self-reliance, led to the marginalization of domestic animals and their subsequent banishment to the niche of children's books and Disney cartoons.

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6 The author of *Pets in America* recollects that as a child in the 1960s she read Classics Comics edition of *Black Beauty* as well as borrowed old copies of *Beautiful Joe* from her grandparents' family library (Grier 133).

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