

## *Leonardo Da Vinci's Masterpiece*

If there are very few humans whom we can trust in distinguishing true masterpieces from other great works of art, Leonardo Da Vinci is certainly one of them. Leonardo combined the mind of a brilliant scholar with the mind of visionary artist and is rightly considered one of the greatest geniuses of humankind. Although Leonardo left us a great number of true masterpieces, we do not know many phenomena or works of art Leonardo appreciated himself as “masterpieces.” We know two instances when Leonardo directly acknowledged something to be a true masterpiece. The first case is the anatomy of human foot: “Human foot is a masterpiece of engineering” declared da Vinci. Any contemporary scholar, biologist or engineer would agree with these words. In the second case Leonardo used his highest praise for a cat: “Little feline is a masterpiece.”

Leonardo was by no means the only scholar or artist who was fascinated by cats. Hundreds or even thousands of writers, poets, musicians, scholars, and politicians left us quotes that capture the human fascination with cats. To fill the love and reverence towards cats that we humans have, it is best to hear the words of these scholars, writers, poets and artists about cats.

## HUMANS ON CATS

I want to start with possibly the most disputed quote about cats: "Time spent with cats is never wasted." These words are attributed to three different authors: father of psychoanalyses, Austrian Sigmund Freud, Sidonie Gabrielle Colette, a French writer and author of *Gigi*, better known as Colette, and American poet and writer Eleanore Marie Sarton, better known as May Sarton. Establishing authorship should not be so difficult if the writings of these authors are carefully checked, but the authorship of Freud seems questionable – Freud was a more of a dog person. Some readers may know Freud's famous words about dogs: "Dogs love their friends and bite their enemies, quite unlike people, who are incapable of pure love and always have to mix love and hate in their object relations." Although one of the greatest thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and discoverer of the human unconscious mind, Freud largely failed to acknowledge the beauty of the human unconscious world, and ascribed to it a role of a depository of tabooed thoughts and traumatic memories. Symptomatically, Freud disliked and distrusted music, as he could not understand where its mysterious emotional power came from. It seems to me more likely that the mysterious character of cats would have made him suspicious the same way music did.

Hector Hugh Munro, a British writer in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century better known as Saki, could not hide his fascination with cats. Here are three quotes from him: "The animal which the Egyptians worshipped as divine, which the Romans venerated as a symbol of liberty... has displayed to all ages two closely blended characteristics courage and self-respect." Saki again: "Confront a child, a puppy, and a kitten with a sudden danger; the child will turn instinctively for assistance, the puppy will grovel in abject submission, the kitten will brace its tiny body for a frantic resistance." And the more from Saki: "The cat of the slums and alleys, starved, outcast, harried, ... still displays the self-reliant watchfulness which man has never taught it to lay aside." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, one of the brilliant minds of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, philosopher and composer, had a somewhat similar view of cats: "Watch a cat when it enters a room for the first time. It searches and smells about, it is not quiet for a moment, it trusts nothing until it has examined and made acquaintance with everything." Colette is also the author of another quote that cat lovers would agree with it: "There are no ordinary cats."

Rod McKuen, American poet and songwriter wrote with respect: "Cats have it all - admiration, an endless sleep, and company only when they want it." Mark Twain, a certified cat-lover, could not express his love for cats enough: "I simply can't resist a cat, particularly a purring one. They are the cleanest, most cunning, and most intelligent things I know, outside of the girl you love, of course." Eric Gurney, 20<sup>th</sup> century Canadian-American cartoonist and illustrator, drew on another cat quality: "The really great thing about cats is their endless variety. One can pick a cat to fit almost any kind of decor, colour scheme, income, personality, mood. But under the fur, whatever colour it may be, there still lies, essentially unchanged, one of the world's free souls."

Barbara L. Diamond is particularly fascinated by cat purring: "If there were to be a universal sound depicting peace, I would surely vote for the purr." Lenny Rubenstein sees purring as a universal language to human heart: "Even if you have just destroyed a Ming Vase, purr. Usually all will be forgiven." And what about cat's beauty?" Cats never strike a pose that isn't photogenic" (Lillian Jackson Braun); "Like a graceful vase, a cat, even when motionless, seems to flow" (George F. Will); "A cat pours his body on the floor like water" (William Lyon Phelps). Henry David Thoreau was fascinated with the flexibility of cats: "A kitten is so flexible that she is almost double; the hind parts are equivalent to another kitten with which the forepart plays. She does not discover that her tail belongs to her until you tread on it". There is an evolutionary wisdom about the cat family in the words of Andrew Lang, Scottish poet and anthropologist: "Of all animals, he alone attains to the Contemplative Life." Ernest Menaul goes onto spiritual and emotional overtones: "The cat has too much spirit to have no heart." And here is a philosophical question from Robert Stearns: "Since each of us is blessed with only one life, why not live it with a cat?"

Through these many saying it is apparent that humans consider cats as equals in many different ways, and believe that we should treat cats the same way we would want to be treated. Mark Twain: "If you shamefully misuse a cat once she will always maintain a dignified reserve toward you afterward - you will never get her full confidence again." Probably one of the most popular cat sayings belongs to Ellen Perry Berkeley, former senior editor at *The Architectural Forum* in New York City: "As every cat owner knows, nobody owns a cat." Kinky Friedman, American singer, writer and politician put this into a humorous form: "I rarely meddled in the cat's personal affairs and she rarely meddled in mine. Neither of us was foolish enough to attribute human emotions to our pets." Montaigne, 16<sup>th</sup> century French writer and politician and one of the most influential writers, who influenced a cohort of writers from William Shakespeare to Isaac Asimov, wrote: "When I play with my cat, who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she to me?" Even if

we are annoyed or angry, we need to remember to treat cats with dignity. Charlotte Gray, Canadian historian and author, once said: "After scolding one's cat one looks into its face and is seized by the ugly suspicion that it understood every word - and has filed it for reference." Peter Gray's words have a feel of fine equality: "One must love a cat on its own terms." Or another one from Paul Gray: "Cats were put into the world to disprove the dogma that all things were created to serve man." Theophile Gautier, 19<sup>th</sup> century French dramatist, widely esteemed by writers as diverse as Balzac and Baudelaire to Proust and Oscar Wilde, once said: "If you are worthy of its affection, a cat will be your friend, but never your slave." Some even complain we treat cats better than each other. For example, Martin Buxbaum, American author remarked: "If we treated everyone we meet with the same affection we bestow upon our favourite cat, they, too, would purr." I think many would agree - I myself cannot even dream that my wife would treat me with the same adulation as she treats our kitten Gigi. Lexie Saige once said: "If I tried to tell you how much I love my cats, you wouldn't believe me - unless your heart is also meow-shaped and covered in stray fur". True. And of course, cat lovers sometimes praise each other. Susan Easterly, author of the book "Your Older Cat," declared: "People who love cats have some of the biggest hearts around."

It is quite probably that humans, being noisy and smelly aposematic primates that we are, sometimes annoy cats, who are famous for their love of cleanliness, calm and serenity. Some suggest that cats have already learned how to deal with noisy humans. Stephen Baker, British animal behaviourist and humourist, is probably right in his assertion: "Cats' hearing apparatus is built to allow the human voice to easily go in one ear and out the other." Here is an observation on cat intellect and pride from Patricia Hitchcock, British/American actress: "If your cat falls out of a tree, go indoors to laugh." Sir Compton MacKenzie, Scottish author and co-founder of the Scottish National Party, an outspoken enemy of the domestication of both animals and nations, asked a question in amazement: "The only mystery about the cat is why it ever decided to become a domesticated animal."

Theophile Gautier, who was already mentioned, put cats in the rank of philosophical creatures. "It is difficult to obtain the friendship of a cat. It is a philosophical animal...one that does not place its affections thoughtlessly." Dilys Laing, American writer, poet and artist, brought this idea even further: "I put down my book, *The Meaning of Zen*, and see the cat smiling into her fur as she delicately combs it with her rough pink tongue. "Cat, I would lend you this book to study but it appears you have already read it." She looks up and gives me her full gaze. "Don't be ridiculous," she purrs, "I wrote it."

The human fascination with cats does not stop at admitting them as equals – there are also sayings claiming that cats are superior to humans. Of course, many of them include a healthy dose of humor, but as the popular saying goes “there’s a grain of truth in every joke.”

Fernand Mery was one of the greatest advocates of animal rights, one of those who gradually started the “Epoch of Responsible Civilization” from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1953 he founded the association “Friends of the beasts” and his fight led to an important law passed in 1963 against people mistreating animals. In 1970 he found the “National Council for Animal Protection,” affecting regulations on the hunting of fur animals as well as the treatment of animals destined for slaughter. In 1974 he published a declaration, *Twelve duties of man towards animals*, which collected two million signatures and was the source of the Universal Declaration of Animal Rights by UNESCO in 1978. Fernand Mery asked quite a serious question: “With the qualities of cleanliness, affection, patience, dignity, and courage that cats have, how many of us, I ask you, would be capable of becoming cats?” Mark Twain, answered this question with a characteristic humor: “If man could be crossed with a cat, it would improve the man, but it would deteriorate the cat.” Jerome K. Jerome, English writer and humorist, continued in the same milieu: “A cat's got her own opinion of human beings. She don't say much, but you can tell enough to make you anxious not to hear the whole of it.” Ernest Hemingway, Nobel Prize winning writer, who had quite contradictory views on some animal-related issues, apparently loved cats very much for his own reasons: “A cat has absolute honesty, human beings, for one reason or another, may hide their feelings but a cat does not.” Following Hemingway’s testament, cats still live and roam freely in his house-museum in Key West, Florida. There are approximately sixty cats residing there, served by a full time vet.

One of the greatest politicians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Winston Churchill, famously declared: “I am fond of pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down. Pigs treat us as equals.” Despite his self-proclaimed love towards pigs, Churchill actually adored cats so much that he was sending his staff members to find his cat before he would start eating dinner. Also, very much like in the case of Hemingway, cats still freely roam the house-museum of the great politician. The reader can visit Churchill’s cat’s website to see how the newest resident ginger cat, Jock IV, is doing – the place is quite popular according to remarks left on the website.

An article in the “Daily Mail” from February 21, 2013 tells us that the love for cats that characterized the most famous British Premier Minister continues in the current UK government. The author of the article, Becky

Evans, wrote about the two 'high-ranking' cats that belong to the current Prime Minister and the current Chancellor of the Exchequer Great Britain. Apparently Larry, Prime Minister David Cameron's pet cat, and Freya, Chancellor Osborne's pet cat, found themselves upset when they found one of their favourite prowling routes (leading to the Office of Foreign Affairs) blocked by a plastic shield. Apparently complaints were lodged by some staff members with allergies to cats, and a shield was installed to stop the cats from entering the building. However, a last minute intervention from a senior political figure seemed to have given the cats a reprieve. Foreign Affairs Secretary William Hague asked for the cat-proof barrier be taken down. ...A Foreign Affairs Office spokesman said: "Freya and Larry visit the Foreign Office a lot and they seem to like the building. 'The vast majority of our staff enjoy seeing them. Some including those allergic to cats have raised concerns. 'Measures were taken to address these concerns. Whether these measures were appropriate to the concerns is under active review.'" The Foreign Secretary asked that the cat proof barrier be removed immediately.

Larry was brought in to the corridors of power in February 2011 to deal with the rodent problem in Downing Street. However, it took him 18 months to record his first confirmed kill and he was subject to accusations of 'chillaxing' after pictures emerged of him lying in Downing Street and being petted by politicians and police officers. There was even an amusing story of the Prime Minister trying to gain Larry's attention, who was sleeping in a nearby armchair, when a brave mouse had appeared in the office of the PM. The response was quite indicative - Larry changed his position on the chair and continued to sleep, indicating to the PM that if he had a problem with the mice he could try to chase them himself. As we can also remember from Churchill, cats look down on even the most powerful of humans...What can we say? Even if Larry did not help with rodents, he surely helped to improve the public image of British politicians and police officers. On his visit to the British PM, President Obama surely was flattered Larry liked him and allowed a pet (see the photo of Larry with USA President Obama and UK PM Cameron).

Through many sayings and sentiments it is apparent that the master-pet relationship maybe reversed in its very essence when that pet is a cat. Bill Dana, American comedian, actor and screenwriter remarked joyfully "I had been told that the training procedure with cats was difficult. It's not. Mine had me trained in two days." Paul Gray, prolific author of cat-related sayings, put a gentle warning to cat-owners "Cats are kindly masters, just so long as you remember your place." James K. Olson, D.V.M., cat surgeon, is optimistic: "Usually, if you are very lucky, the cat will treat you as an equal." Cleveland Amory, American author and influential animal rights activist, gives humans

more hope: "As anyone who has ever been around a cat for any length of time well knows cats have enormous patience with the limitations of human kind." Karen Brademeyer, widely known for his quotes on cats, has probably summed up our attitude towards cats with this one: "Who among us hasn't envied a cat's ability to ignore the cares of daily life and to relax completely?" An anonymous author noticed something cat lovers could have guessed themselves: "It's really the cat's house – we just pay the mortgage."

Here is some good advice from Susan Howatch, an English author, to all those who want to gain a cat's appreciation: "I have noticed that what cats most appreciate in a human being is not the ability to produce food which they take for granted – but his or her entertainment value." Another advice: if your girlfriend loves her cat, remember never to make any bad remarks towards the cat, or god forbid try to get rid of it. Here are two sad lessons from an anonymous cat-loving author: "My husband said it was him or the cat... I miss him sometimes." And a second one: "I got rid of my husband. The cat was allergic."

Cats have been particularly popular with authors and poets, and for different reasons. Edgar Allan Poe, American writer, inventor and the re-inventor of two of the most popular contemporary writing genres, detective fiction and science fiction, wrote with envy about his desire to learn from cats: "I wish I could write as mysterious as a cat." Here are the words of Hippolyte Taine, the 19<sup>th</sup> century French historian who profoundly influenced great French Literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: "I have studied many philosophers and many cats. The wisdom of cats is infinitely superior." There are authors who try to find positive points for humans when compared to cats. For example, Stephen Jay Gould, evolutionary biologist and one of the most influential and popular science book writers, once said: "My cat may manipulate me psychologically, but he'll never type or play the piano." – 1 point for humans. Dan Greenburg, American author and humourist, noted a well-known danger for many writers: "Cats are dangerous companions for writers because cat watching is a near-perfect method of writing avoidance." I know this for myself, and even if a cat is not sitting next to me I will often go to search for them myself.

Barbara Holland, an American author, remarked: "A cat-less writer is almost inconceivable. It's a perverse taste, really, since it would be easier to write with a herd of buffalo in the room than even one cat; they make nests in the notes and bite the end of the pen and walk on the typewriter keys." Robertson Davies, one of the most loved Canadian novelists, expressed well the mutual enjoyment that authors and cats bring to each other "Authors like cats because they are such quiet, lovable, wise creatures, and cats like authors

for the same reasons." Aldous Huxley, the 20<sup>th</sup> century prominent English writer and author of "The Brave New World", gave advice to aspiring authors: "If you want to be a psychological novelist & write about human beings, the best thing you can do is to keep a pair of cats." Charles Dickens, one of the most popular writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, remarked: "What greater gift than the love of a cat?"

The therapeutic qualities of cats have been noted long before contemporary scholars did scholarly studies on this topic. Anonymous author expressed this beautifully: "A loving cat can mend a wounded heart." Here is some more anonymous wisdom with a solid background: "Cats are magical... the more you pet them the longer you both live." Stuart McMillan's words are more poetic, but get the message across: "A meow massages the heart." Here is an interesting suggestion for pharmaceutical companies from Alexis F. Hope: "If purring could be encapsulated, it'd be the most powerful anti-depressant on the pharmaceutical market." Do not believe? Listen to Jane Pauley "You can't look at a sleeping cat and be tense." Or listen to these words: "There are few things in life more heart-warming than to be welcomed by a cat" (Tay Homoff). I do not think there will be many cat-haters reading this book, but if you have even a slight suspicion that cats are selfish animals without much feelings and sympathy, listen to Florence Nightingale, celebrated English founder of modern nursing, who definitely knew what sympathy was about: "Cats possessed more feeling and sympathy than people."

If you still do not believe in cats' magic therapeutic qualities, then listen to the dry language of scientific research. A recent scholarly study confirmed what cat lovers knew for ages, that cats are wonderful for human health (Qureshi et al., 2009). The study concludes in very simple, if a bit dry, medical jargon: "A decreased risk for death due to MI and all cardiovascular diseases (including stroke) was observed among persons with cats. Acquisition of cats as domestic pets may represent a novel strategy for reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases in high-risk individuals" (Qureshi et al., 2009). In plain English, if you have any problems with your heart or blood pressure, just adopt a kitten.

Albert Schweitzer, influential doctor and humanitarian, made a very interesting proposition that contemporary science is gradually coming to acknowledge: "There are two means of refuge from the misery of life - music and cats." Establishing of the therapeutic power of music was one of the major developments during the last several decades, but the establishment of the full potential of "feline therapy" is still only in its infancy.



Cats are sexy – at least according to Spanish actor Antonio Banderas, who definitely knows what this means: "If you call a cat, he may not come. Which doesn't happen with dogs. They're different types of animals. Cats are very sexy I think too in the way they move." It is no surprise that beautiful women are often compared to cats. Sometimes women literally dream themselves to be cats. Here are the words of Bridget Bardot, one of the most influential actresses and beauty icons of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: "I really am a cat transformed into a woman... I purr. I scratch. And sometimes I bite."

Cats survive amazing things: Florida Senator Ken Myer's cat Andy fell from the 16<sup>th</sup> floor and survived. In 1999, a cat survived 80 days being trapped in a wrecked building after an earthquake in Taiwan. A kitten survived a transatlantic flight from China to USA with sub-zero temperatures, in a box of bicycle parts, for over two months until it was found in USA. Jules Verne, brilliant expert of science fiction, would not be surprised by these facts: "I believe cats to be spirits come to earth. A cat, I am sure, could walk on a cloud without coming through."

For Jean Cocteau, one of the most influential artists and thinkers from France, cats were a spiritual symbol of home: "I love cats because I enjoy my home; and little by little, they become its visible soul." Freddie Mercury would call to London when on tour to talk to his cats, and he dedicated Queen's last album, *Innuendo*, to his cats and to all cat lovers.

Here are a few traditional sayings about cats and cat lovers. The first is a Colonial American Proverb: "You will always be lucky if you know how to make friends with strange cats". I like very much the Celtic saying which acknowledges the deep religious feelings that our ancestors most likely had for cats: "The Mind of God may be glimpsed in the eyes of a cat."

Although the bible does not mention cats, and cats were persecuted for centuries, in contemporary popular image cats belong to the imagery of heaven. It is difficult to disagree with these words from an anonymous author: "Kittens are angels with whiskers." Here is another anonymous saying: "No heaven will not ever Heaven be unless my cats are there to welcome me." Robert A. Heinlein, one of the most influential science fiction writers, had this piece of advice for those who are concerned of their status after their death: "How we behave toward cats here below determines our status in heaven." Abraham Lincoln, one of the most loved American Presidents, declared quite sternly: "I care not for a man's religion whose dog and cat are not the better for it."

Possibly the most interesting part of these cat quotes are those which suggest that even a cat's negative characteristics are seen in a positive light. Here is a good example from Missy Dizick: "Some people say that cats are sneaky, evil, and cruel. True, and they have many other fine qualities as well". Or listen to Fernand Mery again: "Are cats lazy? Well, more power to them if they are. Which one of us has not entertained the dream of doing just as he likes, when and how he likes, and as much as he likes?" P.J. O'Rourke, American writer, solved the question of why cats became the favourite pet for Americans: "It is easy to understand why the cat has eclipsed the dog as modern America's favourite pet. People like pets to possess the same qualities they do. Cats are irresponsible and recognize no authority, yet are completely dependent on others for their material needs. Cats cannot be made to do anything useful. Cats are mean for the fun of it. In fact, cats possess so many of the same qualities as some people that it is often hard to tell the people and the cats apart."

And one final quote - my favourite saying about cats belongs to Darwin. Pity, this is not the great Charles Darwin, my lifelong hero and role model, but his grandfather Erasmus Darwin, a brilliant free-thinker, inventor and encyclopaedist. Erasmus Darwin's saying does not constitute only a few beautiful words expressing the human awe for cats, but it also contains a great deal of truth about the development of higher moral and aesthetic qualities among humans during our evolution. So here is the quote: "To respect the cat is the beginning of the aesthetic sense." I love it.

## CATS AND DOGS

Dogs have been for a long time praised as "man's best friend" - and there is indeed great wisdom in these words. It is impossible to find any other domesticated animal which has served humans with such loyalty and love as dogs have. Being pack animals by nature, dogs are easily incorporated into a human family and accept humans as leaders. Although we both belong to social species, we are still quite different. For example, are humans a "dog's best friend" as well? Humans sometimes have complex relationships with those who treat them with too much adulation - taking for granted some of the most precious things in life is undoubtedly in our nature. Of course, those humans who can appreciate a dog's love and loyalty can be best friends to their dogs as well, but even the most loving dog owners will have to accept the sad fact that they will never be able to love their dogs as much as their dogs love them.

We humans are lucky if love visits us in our lifetime, but dogs are born with love in their blood. Yes, in critical situations some humans are ready to sacrifice their lives for others, but dogs behave as if they are in a battle trance every time they are together with their pack or master, ready to sacrifice their interest and life for others.

My favourite dog quote comes from an unknown dog lover: "My goal in life is to be as good of a person my dog already thinks I am." Cats are very different in this regard – in the best possible scenario cat will treat you as a friend, but without the adulation that dogs grant us.

The profound difference between dogs and cats comes from the well-known fact that dogs are social pack animals, and that cats are mostly solitary animals. Cats are often unhappy if an owner brings in a house another cat; however dogs are usually happy with new dogs arriving as soon as they work out their ranking. As a matter of fact, a single dog as a sole owner of a backyard is usually an unhappy one, dreaming of some company to share the space with. A lonely cat on the premises, in contrast, is a happy one, providing that there are humans who can provide entertainment whenever the cat wants it.

Let us have a look at a few more quotes about dogs. Of course, this book is dedicated to cats, not dogs, but in our contemporary life cats and dogs are so closely related to the human existence that a book about cats without at least some discussion about dogs would not do much justice to the topic of the book.

A large portion of quotes about dogs stress the enormity of affection, love and adulation that dogs have for their human masters. Possibly Josh Billings expressed this affection the best: "A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than you love yourself." Or listen to this: "The dog is the only animal that has seen his god" – there is no need for the anonymous author of this quote to specify who the God is in this context. Again, the same idea expressed with almost the same words, but this time by Holbrook Jackson, British journalist and publisher: "Man is a dog's idea of what God should be." Aldous Huxley, whom readers may remember from his advice to authors to keep a pair of cats in order to better understand human psychology, commented on the character of dogs as well: "To his dog, every man is Napoleon; hence the constant popularity of dogs." The great Konrad Lorenz had a deservedly high belief in dogs' moral integrity: "There is no faith which has never yet been broken, except that of a truly faithful dog." A dog's legendary devotion and selflessness is often taken for granted. Here are the words of Ramona C. Albert: "When a dog wants to hang out the "Do Not

Disturb" sign, as all of us do now and then, he is regarded as a traitor to his species". Dogs are often doing dirty jobs for their masters – the unknown author of this quote put this into a humorous light: "I loathe people who keep dogs. They are cowards who haven't got the guts to bite people themselves."

Dogs are sometimes portrayed adoring their masters even if there is probably not much to adore. Dave Barry, Pulitzer Prize winner American writer and humourist, captured the dog character very well: "You can say any foolish thing to a dog, and the dog will give you a look that says, 'Wow, you're right! I never would've thought of that!'" Or listen to Christopher Morley, American journalist and author: "No one appreciates the very special genius of your conversation as the dog does." Robertson Davies, the Canadian writer who expressed his opinion on why cats and authors like each other, had these words to say about dogs: "The dog is a yes-animal, very popular with people who can't afford to keep a yes-man."

Sometimes friendship with dogs can be viewed as a problem – here are words from Edward Abbey, American author and environmentalist: "When a man's best friend is his dog, that dog has a problem."

Dogs are also honoured in traditional sayings for their unrestricted love. Here is a Polish Proverb: "The greatest love is a mother's; then a dog's; then a sweetheart's."

In the words of American conservationist Roger Caras we can feel the predominantly one-sided love between humans and dogs: "Dogs have given us their absolute all. We are the centre of their universe. We are the focus of their love and faith and trust. They serve us in return for scraps. It is without a doubt the best deal man has ever made."

Well, if after reading these quotes about the religious adulation of dogs for their masters you are thinking dogs are non-discrete towards any human, you are mistaken. Listen to Will Rogers, American cowboy, columnist, and one of the most popular movie stars of the 1930<sup>th</sup>: "If you get to thinking you're a person of some influence, try ordering somebody else's dog around." (The difference between dogs and cats is that cat owners cannot even order around their own cats.)

Exactly as is the case with cats, dogs are also believed by some to be superior in a certain sense to humans. Mark Twain, whose love for cats was shown in several of his quotes, had an extremely positive view of dogs as well: "The dog is a gentleman; I hope to go to his heaven, not man's". Andy Rooney, American radio and TV personality, is probably correct in his assertion: "The average dog is a nicer person than the average person". Some

also think that dogs' mastery of communicating their emotion is also superior to human eloquence: "A dog can express more with his tail in seconds than his owner can express with his tongue in hours" (an unknown author).

Very much like cats, dogs are excellent therapeutic aids. Here is a quote from Ben Williams, British character actor: "There is no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face." Another quote highlighting the bond between humans and dogs: "If your dog is fat, you're not getting enough exercise" (an unknown author). According to Herman Melville, the author of "Moby-Dick" and one of the founders of American literature, dogs and horses can understand humans better than even the greatest thinkers: "No philosophers so thoroughly comprehend us as dogs and horses".

In the beautiful book "Dogs make us human", the authors Jeffrey Masson and Art Wolfe write: "As a former Freudian psychoanalyst, I have always claimed that just about any dog would make a better therapist than just about any human. You hope your therapist is not too interested in your status, your colour, your money, your social class, but you can be absolutely certain that your dog is not." By the way, although the book is dedicated to dogs, there is couple of words about cats: "I adore cats."

French writer Colette, famous among cat lovers for her sayings, was also a great fan of dogs: "Bulldogs are adorable, with faces like toads that have been sat on." Another certified cat-lover, Winston Churchill, made an evolutionarily potent observation: "The nose of the bulldog has been slanted backwards so that he can breathe without letting go."

There are plenty of differences between dogs and cats, and the attitude between dogs and cats is truly proverbial: "If you can look at a dog and not feel vicarious excitement and affection, you must be a cat" (an unknown author). Robert Brault found an interesting difference between cats and dogs: "A cat, after being scolded, goes about its business. A dog slinks off into a corner and pretends to be doing a serious self-reappraisal." Desmond Morris, English zoologist, sociobiologist and author of popular science books, made another interesting suggestion that may need some additional research: "Artists like cats; soldiers like dogs", but generalising all artists to be free spirits and all soldiers to be discipline enthusiast might prove incorrect – yes, as we will see later, most dictators hated cats, but there were also some artists among the cat-haters as well.

In regards to human-cat and human-dog relationships, there is not so much disagreement among different authors. Here are three more anonymous quotes: "Dogs have masters: cats have staff," and "Dogs believe

they are Human, Cats Know They are Gods!" or, "A dog says 'You pet me, you feed me, you shelter me, and you love me, you must be God.' A cat says, 'You pet me, you feed me, you shelter me, and you love me, I must be God.'" Hal Holbrook, American actor, put down a gentle warning for men and dogs: "Women and cats will do as they please, and men and dogs should relax and get used to the idea." Derek Bruce: "In order to keep a true perspective of one's importance, everyone should have a dog that will worship him and a cat that will ignore him."

George Mikes, a British author and comedian of Hungarian origin who dedicated a book to his cat, is the author of the two following quotes: "You can keep a dog; but it is the cat who keeps people, because cats find humans useful domestic animals," and "A dog will flatter you but you have to flatter the cat." Vicki Brown, 20<sup>th</sup> century English singer, expressed dogs' overtly positive attitude and cats' more realistic view of humans: "Dogs believe every stranger is a friend they haven't met yet. Cats wait for a proper invitation."

Mark Twain, who loved both cats and dogs, still admitted a big difference between them: "If animals could speak, the dog would be a blundering outspoken fellow; but the cat would have the rare grace of never saying a word too much." Doug Larson, American editor and columnist, also emphasized a cat's laconic communication: "The cat could very well be man's best friend but would never stoop to admitting it."

Some express their preference of cats quite directly. For example, here is Jean Burden, American poet and author. "A dog, I have always said, is prose; a cat is a poem". Ann Taylor, English poet and literary critic of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, compared their eating habits: "Dogs eat. Cats dine."

But we must admit that not all sayings favour cats. For example, the dog was definitely the preferred animal for those who composed the Bible - as W. E. Farbstain asserts: "The dog is mentioned in the Bible eighteen times - the cat not even once." Another example of the higher appreciation of dogs is Alfred North Whitehead, who stressed cats' selfish character in comparison with dogs': "If a dog jumps into your lap, it is because he is fond of you; but if a cat does the same thing, it is because your lap is warmer". I am sure that some cat lovers, reading this quote, would disagree. It seems to me that they both jump to your lap because they like you, but the only difference is that it is much more difficult to gain a cat's affection.

If we take humans, dogs and cats, and look at the attitudes in between the three of them, we can see an interesting "love triangle." Dogs love and deify humans. Humans also love dogs but their feelings towards cats are

somehow stronger - but what about cats, who do they love? Well, they definitely love some of their human caregivers, although they are usually not as expressive in showing their feelings as dogs are.

It is ironic that cat lovers adore cats virtually the same way as dogs adore their human masters. There are differences though – as a rule, cat lovers adore all cats, but the same cannot be said about dogs. Dogs, human and cats form a loose triangle of love, where dogs love humans and humans love cats. Dogs and cats, as true rivals, generally dislike each other.

## WHY DO HUMANS LOVE CATS?

Even if we can all agree that humans love both cats and dogs, there is a difference in the intensity of human affection towards these two animal families. The interesting question is why do humans love cats to such religious adulation? When we love dogs, there is at least some logical explanation for this – they are useful animals. Dogs have been serving humans for thousands of years, helping them protect their territories and cattle, helping during the hunts, and as some scholars suggest, providing food in dire times. In regards to cats, the only directly positive thing is that cats can keep the rodent population down. Well, is that all? Is this the only reason why humans have cat-shaped gods? Even humans in the cities adore cats when they do not have any big agricultural resources to defend. To some readers this topic may not sound worthy of attention, but I believe this is a very serious scholarly question – as anything related to love is.

Although left-handed, the celebrated German doctor, humanitarian and musician, the winner of the Nobel Prize. Albert Schweitzer would often write prescriptions with his right hand because his beloved cat “Sizi” liked to sleep on his left arm and could not be disturbed. Sizi sat on his desk as he wrote, often falling asleep on his left arm, which of course the doctor dared not move. And for how long did this go on? 23 years! Sizi had been rescued by Dr. Schweitzer when she was a kitten after he heard her plaintive “meow” under the floor of a building that was under construction.

Or take the case of Albert Einstein – his cat had a tendency to be depressed on rainy days. And Einstein, a scholar who always had a few things on hand to do, would talk to his cat to alleviate his depression. Charles Dickens also had a cat who kept him company while he wrote, and in typical

cat fashion this cat would extinguish his reading candles when it was time to get the writer's full attention when it was time for play.

So, why do we love them so much? Well, a cat lover might say they are truly amazing animals. Cats have eyes that are able to see in the near complete darkness, and at the same time are able to look directly at the Sun; Cats have the amazing ability to sit for hours ready for action, and when needed, act as swift as only cats can – as if they had taken only the optimal amount of time needed to prepare. What about their sense of balance? Hearing? Flexibility? And what about their cleanliness? These are all impressive qualities in an animal, yet this still does not explain why we love cats to the level of deifying them and creating religions with cats as the central gods. Herein also lies the question of why we love big cats as well, who do not help with rodents but instead occasionally kill and eat us, humans.

Humans can feel the presence of a certain mystery around cats. Short stories and novels about cats, films and internet discussions provide plenty of food for thought for those who believe in cats' mysterious powers. This could be a mysterious "sixth sense" which we will discuss later, or just the reasons for our excessive fascination with cats. Henry David Thoreau, a 19<sup>th</sup> century American author, philosopher and transcendentalist, expressed this in the following words: "What sort of philosophers are we who know absolutely nothing about the origin and destiny of cats?" Or listen to Hazel Nicholson from the Bristol Naturalists' Society: "A cat is a puzzle for which there is no solution." Sir Walter Scott was fascinated by a cat's internal world: "Cats are a mysterious kind of folk. There is more passing in their minds than we are aware of." Even when living comfortably in a house, a cat retains a mystery. Here are the words of Jean Burden, American poet and author, put very poetically: "Prowling his own quiet backyard or asleep by the fire, he is still only a whisker away from the wilds."

Cats are essentially a small carbon copy of all these majestic big cats – leopards, jaguars, snow leopards, and above all – tigers and lions. They look the same, walk the same way, behave the same way, and although they do not give us the feel of overwhelming power that being close to big cats creates, small cats are often looked at with similar admiration of their beauty, agility, and power. There is definitely truth in the following popular quotes: "God made the cat so that man might have the pleasure of caressing the tiger." This one was from Fernand Mery, already mentioned previously in this book and one of the most widely known cat lovers. The next one has no known author: "A cat is a tiger that is fed by hand." And by the way, Einstein named his cat "Tiger."



Finally, I want to mention one of the most fascinating book reviews, found in countless Amazon stores. In this review the author candidly confesses he has not read the book, but still readily gives five stars to the book mostly for the love of the tigers: "It looks to be a fabulous book & as I'm nutty about tigers, I'm sure I'll love it. However, a family member has hidden the book as it's for me for Christmas, so I can't really say much about it, but I have typed in 5 stars as I'm sure it will be, as I have read Stephen Mills articles in the BBC Wildlife magazine & they are great". It seems new generation of tiger and cat lovers is coming along.

## CATS ACROSS THE AGES

The adulation that cats are subject to in the contemporary world is not a new phenomenon brought by a human desire to get close to our natural roots. Cats have been a part of traditional tales, beliefs and superstitions across the ages and across the cultures.

Very informative blog, "Cats in the Ancient World", was published by Joshua J. Mark on 17 November 2012 (under the license of Creative Commons) and I suggest all cat lovers to have a look at it.

It was believed for a long time that cats were domesticated by Egyptians some 4-5 thousand years ago - today the date has been shifted back in history. It is now believed that cats had been domesticated approximately 12,000 BCE, at about the same time as dogs and other domestic animals, in Mesopotamia. A special project headed by Dr. Andrew Kitchener, a Zoologist at the National Museums of Scotland, came to the following conclusion in 2007: "This shows that the origin of domestic cats was not ancient Egypt - which is the prevailing view - but Mesopotamia and that it occurred much earlier than was thought". The discovery of a cat skeleton in Cyprus in a grave dating to 9,500 BCE, made by archaeologist Alain le Brun, was also important in revealing this, as Cyprus had no indigenous cat population and it is unlikely that settlers would have brought a wild cat, by boat, to the island. In Ancient Babylon, a cat was believed to be a host for certain holy human souls after death. The soul stayed in the cat as long as the cat lived and only in this way could the soul gain entry to Paradise - a very nice prospect indeed for every cat lover!

Although the Bible does not mention any cats at all (we will discuss the possible reasons for this neglect later), according to Hebrew folklore the

Biblical Noah needed cat to keep the rat population in his ark low. Apparently, when Noah asked the Lord for his help in controlling the rats, the Lord caused the lion to sneeze and out came a cat. According to another early Christian folktale, a little tabby kitten was the only one who could put baby Jesus to sleep – she curled up beside him in the manger, purring a lullaby, and the future savior quickly fell asleep. All tabby cats have an "M" in their fur pattern on their foreheads, and according to Christian folk-lore this stands for "Mary" as a testament to its kindness. A Muslim tale has a different explanation for the same "M" sign. According to the traditional tale, it came from the Prophet Muhammad and his cat Muezza. When Muhammad heard a call to go for a day prayer, he found that his little cat had fallen asleep upon the sleeve of his robe. Needing to get to the afternoon prayer, Mohamed cut off the sleeve so as not to disturb his cat's slumber (sounds familiar), winning the heart of many cat lovers. According to Moslem interpretation, the letter "M" on the forehead of tabby cats (the oldest of the domestic cats) is for Mohammed. The Japanese have a tale about Maneki-neko, a cat with one paw raised, a potent symbol of good luck. Legend says that such a cat brought great fortune to the poor temple of Gotoko-ji in Tokyo. Italian genius Petrarch, the father of humanism who conceived the idea of the Dark Ages in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, loved his cat so much that they were buried together. Despite the medieval distrust and fear of cats, Cardinal Richelieu (16-17<sup>th</sup> centuries) reserved one of his rooms for his cats, where overseers fed them chicken pates twice a day – he also built a cattery at Versailles for his wards and when he died the overseers and cats were provided for after his death.

The fact that the cats are seen as more than just a method of pest control is substantiated by the reverence accorded to felines in the literature of India. The Indian folk tale in the *Panchatantra* from the 5th century BCE became the basis for the famous story of Puss in Boots more than two thousand years later (by Charles Perrault). The goddess, Sastht had the same role as the Egyptian Bastet (cat goddess) and was as greatly revered.

Persians claim that the first Persian cat came to be created by a magician as a token of gratitude to Rostum, who saved him from a band of thieves. There is an ancient Chinese myth about the beginning of the world – the gods appointed cats to oversee the running of their new creation, and in order for communication to be clear granted cats the power of speech. Cats, being the free spirits that they were, spent most of the time in playing or sleeping. Cats explained to the God that they had no interest in running the world and subsequently nominated human beings for that responsibility. The power of speech was then taken from the cats and given to humans but, as humans seemed incapable of understanding the words of the gods, cats remained

entrusted with the important task of keeping time and therefore maintaining order.

It was thought that one could tell the time of day by looking into a cat's eyes, and this belief is still maintained in China. The Romans regarded the cat as a symbol of independence and not as a creature of utility. Cats were kept as pets by both Greeks and Romans and were regarded highly.

The Ancient Greeks believed that the Sun and Moon created all animals - whereby the Sun created the lion and the Moon that created the cat. The Roman Moon-Goddess Diana became linked with the cat and the number nine and was believed to have endowed the cat with nine lives. John Lennon, with his mystical love of the number nine and his love of cats, would certainly agree that cats had inherited something from the goddess - it is sad John himself did not have nine lives...

Sir Isaac Newton loved cats and many of us use one of his most popular inventions - the so-called "cat-flap", which he invented for his cats to get in and out of his laboratory on their own. French poet Charles Baudelaire apparently loved cats so much that when he was stroking and kissing them he would not even hear his friends talking to him. Celebrated American aviator Charles Lindbergh loved cats and was often taking them in the air with him. Although he did not take his favourite black kitten Patsy on his historical trans-Atlantic flight from New York to Paris, there is a touching postal stamp showing Patsy watching the take-off of his master. Cat lovers can understand Charles' explanation why he did not take the kitten with him on the Trans-Atlantic flight: "It's too dangerous a journey to risk the cat's life."

Even in Medieval France, where cats were linked with the Christian Devil in the form of Lucifer, people believed in a mystical cat called *matagot*, or magician cat, that could bring great wealth to its master if treated with the utmost respect. Another such cat was the *chat d'argent*, a silver or money cat, thought to be able to bring wealth to nine masters. In Roman tradition the cat was linked to Venus, the goddess of love - with its long association with fertility, sex and the feminine.

Ireland has many legends of mystical cats - Cat-Kings, who symbolized the underworld. In Norse mythology, the cat was closely linked to Freya, goddess of fertility, creation and death - her followers were mainly female fortune-tellers or mystics and they used cats in their rituals. Freya also owned a chariot which was drawn by two huge cats. The Norwegian Forest Cat, a large natural breed of the area, was said to be highly regarded by the Vikings and to be carried into battle upon the shoulders of their masters where they

assisted by clawing at the faces of their enemies. A Finnish myth describes the cat as a guide through Hell to Paradise for the souls of men.

Black cats have a special place in human cultures. In Europe, early America and China the black cat was feared as an omen of bad luck. Britain was different – a black cat was believed to bring good luck, for example, assisting in finding buried treasure. According to Buddhist superstitions cats could bring silver, gold, and protect a house from fire. Cats with extra claws on their paws were also believed to bring luck. Young girls in France were careful not to step on a cat's tail, as that would mean they would marry that year, but hearing cat sounds on the eve of her wedding or on the wedding day was a good omen. In some cultures cats were believed to grant family wishes for children, and in some cultures cats were consulted about matrimonial issues. In Russia, when a family is moving to a new place, the cat must be the first one to enter the new home – this practice continues to this day.

But of course, we also need to discuss the absolutely unique situation with cats in Ancient Egypt, where the reverence for cats reached its highest level ever seen in recorded human history.

## EGYPT, OR THE CAT'S "GOLDEN AGE"

We live in an age when animal rights are legally guarded. For the mistreatment of the animals people might pay hefty fines or even go to jail. Cats enjoy such protection no less than other animals. Well, it must be the golden age for animals then, right? Actually, it is not. In regards to cats, they definitely had their golden age long ago, during one of the first civilizations of the ancient world. Egyptians treated their cats more or less as Gods.

If you think this is a poetic exaggeration of our past, think of this fact: in Ancient Egypt, every case of a cat dying was to be investigated by a priest – and if the cat was found to have died because of human violence or mistreatment, the culprit (yes, human culprit) was put to death. Even today, we cannot say that cats are protected as much as they were during thousands of years in the old Egyptian civilization. Very much like Pharaohs, cats were mummified and kept in tombs. Hundreds of thousands of mummified cats have been found all over Egypt, and from Beni Hasan, an ancient Egyptian cemetery, 19 tons of mummified cats were taken to England to be used as fertilizer. It seems in Egypt more cats were mummified than people.

Cats were believed to be of protective value against the bites of poisonous snakes. The cat goddess Mafdet was protecting the Pharaoh against serpents in the royal palace. In the Egyptian "Book of the Dead," the God Ra (known as Mau) is depicted as a cat slaying a huge python, the representative of darkness. In this way, the cat and serpent represented the struggle between light and darkness, with the Sun-God Ra being victorious in the slaying of the serpent.

Sacred cats were kept in a sanctuary in ancient Egypt. They were carefully guarded by priests day and night. The priests were interpreting the slightest of any of the cat's movements like a twitch of a whisker, a yawn or a stretch in their divination and predictions for the future. Cats had a very prominent place in Egyptian mythology - a cat was the guardian of the Tree of Life, known as Persea Tree. The Egyptian Sun-God Ra proclaimed his direct connections to a cat: "I am the Great Cat which fought hard by the Persea tree." Scholars generally agree that "Persea tree" is the tree known by Christians as the Tree of Life. The depiction of Satan in the Bible as a snake at the tree suggests that the cat may have been guarding the tree from the serpent, and we know that cats were defenders of humans from serpents in Egyptian mythology, and probably to some extent in life as well. In an amazing twist of luck though, the same cat who was fighting against Satan later became the representative of Satan - we will discuss the reasons of this transformation later. In pre-Christian times the cat was believed to have knowledge of both good and evil without representing either. Therefore, without taking sides the cat represented balance and wisdom.

It was strictly prohibited to extradite cats out from Egypt, and this prohibition had religious and not economic basis. There were also governmental officers responsible for finding and returning cats which had been smuggled out. According to Herodotus, Egyptians cared so much for their cats that they placed their safety above human life and property. When a house caught fire, the Egyptians would concern themselves more with rescuing the cats than with anything else, often running back into a burning building or forming a perimeter around the flames to keep rescued cats at a safe distance. In the case of cat death (which was always investigated by a priest), "all the inhabitants of a house would shave their eyebrows [as a sign of deep mourning]. Dead cats were taken to Bubastis where they were embalmed and buried in sacred receptacles" (Nardo, 2008:117).

Possibly the greatest proof of Egyptian devotion to the cat, however, comes from the historical Battle of Pelusium (525 BCE) against the Persians. According to the Macedonian historian Polyaeus, knowing of the Egyptian's love for cats Cambyses had his men take cats with them into battle as 'feline

shields', and Persian soldiers also painted images of cats on their shields. The Egyptians did not fight in fear of harming the cats and, demoralized at seeing the image of Bastet on the enemy's shields, surrendered the city. It was after the success of this battle that the Persians established a Persian dynasty in Egypt.

There are often comparisons made between the cat reverence in ancient Egypt and the sacred reverence of cows in India. This comparison is indeed not far from reality, although there still seem to be certain important differences. Basically, cows have been revered in India as Mothers, while cats were revered in Egypt as Gods.

Bast (sometimes called Bastet) was the Egyptian cat-headed goddess. She had a special city, Bubastis, which she ruled over. During 10<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC Bubastis was a resident of the Egyptian Pharaohs. Bubastis is usually identified alongside the Biblical city "Phibeseth". The City of Bubastis housed Bastet statues and a shrine. An annual festival in the city was described by Herodotus as the most joyous festival out of all Egyptian events. During this festival a large image of the cat (or the lioness) Bastet was transported on a barge towards the city, accompanied by dancing, singing and drinking, and ended in sacrifices and a ritual feast.

The beginnings of the religious importance of cats and lions in Ancient Egypt are lost in the mist of time. The origins and the age of the mysterious Sphinx statue, with the body of lion, and the head of the human, are still uncertain. We should not be surprised if some symbolic connections are found between the sphinx and the much older European figures of humans with lion-heads.

Even the word "cat" comes from the Egyptians. It came from the North African word for the cat, "quattah." As a legacy to Egypt's reverence for cats, virtually every other European nation employs variations on this word: from English "cat" and French "chat" to German "katze," Russian "kot", and Georgian "kata". The word 'puss' or 'pussy' also has Egyptian origin. It comes from the word 'Pasht', an often used name for the Egyptian cat-goddess Bastet.

If you have an image of Egypt as a country where cats essentially ruled over humans, you are actually not too far from the reality. Many cat lovers may understand the Egyptian reverence and love towards cats very well, and it could be said that domestic cats are still the rulers of many modern households. Of course, we do not watch their smallest movements to interpret our future and we do not mummify them (well, most of the time), but the

mysterious fascination and reverence towards cats obviously still remains within us.

## **FROM GOD TO SATAN: MEDIEVAL EUROPE, OR THE CAT'S DARK AGE**

After the Egyptian religious reverence towards big and small cats, times started to change. Greeks and Romans had a very favorable attitude towards cats, if not a religious veneration. There were some superstitions against cats in Greece, but without any actual serious repercussions for cats. When Christianity came to the Middle East and adjacent territories, troubles for cats started quite swiftly. Symbolically, a cat is not mentioned at all in the text of the Bible. The situation worsened from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and particularly after Pope Gregory IX in the papal bull (1232-1234) *Vox in Rama* condemned people worshipping Satan in the form of black cats. Donald Engels claims that *Vox in Rama* was “a death warrant for the [cat], which would be continued to be slaughtered without mercy until the early nineteenth century. It is said that very few all-black cats survive in Western Europe as a result” (Engels, 2001).

During the rule of Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) Christians began persecuting cats in great numbers. Cats were executed in the hundreds of thousands and possibly millions. The Medieval Christian Church gave us the most chilling examples of the morbid hatred of cats. They were hanged, burned alive, and thrown out from very high buildings. Furthermore, it was not only cats that were persecuted - cat lovers were also viewed as carriers of dark satanic powers. One infamous medieval witch-hunt tallied conservatively at an estimate of 40 or 60 thousand lives (human lives) - the cat tally was at least ten times higher. One of the most obvious pieces of evidence with which a medieval Christian court could sentence a woman for being a witch and an agent for Satan was her love and compassion for cats. Caring for a cat in those dark times was virtually as dangerous as caring for a Jew in a Nazi-occupied territory. Gregory IX's attack on cats was not a single occurrence in the history of the Catholic Church. Pope Innocent VII (1336-1415) and Pope Innocent VIII (1432-1492) continued the tradition of cat torture and killing. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in some cultures there are still vivid remainders of these medieval prejudices against black cats.

There are ongoing debates whether the slaughter of cats contributed to the devastating pandemic of Bubonic Plague that started in 1348 and killed between 75 and 200 million people. Europe, where the slaughter of cats brought their population almost to extinction, was hit the hardest by the plague.

According to Desmond Morris, "Because the cat was seen as evil, all kinds of frightening powers were attributed to it by the writers of the day. Its teeth were said to be venomous, its flesh poisonous, its hair lethal (causing suffocation if a few were accidentally swallowed), and its breath infectious, destroying human lungs and causing consumption" (Morris, 1987:158).

Why were cats, treated as a God in Ancient Egypt and revered among Romans and Greeks, suddenly viewed in such a negative light? It seems to me that the reason of the morbid hatred of cat was exactly this ancient reverence towards big cats, and by default small cats as well. The new religious system was trying to destroy one of the strongest symbols of the ancient religious system. The true motive of the new Christian religion was to replace, banish, eradicate, and destroy the strongest existing subject of love and religious adulation, together with its staunchest followers. As many cat lovers were women, particularly single women, both cats and single women became the main target of religious hatred, known to us as a "witch-hunt."

The cat's dark ages continued with some short reliefs up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even brilliant artists and serious scholars were affected by this hatred. For example, William Shakespeare, one of the greatest humanists, mentioned cats in his writings many times, always in a negative light, often calling them "vile." During Shakespeare's lifetime (1564-1616) witch-hunts were rampant in England. People linked cats, particularly black cats, to witches. Cats were destroyed, cat lovers were viewed with suspicion and if they were lonely women, hanged. For a popular writer it was virtually impossible to neglect the very strict penalties towards cat lovers. Another example of cat hatred was Edward Topsell, author of the monumental books on animals, *The History of Four-footed Beasts* (1607), *The History of Serpents* (1608), and the later reprinted together as *The History of Four-Footed Beasts and Serpents* in 1658, he wrote: "the familiars of Witches do most ordinarily appear in the shape of Cats, which is an argument that this beast is dangerous to soul and body" (cited from Morris, 1987:158).

The infamous witch-hunts of the late middle-ages involving cats and cat-lovers as one of the primary targets are one of the darkest pages in the history of our interactions with animals. I wonder if one day I will be able to watch a



drama-suspense-horror movie about the life of cats and single women who cared for them despite the mortal danger during the dark 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Pope John Paul II, one of the greatest humanitarians, made over one hundred apologies for the wrongdoings of the Catholic Church over many centuries. The apology to cats, our most loved pets, is still pending. To my joy I found that the medieval persecution of cats by the church was probably hidden deep in the heart of the humanitarian Pope. According to the Polish emigrant, Antony Gronowicz, who allegedly interviewed the Pope twice privately, the Pope had a very vivid dream about a mother cat followed by six kittens as they were trying to find shelter during a snowy and freezing New York winter night.

I want the readers to know that the authenticity of the whole book where this story comes from was officially debated by Vatican, and that the book was withdrawn by the publisher. But even with this suspicion in our minds, the story seems to me very symbolic, as a sign of changing attitudes towards cats in the Vatican. This story shows the deep embarrassment of humanistic Christians for the cruelty that cats suffered from the medieval Christian Church. Here is the whole story from the book:

"In the midst of this discussion of his trip to Canada (in 1969), the Pope abruptly changed the subject and said: "The night before my departure from Canada to New York, which I had never seen, I had a strange dream." But his dream was not of beautiful forests, warm with the summer sun. It was of a crowded city, frigid with the cold of a northern winter. And although he had never been there, his dream captured the way Manhattan looks and feels, after a major snow storm.

"It was a terribly severe winter in New York, the city was completely covered with snow. Inhabitants were well-off and warmly dressed, and walking slowly along roads because cars, due to mountains of snow, could not be operated. I was happy that I could walk on top of the snow on avenues of white.

"All my physical effort was spent on walking. To this day, pictures of huge apartment houses on both sides of the avenue are instilled in my mind, and the doormen quickly closing and opening entrance doors as though trying to prevent humanity and warmth from escaping.

"On top of the snow, I noticed a brown cat emerge from a side street and walk on the snow. I looked closer, and to my surprise, saw that this big cat was being followed by six small brown-and-white kittens, all of them following the big brown cat in a perfect line. The mother cat looked back from

time to time to see if her babies were there, but her main concern was to reach the entrance door. I presumed she was trying to find warmth for herself and her children, but as soon as she reached the door, a man in a well-pressed uniform, jumped at her with a broom and chased them away. I followed this procession and prepared to deliver a speech to the doorman. I opened my mouth and tried to complain, 'Where is your proverbial American generosity? Where is your American good heart and fair play? Let them in. Let them in!!'

"I tried to speak, but the words would not come out. Maybe I was afraid of the doorman with the broom. I started searching my cassock pockets for a piece of bread, found some crumbs and put them on my palms, calling: 'Kitty, kitty, kitty.' But the words would not come from my supposedly intelligent mouth. Instead, the wind blew the crumbs from my palm and I said, 'what can I do? I can't speak to the cats. I can't speak to the doorman. But there are many hungry birds. They might pick up the crumbs.'

"Again, I walked after the cats, now with a pain in my chest, feeling tremendous cold. On the left I saw a church building and thought, 'There we will find help.' I heard singing and again, the idea occurred to me that it must be a Catholic church. The music grew louder, as though trying to convince God that they were praying to Him.

"The mother cat jumped in front of me and climbed the stairs, followed by her kittens. I raised my head and saw a tall Jesuit priest chasing the cats off the steps. But as I was about to shout at the Jesuit 'I am a cardinal!' and give an order to accept the cats, the mother cat and her offspring ran behind the church, because from there came the appetizing aroma of food. Probably there was a kitchen there. But a second Jesuit appeared at the kitchen door and scared the cats away. They returned to the avenue and started walking north."

"They walked on the same side of the avenue as the Jesuit church and I followed. Then they reached an imposing red brick church. An Anglican bishop appeared and said to the cats, 'My dear animal children, please go immediately to the animal shelter. There is food for you there. We Anglican clergy donate lots of money to the animal shelter, every year, at Christmas time.'

"The mother cat and her kittens didn't even meow. They knew the authoritative voice of the Anglican bishop. They walked uptown and gradually the luxurious buildings disappeared, together with the doormen, and we saw drab dilapidated apartments."

"As they walked and the buildings grew shabbier and dirty, a door was opened, not by a doorman but by an old wrinkled woman in a cotton dress. [She saw the cats] and shouted 'Oh, little mother,' and when she opened her mouth I saw she had few teeth. She gently ushered the mother cat and kittens inside, who jumped happily about because the warmth of the house embraced them."

According to J.R. Hyland, the author of the article on the website, "the narrative ended as the cats found a safe haven with the woman who had little enough, herself. When the Pope concluded his dream the author to whom he related it did not make any comment on what had been said. But he did write that "I had never seen such a sad expression on the face of this man." Considering that this was the same man who had related the horrors of his young manhood, under Nazi occupation, the author's remark shows the deep impact this dream had on the Pope."

The next Pope that followed John Paul II in 2003, Benedict XVI, apparently has always been known for his love of cats. He spends time talking to cats and according to many witnesses the cats, who do not care for his high status, come running towards him. Cat lovers know very well that cats can sense the people who truly love them. During the Pope's visit to Australia, knowing about his love of cats the Pope was given a grey cat called Bella. Pope Benedict XVI is probably the first Pope who has a biography written from the point of view of a cat (Perego, 2008). Although the world has seen two recent popes who both loved cats, the apology to our beloved pets is still pending.

Cats' fortunes started to change from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Stories of cat worship in Egypt, published in archaeological journals of the time, apparently had a big impression on Queen Victoria, who ruled from 1837 to 1901. The Queen became interested in cats and adopted two Blue Persian cats. These cats were treated as members of her court – the story of the Queen's cats became widespread and people became interested in having cats of their own. Love towards cats had grown in the USA as well. The most popular magazine in America at the time, *Godey's Lady's Book* published an article in 1860 suggesting Americans to embrace the "love and virtue" of a cat. The first cat show was held in Crystal Palace in London in 1871, and appreciation of cats was elevated to such a level that, for the first time, cats were given "specific standards and classes" which are still used to categorize felines today (Morris, 2008:148). After two decades of success in England a cat show was held in America in 1895 at a place no less famous than Madison Square Garden in Manhattan. Cat popularity in the United States steadily grew,

recently reaching a point at which cats displaced dogs as the country's favourite household pet.

Cats are said to have nine lives. Not many animals have suffered as gravely at the mercy of humans for centuries as cats have - and yet they still they managed to recover. They are with us, bathing in our love and adulation. Our lasting love towards cats proves that the first love never really goes away.

## DO WE LIVE IN AN ERA OF CAT-MANIA?

As William Shakespeare famously claimed, love is blind. Well, everything must have its reason, even love, and particularly if it is so strong as to make us blind. When love goes for millennia, and reaches the forms of religious adulation, there must be some very serious reasons for this. So what can be the reason of our fascination with cats - both small and big? Is it their beauty? The notion of beauty is very subjective, so theoretically cats are no more beautiful than, say, bats or hyenas.

I recently found an interesting article: "The Million Dollar Question: Why Does the Web Love Cats?" (published on Oct 22, 2010). Mind this is not a discussion about why we love cats, but on the reason of cats' immense popularity on the internet, both in videos and the millions of pictures and "memes" catalogued on countless websites. With a healthy dose of humor, as is so common for many popular websites, the author of the article, Amy-Mae Elliott, talks to internet experts, cat-themed content creators, viral content experts and other commentators from within the industry in order to try and find and answer this interesting phenomenon. The consensus is that while dogs have had a few notable successes online, apparently they are nowhere near to matching their feline rivals for popularity. Several possible reasons were discussed in this entertaining article - I will list a few below, sometimes with my own comments included:

1. Cats are popular because they are simply cute. Elspeth Rountree, the co-founder of Know Your Meme, suggests that we've always adored the feline family, it's just that the Internet provides a modern, one-click way to share such content. Also, images and videos of cute cats were popular before the advent of the Internet. A comment from the author of this book: Very true.

And do not forget that images of big cats are the very first images that ancient humans created, more than 30,000 years ago.

2. Cats are not only cute, but there is something else about them. Cory Alder, the creator of the popular iPhone app “CatPaint,” does not agree with the “cute” explanation: “I can say it's not just because they're cute. That would be a huge over-simplification... Cats are awesome and enigmatic. They even have a hint of danger about them.” Comment from the author of this book: Very true. If cats were merely cute, we would not be worshipping big cats as gods in our prehistory.

3. The next suggestion is that the web loves cats because they're the perfect canvas for human projection. “Cats have very expressive facial and body expressions, so they are a perfect canvas for human emotion, which makes them awesome for captioning and anthropomorphization,” says South Korean internet entrepreneur Ben Huh, CEO of the Cheezburger Network. Sam Ford, the Director of Digital Strategy at Peppercomm and co-author of *Spreadable Media*, suggests that dogs are just too easy to read: “Throughout the history of civilization, humans have had a deep fascination with cats. While dogs' forms of communication – and understanding of language – are more closely aligned with humans, cats are particularly fascinating because they are not necessarily as easy to read.” A comment from the author of this book: Very true. I think if we ask cats they also may say the same thing – which is that humans are not easy to read – this is so because we are so similar to cats in this feature. For more on this subject see the discussion a bit later in this book entitled “Human Intelligence vs. Cat’s Sixth Sense.”

4. Another idea is that showing cats in humorous situations is funnier because of their self-respect and pomp. These words of Brad O’Farrell, creator of the *Play Him Off, Keyboard Cat* video, most likely will anger cat lovers. “Most of us who have dealt with cats know that cats are jerks, and while outright abuse is never popular, I think a lot of people just like to see cats get their comeuppance.” Tom Cox, author of the book “Under the Paw – Confessions of a Cat Man” expressed a similar idea with a bit more respect: “Cats have a combination of incredible dignity, but also comedy about them. Cats can be so ridiculously pleased with themselves – and you don't get that with dogs. Because they are so proud and so aware of that dignity, when it is punctured it's the funniest thing in the world.” Comment: Possibly true as well. A cat’s dignity is an important part of its personality, and although we do not usually make fun of big cats, smaller cats can be made funny (provided the joke does not really hurt their feelings!).

5. There is also the suggestion that cats are popular on the internet as computer experts like cats, primarily because of their lifestyle. "Cats require relatively little maintenance (no baths, no walks) and are basically nocturnal animals, so they're a perfect match for the Internet geek/coder/hacker lifestyle." Comment: this is also possibly a contributing factor, but if we recall here the love of cats that authors, poets and philosophers had, I would suggest instead that cats are loved by all people who are engaged in intellectual work, whether it be philosophizing many years ago or working with modern technology, as a cat's more complex inner world provides bigger possibilities for fascination and possibly imagination.

6. There is also even the tongue-in-cheek suggestion that all this is a part of cats taking over human civilization. Jack Schofield shared his favourite quote on the topic of a cat-dominated Internet. "David Burge (the owner of a popular Iowahawk blog) once said that "When John Atanasoff and Clifford Berry developed the first digital computing machine at Iowa State University in 1937, little did they know that their invention would become an integral part of a sophisticated worldwide cat picture distribution system." This is funny because it's true." Matt Smith added a historical dimension to the joke (hopefully): "Cats have been domesticating and harvesting humans for at least two millennia, albeit slowly, generation by generation. With the Internet, they are moving much faster, and in only two or three more generations, we will be completely incapable of sustaining a line of thought for more than half a second, and therefore effectively be zombies in the service of our feline masters who will use lame Photoshoppers to communicate with us." Author's comment: Power to cats! Cats have been as gods for the millions of years – they shaped us into what we are today. With the appearance of big state religions we humans lost the sight of nature and instead made ourselves the center of the whole universe. Our contemporary liberal world frees our thoughts from humanocentrist dogmas and slowly brings us back to our natural states of mind. The comeback of fascination with cats is welcome and natural. It heralds the acquisition of the wider view of the world, a world where humans are a part of the natural world and not above it. Cats, particularly big cats, are the symbol of nature for us – they teach us humility.

In the conclusion of the article, in the words of Burnell Yow (the internet sensation "Nora The Piano cat's" personal assistant): "Cats seem totally comfortable being exactly what they are, and they are totally alive to the moment, which is something we, as humans, have lost sight of, though we are trying to get back to that enlightened state... Why do you think so many people meditate and practice yoga? We are seeking to be more cat-like, and

perhaps our embracing of cats is simply the embracing of what we know to be essential in ourselves." A comment from the author: totally agree – cats bring us back to our natural selves. They free us, in a Freudian sense, from many unwanted constraints of civilization. They remind us what we are, and how much we can enjoy our lives by feeling more integrated with the rest of the natural world.

William Calvin proposed a well-received idea among scholars in his essay "The Lovable Cat: Mimicry Strikes Again" from his book "Throwing Madonna." According to Calvin, our fascination with cats comes from the resemblance between cats and small babies. According to this point of view, with their large eyes cats look like human babies, and as humans love babies for obvious reasons, they also find cat faces equally attractive. Well, we can have arguments as to whether the resemblance is really there, as cat's fur covered faces, much larger and mobile ears and whiskers hardly resemble the features of a human baby. If resemblance was the key to our affection, it would be logical that we loved baby chimpanzees and bonobos more than kittens, as there are so many direct parallels in looks and behaviour between our closest genetic relatives. To me this 'aesthetic' attraction does not seem to be the case. And of course, it would be even more difficult to explain our love and fascination towards such cats as tigers and lions by their supposed resemblance to human babies. I believe many would agree that these majestic cats are amazingly beautiful regardless.

As a reader of this book would remember, I believe that human ancestors had a long and close relationship with the cat family during the whole time of our co-evolution since we came down from the trees. I also believe that our adulation with small cats as pets has a lot to do with our evolutionary past, as small cats do look very much like big cats – we also need to remember that this history of our interaction with small cats is a relatively recent phenomenon. The initial belief that Egypt was the place where cats were domesticated does not look convincing after much earlier traces of cat domestication have since been found on the island Cyprus. Therefore, now the official timelines for the domestication of the cat stretches back about 11,000 years. 11,000 years might sound impressive, but this ancient date is dwarfed when compared to the 6 million years that we spent interacting with big cats. Our dependence and close interactions with the ancestors of big cats lasted for millions of years – for all these years we looked up to them and deified them. We formed our morphology and behaviour firstly in order to become exempt from their diet, and then later to challenge them at their kills and steal from their diet. Even when we became their direct rivals at a kill, we still largely depended on their skills as prime predators. This balance was

forever changed, but only when humans started big game hunting and farming, and this happened probably as recently as 10-12 thousand years ago.

The next major religious subject in human history, the Sun, has been deified possibly as long as since the beginning of agriculture, some 10 thousand years ago. Very interestingly, two most important gods in human prehistory – the animal and astral gods, lion and Sun – were found to have connections with the natural world and with each other. Humans cannot look at a midday Sun directly, but lions (and all other cats) can do this without any problem. This connection between cats and the Sun was believed to be the proof of their divine connection. The god Ra, represented as the Sun, was also known as a Lioness. The closeness of the images of a male lion with his majestic mane around his head, and that of the Sun, surrounded by the brilliant life-giving rays, was also noticed. Even the lion and Sun colours are generally matching each other. The formidable 10-thousand year history of human farming is dwarfed next to about 6 million years of interactions with big cats. The history of major contemporary world religions does not go further than 2-3 thousand years back in history and in comparison seems like the blink of an eye.

If we look at the 6 million years of human evolutionary history since our ancestors came down from the trees for good, and compress those 6 million years into one year, we will have the following picture:

About the first six months we find our distant ancestors in a desperate bid to create a decent defense strategy against big cats, still living in the open woodlands of Africa. This was a time when the basics of hominid morphology and behaviour were formed, from bipedalism, long head hair, long legs, obtaining the sense of rhythm, the state of the battle trance and the elements of primary religious practices, based on collective consciousness;

During the remaining six months our ancestors start challenging the ancestors of the big cats; Their intimidation strategy allows them to confront and chase away even the strongest of predators. Big cat and human ancestors come to the mutual conclusion that it is better to avoid physical clashes. Hominids in turn developed a deep reverence towards big cat ancestors, and big cats developed a natural avoidance of biped hominids. This was also the time when big cat ancestors and early humans started travelling across the continents; It was at the final stages of this period that the first surviving artifacts of arts, first paintings and sculptures, tellingly connected to the



images of lions, appeared about 32,000 years ago – on our calendar this 32,000 years ago would already be December 29<sup>th</sup>.

Only on the last day of our compressed year-long timeline, on December 31<sup>st</sup>, a few hours into the morning we would see the introduction of farming and the appearance of the Sun as a new central deity in some advanced groups of people as the first civilizations (Mesopotamia, Egypt, China). In regards to the appearance of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and other big religions, they would make appearance only during the evening hours on December 31<sup>st</sup>, only a few hours before the end of the year.

Of course, with our ability of logical thinking we can understand that the Sun was the principal factor in the emergence and sustenance of life on our planet. Humans, lions and all other forms of life depend on the Sun. It is one thing to understand something by logical thinking, but another thing to interpret the message within your emotional experience of your own past. Very much like children's character and social connections are based on their early childhood memories, the emotional memory of our species is firmly connected to our evolutionary past. We spent most of our evolutionary history measuring up against the ancestors of the big cats, and it is natural that big cats have such a firm place in the human collective psyche. We look at them with awe and envy, we are mesmerized by their beauty and power. We love them and at the same time we are afraid of them – they made us who we are. Yes, in the evolutionary arms race we eventually outstripped all other animal species, including big cats. Today we can kill them, we can use their body parts for medicines, we can put them into zoos and watch them in the circus, but we still retain our immense respect and deep seated love for these majestic animals.

Terry Pratchett, English best-selling author of the 1990s, produced one of the best known cat quotes "In ancient times cats were worshipped as gods; they have not forgotten this." I like that Terry does not specify to which "Ancient times" he is referring to. Many would understand this as a reference to Egypt, and possibly Terry himself had Egypt in his mind as well. Well, I hope the readers of this book already know my point of view that our love and deifying of cats did not start in Ancient Egypt. Our reverence and deep religious respect towards cats started not millennia, but millions of years before the Egyptian civilization even started. The Egyptian civilization was possibly the last epoch of ancient religious reverence of cats, and probably one of the first epochs deifying the Sun. In Egypt two religious systems, cats on one side and the Sun on another side peacefully co-existed. Their coexistence was possibly connected to the fact that both animals and celestial objects were the part of the natural world. Unfortunately, the peaceful

coexistence of different religions became impossible with the later development of world religions, where monotheistic gods obtained human faces and the whole world was considered to be created for the purpose to serve and please the Human race.

We are gradually recovering from the deep selfish humanocentrist delusions we have suffered for several millennia. We are starting to acknowledge the importance of finding humans' place within nature instead of finding the role of nature in human life. At the same time, our little furry companions are helping us to recover the lost humility in our hearts and our instinctive sense of fascination with nature.

Our planet unites peoples and cultures with very different cultural histories. Not every indigenous culture has undergone the upheaval and "development" of city-based civil societies. It is quite difficult to build a civil society and nation-states in some tribe-based cultures – Monotheism has not become the religious worldview for all cultures, and this is also why so-called pagan elements are still so strong in many cultures recently converted to monotheism. Even the Sun and other celestial objects have not obtained religious significance in some cultures where farming was not practiced for centuries and millennia, so there is indeed a wide range of historical memories and historical worldviews throughout the world.

However, all human societies, without any exceptions, have a deep seated memory of our first gods, the majestic big cats, despite the difference in cultures, we all come from the same evolutionary past. The memory of millions of years of vigorous everyday fighting for survival will most likely stay with us forever. We all still look and behave as big cats shaped us, and we should not be too surprised if we gradually realize that we live in a catmania-stricken world.

We suffered catmania for millions of years, so it is no wonder we are now finally reviving this ancient state.

## IS IT POSSIBLE TO HATE CATS AND KITTENS?

It is very difficult for cat lovers to imagine that there are some humans who do not like cats, do not find them cute and beautiful – and that some are even morbidly afraid of cats. We discussed the long list of artists, writers, poets, musicians, scholars and religious and political leaders who loved cats to the point that the term “catmania” would be appropriate to use. Cats are by far on top of the any list of animals in terms of internet and general culture popularity.

But not everything has been this rosy all the time – it was not only in the dark medieval times that the beautiful cats had more than their share of haters. There are those who actively dislike cats in today’s world, and people of different professions are represented in this category. There is even a special term describing the fear of cats: “Ailurophobia,” or “cat phobia.”

It is very symptomatic that ambitious politicians and dictators are over-represented in the list of cat haters. Genghis Khan, great conqueror from Asia, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and Nero from the Ancient Greece and Rome, Ivan the Terrible, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, all hated or were afraid (or both) of cats, sometimes even kittens. They were exterminating cats very much like free thinkers in their own countries and empires – those who did not want to submit and follow their orders. Henri III of France and King Louis XIV of France were the perpetrators of a particularly cruel extermination of thousands of cats. Dwight D. Eisenhower has the dubious title of being the most cat-hating American president. Cat haters were also among scholars, for example Georges Louis Leclerc de Buffon, French naturalist of 18<sup>th</sup> century, and Noah Webster, the American educator and lexicographer of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century. They did not organize cat massacres, yet still described cat’s character not very far from the medieval Christian treatise.

According to several websites, Chicago banker Rockwell Sayre was one of the world’s worst cat-haters. He lived in the early 1920's, and started a campaign to rid the entire world of cats by the year 1925. He offered financial rewards to cat killers, giving 10 cents to anyone who would bring a dead cat to his house. Allegedly, Sayre boasted that he inspired the killing of seven million cats during the first three months of his campaign. According to him cats were "filthy and useless." In 1925 he extended his campaign for a further ten years, as there were many cats still left – fortunately soon after he died himself. Cats had taken their revenge – the Chicago banker probably would

have died of a heart attack anyway if he had a chance to see the popularity that cats have attained in contemporary America.

There is few very unexpected names on the list of cat haters. These are people from the world of art. Artists, as a rule, love cats and many artists are known for their strong feelings towards cats – so cases of artists hating cats are more difficult to explain.

To explain why American dancer Isadora Duncan hated cats is very difficult, as at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century the witch-hunts were long gone in the United States. For a dancer who was famous for seeking more natural movements in the art of dancing, a cat's gracious movements should have been a source of eternal fascination and inspiration rather than a morbid hatred and desire to hang them. Either Isadora had some very traumatic childhood memories connected to cats, or possibly the over-ambitious dancer could not bear the idea that cats naturally had such a grace in their movements that was impossible for her or any other human dancer ever to achieve through practice and dedication.

Another unexpected case is of the composer Johannes Brahms, who enjoyed killing cats in his neighborhood with a bow and arrow. Musicians and composers, from Chopin and Shostakovich to John Lennon and Freddy Mercury, make a long list of cat-lovers. In Brahms's case probably the free spirit of cats was unacceptable to the composer who disliked the contemporary romanticism and free expression of emotions both in life and in music. Brahms was cold and unappreciative when meeting Franz Liszt, one of the greatest humanists and romantic composers (allegedly, he felt asleep when Liszt was performing for him). In his aesthetics Brahms was striving for the stricter past, the epoch of baroque and classicism. Brahms never married, and he was known to destroy all his early compositions that in his view did not answer his highest aesthetic aspirations.

Of course we know the history of our interactions with cats has had truly darker times, and the few cat-haters that we mentioned above only form a miniscule amount in comparison to hundreds of years ago. Cats lived through centuries when they had to use their numerous lives and intelligence daily in order to survive. It is not a coincidence that these ages, ages where democracy and cats were both stamped out, are known today as the "dark ages." Cats showed an amazing resilience – they not only survived mass persecution, but by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century they became the world's favourite pet. And not only the world's favourite pet – according to an

“Animal Planet” poll, the title of world’s favourite animal also belongs to a cat, this time to the biggest of all cats – the tiger.

A cat is an eternal reminder of our profound connections to nature. Cats make our society less humanocentrist and more altruistic. In our love towards small and big cats we pay them back for millions of years of taking care of our ancestors, for feeding us, for punishing us for being non-cooperative and for encouraging us to be more altruistic. Cats made us the bipedal, tool-using, intelligent species of primates with culture, science and religion that we are today. Cats served us as the subjects of our envy and fascination, served as models for the development of our aesthetic sense and served as the models for our first cultural artifacts.

Cats’ popularity is steadily increasing. Taking into account our common evolutionary history and our mutual respect, the popularity of cats will most likely not have a usual fashion-like fluctuation, although there can be change in forms of expression that may make this seem so. There will be no more Dark Ages for cats - in the epoch of increasing of spiritual and personal freedom and a comeback to the nature, we have finally rediscovered our first God, the most revered and possibly still the best loved God. The future of cats in human society seems to be extremely bright.

Although cats’ popularity on the internet is truly dazzling, advertising companies have not yet realized the full potential of cats as advertising agents, although there are some signs of the popularity of cats in attracting potential buyers.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen yet another expression of our love for cats emerge: the so called “cat-cafes” which are now taking the world by storm. A cat-café is a café where visitors, while waiting for and then consuming food and beverages, can entertain themselves by playing with and stroking numerous roaming cats and kittens. The very first cat-café, according to sources from Wikipedia, appeared in Taipei, Taiwan in 1998. The café became very popular, particularly with Japanese tourists, and it was no surprise that in 2004 the first cat-café was opened in Japan, in Osaka. Today there are at least 39 cat-cafes in Tokyo alone - by the time this book is out, there will most likely there be a few more. Cat-cafes are also becoming popular in Europe - 2013 saw cat-cafes opened in the UK, Hungary, Germany, Spain and France. The first cat-café opened in Paris, “café les Chats” has many formerly-homeless cats roaming around, creating for the visitor, as the owner calls it, “purr therapy.” The opening week of the first Paris cat-cafe was huge, and saw bookings completely filled for the next two months.

When our family visited Paris for the first time in 1999, there were no cat-cafes in Paris, but we remember very well a small boutique where the owner had a very cute and playful kitten named "Sidonie" who would roam around the store and relax at the counter. We dubbed the boutique "Sidonie's Shop" and returned to the place on numerous occasions in our short 10-day stay in Paris. I am also quite sure the cute Sidonie would have attracted a few more people to this shop in much the same way. As we can be sure that this was also not the only place in the world to have such a situation, we can basically say that the concept of cat-cafes was already around for a while and was just waiting to be taken to the next level.

There are already some other indications of the power of cat magnetism in some publications. For example, in an innovative article by Elizabeth Haggarty (Haggarty, 2011) it is claimed that ads with images of the cats attracted 78% more attention from Facebook users than any other ads. But this is only the beginning - I think we will see in the next decade or so a drastic increase of advertisements involving cats, both small and big cats, instead of human models, launching new products from sofas to new model cars. I also believe we will gradually see powerful politicians advertising their love towards cats before election campaigns in order to raise their public ratings. And finally and most importantly, research of cats' amazing senses and psychic powers can lead to new scholarly breakthroughs, causing paradigmatic changes in several spheres. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has a good chance to become the "cat century," or the beginning of the "cat millennia."