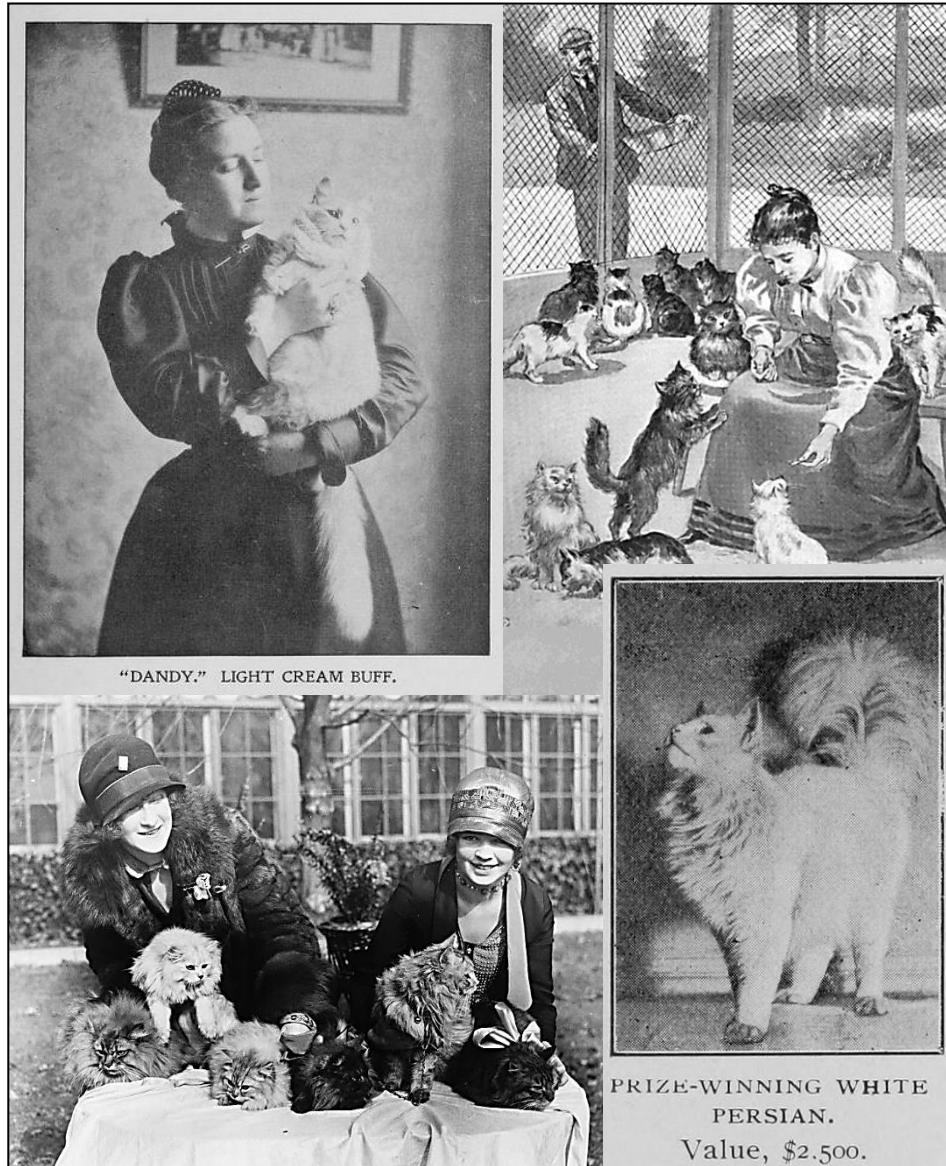


The cat's cradle of felines and society

Cats and American domesticity (1870-1920)



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INTRODUCTION

‘The cat is (...) favoured by that half of the human race which is the more concerned with domestic cares; for it is a home-loving animal and one exceptionally clean and orderly in its habits, and thus naturally commends itself to the good will of the thrifty housewife’, was how St. George Mivart started off his study of the cat.¹ According to this example, there was a special connection between cats and women, or specifically housewives. The fact that women and cats were perceived as home-loving and cleanly creatures was an important feature of the linkage people seemingly noticed between both. The way in which women and the home were connected was referred to as domesticity, which was a familiar context for women to be placed in. Yet, cats fitted into the notion of domesticity as well. This research wants to provide more insights into the connection between cats, women and domesticity – something which was frequently heard in the research period of this paper, from 1870 to 1920. In order to conduct this research, the following research question is used: how were cats influenced by, and had an impact on domesticity in the United States?

During the period considered in this research, the role and position of animals in society changed. It was not a new concept for people to have certain animals living with them. However, from 1800 onwards, the practice of keeping pets as we know it today started to develop.² The practice created a new appreciation for animals and was also connected to human concerns, especially those that arose out of a capitalist society that was quickly industrializing and urbanizing. Moreover, the treatment of pets was supposed to be more civil in a modern society where there was no place for public displays of violence, including violence towards animals. Many considered the mistreatment of animals as poor moral character.³ This resulted in newfound ideas on what was appropriate behavior towards animals. Respectable people adhered to this new ethic of kindness to animals and used it to differentiate themselves from

¹ St. George Jackson Mivart, *The Cat: An Introduction to the Study of Backboned Animals, Especially Mammals* (New York 1881) 1.

² Kathleen Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1994) 3, 137; Katherine C. Grier, *Pets in America: A History* (Chapel Hill 2006) 15; Kathleen Kete (ed.), *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire* (London 2014) 16; Ingrid H. Tague, ‘The History of Emotional Attachment to Animals’, in: Hilda Kean and Philip Howell, *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History* (London and New York 2018) 345-346.

³ Hilda Kean, *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800* (London 1998) 10-11, 12; Jordan Curnutt, *Contemporary Legal Issues. Animals and the Law: A Sourcebook* (Santa Barbara 2001) 73; Diana L. Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty: The History and Legacy of Animal Rights Activism in the United States* (Athens 2006) 7, 34-38, 58; Dorothee Brantz, ‘The Domestication of Empire: Human-Animal Relations at the Intersection of Civilization, Evolution, and Acclimatization in the Nineteenth Century’, in: Kathleen Kete, *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire* (London 2014) 77-78; Robert G.W. Kirk, ‘The Experimental Animal: In Search of a Moral Ecology of Science?’, in: Hilda Kean and Philip Howell, *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History* (London and New York 2018) 123-126; Kete, *A Cultural History of Animals*, 15; Tague, ‘The History of Emotional Attachment’, 345.

those who did not. Animals deserved good stewardship and benevolence. One outcome of this new ethic was an increase in petkeeping. By the early 1900s, around 25 million Americans had a pet cat. Pets, in general, became a part of the human family and were included in household rituals and routines.⁴

Another expression of the new kindness towards animals was the founding of organizations to protect animals. The first one in the United States was the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, hereafter ASPCA, founded in 1866 in New York – which is still in existence today. Soon thereafter, SPCA's spread across the continental United States. Such societies were finally taken seriously by the general public in the 1870s.⁵ At this time, there was also growing emphasis on different breeds – animals fitting into a certain standard and possessing a pedigree – especially around the turn of the century. Shows were organized where people could parade their prized-pets and new clubs were formed that set the standards of different breeds.⁶

This changing position of animals coincided with a new role for the home and for women, whose main function was that of mother and wife when the home was no longer a place of economic activity. This development started at the beginning of the nineteenth century and had become a mainstay of American culture around 1850. This was part of the separate-spheres ideology, where society would ideally be divided into a public- and private sphere. The former was male-dominated, a place of work, competition and temptation; the latter was female-dominated and was supposed to be a safe haven from the outside world. In the latter, women were expected to fulfill the role of devoted wife, mother and homemaker. This conceptual dichotomy is typically referred to as the domesticity-ideal.⁷

⁴ Arnold Arluke and Robert Bogdan, *Beauty and the Beast: Human-Animal Relations as Revealed in Real Photo Postcards, 1905-1935* (Syracuse 2010) 9-14, 27-28, 35-36; Susan Hunter and Richard A. Brisbin, *Pet Politics: The Political and Legal Lives of Cats, Dogs, and Horses in Canada and the United States* (West Lafayette 2016) 8, 50-51; Arnold Arluke and Laruen Rolfe, *The Photographed Cat: Picturing Human-Feline Ties, 1890-1940* (Syracuse 2013) 3; Katharine M. Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination: Feline Images from Bast to Garfield* (Ann Arbor 2001) 188; Kete, *A Cultural History of Animals*, 3-4, 15; Grier, *Pets in America*, 10, 13-14, 129-139; Brantz, 'The Domestication of Empire', 75-76.

⁵ Susan Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless: Protecting Animals and Children in Gilded Age America* (Chicago 2011) 7; Curnutt, *Contemporary Legal Issues*, 72, 73; Beers, *For the prevention of Cruelty*, 40, 44-49, 62-63; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 53; Brantz, 'The Domestication of Empire', 79.

Further references are to the SPCA, as only the organization in New York was called ASPCA.

⁶ Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge 1987) 87, 91, 94, 97, 101, 104; Neil Pemberton, Julie-Marie Strange and Michael Worboys, 'Breeding and Breed', in: Hilda Kean and Philip Howell, *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History* (London and New York 2018) 394, 403, 409, 412; Margo Demello, 'The Present and Future of Animal Domestication', in: Randy Malamud, *A Cultural History of Animals in the Modern Age* (London 2014) 82-83; Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 10-16; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 57-58.

⁷ Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven 1973) 153, 163; Glenna Matthews, *"Just a Housewife": The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York 1987) 35, 44-47; Tiffany K. Wayne, *Women's Roles in Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport 2007) 1; Barbara

Women played the important role of mother as they morally shaped future American citizens – and new mothers – thereby essentially influencing the entire nation. However, during the research period of this paper the notion of this high moral purpose of the home was in decline.⁸ Still, for many the home remained an important place where women took care of the house and performed tasks such as guarding the health and psychological wellbeing of the family and being in charge of family expenditure. In the year 1920, still a large number of all women, 75%, stated that their main function was that of wife, mother and housekeeper. Many women continued to rely upon their position within the domesticity framework to gain access to the public sphere. For example, women used it to participate in the reform movements or to organize clubs for a variety of reasons, from study- to temperance-clubs. Nonetheless, times were changing and around 1900 women did have greater opportunities to attend higher education and find employment. Most employment opportunities for women were those that could be considered an extension to their maternal and caring role as were prescribed by domesticity.⁹

The history of domesticity and petkeeping comes together in several ways.¹⁰ First, the pet became the embodiment of the middle-class family, although people of all classes and ethnicities had pets. Pets were ‘morally mandatory’ in the home as petkeeping taught important values such as kindness and self-control. They were the ultimately tamed, or domesticated, animal, and became part of human civilization.¹¹

Welter, ‘The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860’, *American Quarterly* 18 (1966) 162-168; Karen Manners Smith, ‘New Paths to Power: 1890-1920’, in: Nancy F. Cott, *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States* (Oxford and New York 2000) 360, 365; Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 29-30.

⁸ Kathleen Anne McHugh, *American Domesticity: From How-To Manual to Hollywood Melodrama* (New York and Oxford 1999) 5; Shirley Samuels (ed.), *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford and New York 1992) 4; Sklar, *Catharine Beecher*, xii-xiii, 156, 159-160; Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, xiii, 6-7, 21, 34-35, 44-46, 92-95; Smith, ‘New Paths to Power’, 375.

⁹ Laura Lovett, *Conceiving the Future: Pronatalism, Reproduction, and the Family in the United States, 1890-1939* (Chapel Hill 2007) 5, 7, 8; Mary G. Jong (ed.), *Sentimentalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literary and Cultural Practices* (Madison 2013) 3-4; Kim Warren, ‘Separate Spheres: Analytical Persistence in United States Women’s History’, *History Compass* 51 (2007) 263, 265-267; Amy Kaplan, ‘Manifest Domesticity’, in: Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher, *No More Separate Spheres!: A Next Wave of American Studies Reader* (Durham 2002) 183; Harriet Sigerman, ‘Laborers for Liberty: 1865-1890’, in: Nancy F. Cott, *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States* (Oxford and New York 2000) 312-313, 320-327, 327, 339; Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty*, 53-54, 87; Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 22, 71-72, 89; Smith, ‘New Paths to Power’, 359, 360, 369, 375, 385-396.

¹⁰ This paper acknowledges current debates on the use of words as ‘pet’ and ‘owner’ in (academic) literature on animals. However, this research chooses to predominantly use the traditional terms – instead of for example ‘companion animal’ and ‘guardian’ – for reasons of convenience and since it fits better with the historical views on animals in the period under scrutiny. For the same reason this research refers to ‘animal’ instead of ‘nonhuman animal’, also because the latter still relies on a human standard.

¹¹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Dominance & Affection: The Making of Pets* (New Haven 1984) 107-108, 171-172, 175-176; Erin McKenna, *Pets, People, and Pragmatism* (New York 2013) 14, 16; Philip Howell, *At Home and Astray: The Domestic Dog in Victorian Britain* (Charlottesville 2015) 12, 17-19; Hilda Kean, ‘The Moments of Greyfriars Bobby: The Changing Cultural Position of Animals, 1800-1920’, in: Kathleen Kete, *A*

Secondly, women had more time to spend as the home was not a place of economic production anymore. This time could now be used, in addition to household chores, for activities such as making fancy embroidering, reading or extending their nurturing role towards a quadruped.¹² Finally, domesticity and petkeeping came together in childrearing. Fewer children per family were born and more time was spent on the on average four children in a household.¹³ Since both children and pets were seen as dependable creatures in the home, contemporaries recognized similarities between them: they were seen as closer to nature and thus pure and innocent, depended on others for survival, were in need of sympathy and were a sentimental investment. Both children and pets were even incorporated into the same humane organization for protection. Moreover, pets could especially help children learn those esteemed moral values such as kindness, self-control or responsibility.¹⁴

The topic of (American) domesticity has interested scholars for many years. This has resulted in literature on a variety of topics. As Kim Warren states in her overview of the use of domesticity in academia, the sole use of gender as a lens of analysis is not enough; other categories of experiences – such as class, race and religion – should be included, she maintains.¹⁵ This paper argues that one such other category can be interspecies interaction. Literature on domesticity refers to themes such as the care of dependents, ways to circumvent the narrow ideal of domesticity or what the perfect middle-class home should look like; all of which are great starting

Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire (London 2014) 26; Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir*, 1, 138; Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 17, 37-38, 120; Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 22, 31, 37, 45; Grier, *Pets in America*, 8; Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 4, 10, 36, 250; Kete, *Cultural History of Animals*, 15, 16; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 51; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 7, 9, 56-58, 119; Kaplan, 'Manifest Domesticity', 184; Brantz, 'The Domestication of Empire', 76, 77, 80; Demello, 'The Present and Future of Animal Domestication', 92-93; Tague, 'The History of Emotional Attachment', 359.

¹² Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 3, 87-89; Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 29; Wayne, *Women's Roles*, 3.

¹³ Peter N. Stearns and Timothy Haggerty, 'The Role of Fear: Transitions in American Emotional Standards for Children, 1850-1950', *American Historical Review* 96 (1991) 66, 80; Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 9, 28-29; Wayne, *Women's Roles*, 1, 3; Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 15, 30; Smith, 'New Paths to Power', 369.

¹⁴ Ann-Janine Morey, *Picturing Dogs, Seeing Ourselves: Vintage American Photographs* (University Park 2014) 105; Carl Griffin, 'Topologies of Tenderness and Violence: Human-Animal Relations in Georgian England', in: Hilda Kean and Philip Howell, *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History* (London and New York 2018) 323; Phillip Howell and Hilda Kean, 'Writing Animals in History', in: idem, *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History* (London and New York 2018) 19-20; Erica Fudge, 'Foreword', in: Sarah Cockram and Andrew Wells, *Interspecies Interaction: Animals and Humans Between the Middle Ages and Modernity* (London and New York 2018) xvii; Kara B. Clevinger, "'These Human Flow-ers': Sentimentalizing Children and Fashioning Maternal Authority in *Godey's Lady's Book*", in: Mary G. de Jong, *Sentimentalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literary and Cultural Practices* (Madison 2013) 16, 26; Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 3, 21-22, 28-29, 32-34, 37; Grier, *Pets in America*, 8, 12, 13-14, 130; Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 32-33; Kete, *Cultural History of Animals*, 7-9; Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 17-18; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 50; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 62, 66-67, 88; Brantz, 'The Domestication of Empire', 77; Demello, 'The Present and Future of Animal Domestication', 81.

¹⁵ Warren, 'Separate Spheres', 270; Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher (eds.), *No More Separate Spheres!: A Next Wave American Studies Reader* (Durnham 2002) 19.

points to include not just human actors, but also nonhuman actors – like cats. This would provide us with new insights on domesticity, the history of the family, women’s history, the role of animals, the practice of petkeeping and feline history. This approach would also reinforce the notion that animals were, almost literally, everywhere throughout history. Animals and the relationships they had with humans were an essential part of every society; therefore, this paper also fits within the growing field of animal-human history.¹⁶

As Harriet Ritvo demonstrates in *The Animal Estate* – the book credited for starting the field –, looking at interspecies interaction can teach us a great deal about a specific society.¹⁷ Within the young field of animal-human history, there is an extraordinary variety in the kind of topics discussed. The changing attitude towards animals in Great Britain and the United States from 1800 onwards, as addressed above, has especially received particular attention. Katherine Grier’s work *Pets in America* is an excellent example as it is a comprehensive overview of the history of petkeeping in the United States. Nonetheless, she only devotes two pages to the link between cats and women – and thus by extension also domesticity – in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century. As Arnold Arluke and Lauren Rolfe point out, we know extremely little about this topic in that period. They themselves fill this gap substantially, but their main focus is broader and their sources are mostly photographs.¹⁸ Cats mostly seem to garnish attention in the history of their appreciation in ancient Egypt, their condemnation from the Middle Ages to the end of the nineteenth century or that they were, in fact, not really an ideal pet.¹⁹ This lack of attention is a great shame since there are many merits to looking into the history of cats, especially given the animal’s connection to domesticity. In most literature on animal-human history cats are minimally addressed or set aside as less important in comparison to the dog as pet. It does not help that many people today still find it acceptable to hate cats and even be proud of it – nobody would boast about hating dogs.²⁰

¹⁶ Clemens Wischermann and Philip Howell, ‘Liminality: A Governing Category in Animate History’, in: idem and Aline Steinbrecher, *Animal History in the Modern City: Exploring Liminality* (London 2018) 1, 5; Erica Fudge, ‘Milking Other Men’s Beast’, *History and Theory, Theme Issue 52: Does History Need Animals?* (2013) 21, 27-28; Chris Pearson, ‘Dogs, History, and Agency’, *History and Theory, Theme Issue 52: Does History Need Animals?* (2013) 129, 132-133, 145; McKenna, *Pets, People, and Pragmatism*, 8; Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir*, 2; Kean, *Animal Rights*, 11-12; Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty*, 5, 17; Grier, *Pets in America*, 5, 8; Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 7, 249; Brantz, ‘The Domestication of Empire’, 75.

¹⁷ Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 3, 7; Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 3-4; Idem, ‘Writing Animals in History’, 21; Wischermann, ‘Liminality’, footnote 1.

¹⁸ Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 79.

¹⁹ Donald W. Engels, *Classical Cats: The Rise and Fall of the Sacred Cat* (London 1999) ix, 152-164; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 48.

²⁰ For example, in the volume of *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire* there are only two references for cats in the index – fourteen for dogs. In *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History*

The cat's distinctive characteristics made the animal a particularly problematic fit into the domesticity framework. As mentioned above, a pet is supposed to be completely domesticated and under human control; but, to what extent does the *felis catus* fit into this image? Cats were known for supposedly domesticating themselves, their aloof and sensual nature, that they can easily live without human assistance and that they have not been modified in appearance to the same extent as dogs have been.²¹ Furthermore, the ideal of domesticity was mostly centered around women. Women and cats have always been, or were portrayed to be, connected, which is at present still the case. A well-known example are of course cats and witches, but they were also connected in being both (ideally) attentive mothers, known for their clean and gentle behavior.²²

Both in the imagery around cats and their connection with women, several contradictions become clear. Cats were, or were perceived to be, independent and sensual predators; yet, at the same time cats and women are placed together, especially in the homely sphere of the domesticity framework.²³ Precisely this interplay is what makes felines so interesting and worthy of study. As Katharine Rogers points out, the cat lives in our home, but does not attempt to conform to our standards – such as the notion of domesticity. Moreover, she likewise points out the inherent contradiction of incorporating fiercely clawed creatures into ideal representations of the home, but without analyzing this strange construction herself.²⁴

Method and sources

Domesticity and the notion of two separate spheres mostly existed as an ideal; women were not really completely cut-off from the outside world. One of the intentions of this

there are fourteen reference for cats, for dogs there are sixty; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 156; McKenna, *Pets, People, and Pragmatism*, 190-192; Morey, *Picturing Dogs*, 18.

²¹ Madison Arnold-Scerbo, 'Cats & Dogs: Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Perspectives', *Biodiversity Heritage Library Blog* (July 24, 2017) <<https://blog.biodiversitylibrary.org/2017/07/cats-dogs-nineteenth-and-early-twentieth-century-perspectives.html>> [April 4, 2019]; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 1, 3-4, 125, 173, 185, 189-190; Morey, *Picturing Dogs*, 18; McKenna, *Pets, People, and Pragmatism*, 185-188, 211, 216; Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 21-23, 115-118; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 48; Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 15-16; Idem, *The Photographed Cat*, 92-93, 94; Engels, *Classical Cats*, 3-5; Brantz, 'The Domestication of Empire', 77; Demello, 'The Present and Future of Animal Domestication', 92.

²² Arnold-Scerbo, 'Cats & Women: Why the Connection?', *Biodiversity Heritage Library Blog* (July 26, 2017) <<https://blog.biodiversitylibrary.org/2017/07/cats-women-why-connection.html>> [April 4, 2019]; McKenna, *Pets, People, and Pragmatism*, 184; Engels, *Classical Cats*, 2, 153, 157-158, 163; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 101, 165-169; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 67, 78-80, 89-91, 94.

²³ Engels, *Classical Cats*, 163, 170-172; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 101-103, 107; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 58-59, 68; Kean, 'The Moments of Greyfriars Bobby', 38; Tague, 'The History of Emotional Attachment', 359; Arnold-Scerbo, 'Cats & Dogs', [April 4, 2019].

²⁴ Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 3, 107-108, 125.

paper is to complicate the notion of domesticity and the separation of women from the outside world, showing that this situation was not as straightforward as it sometimes is portrayed to be. Such a critical approach fits with current views on this ideal within academia.²⁵ Moreover, for many families it would remain an unachievable ideal, not having the (financial) resources for the woman to just be the homemaker. Often this was the case for ethnic minorities and women from lower classes. The ideal of domesticity did not consider their struggles or divergent views on homemaking; the same was true for regional differences. Domesticity thus mostly reflected North-Eastern, white, Anglo, middle-class women.²⁶ This paper is aware of this narrow image of domesticity, but still chooses to mainly analyze the North-East because this was the *hotspot* for the American cat fancy. The cities of New York, Boston and Chicago – the latter also deviating from the North-Eastern perspective – are analyzed, not compared, for this purpose.

While the main focus is on how cats were placed in the *ideal* of domesticity, this research also looks into the practice of domesticity – to the extent that this is possible – and how cats were involved in this. This is done by including real-life events such as cat shows or cat-related occupations, instead of only prescriptive material. Moreover, this research includes a critical perspective on the practice of petkeeping. Even though this practice was, and is, filled with love and affection, there were also more negative aspects, which are addressed. Conform to current trends within animal-human history of using ethological insights – that is, the study of animal behavior and psychology –, this research wants to include this occasionally as well.²⁷ A cat does not function or think in line with a human construction such as domesticity. Perhaps they were forced to participate in both practice and ideal, but in principle a cat would not align his or her behavior in order to comply. While the past might feel strange and unfamiliar to us – in its appearance, standards, morals, etcetera – a cat, or any other companion animal within a domestic setting, and the inclination to raise the status of pets, feels familiar to our own present-day experience.²⁸

²⁵ Davidson, *No More Separate Spheres*, 8-9, 11-12, 18-20; Warren, 'Separate Spheres', 262, 264-366, 270.

²⁶ Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 32-34; McHugh, *American Domesticity*, 5, 7-8, 192; Smith, 'New Paths to Power', 375-385.

²⁷ Sarah Cockram and Andrew Wells (eds.), *Animals and Humans between the Middle Ages and Modernity* (London and New York 2018) 5; Éric Baratay, 'The Giraffe's Journey in France (1826-7): Entering Another World', in: Clemens Wischermann, Aline Steinbrecher and Philip Howell, *Animal History in the Modern City: Exploring Liminality* (London 2018) 93; Philip Howell, 'Animals, Agency, and History', in: idem and Hilda Kean, *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History* (London and New York 2018) 206; Engels, *Classical Cats*, ix; Pearson, 'Dogs, History, and Agency', 136, 138-139, 145.

²⁸ Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 4; Ann-Janine Morey points this out regarding dogs, *Picturing Dogs*, 25.

This research uses ethological information to better understand the animal as historical actor and his or hers experience. The animal as historical actor is by now mostly recognized.²⁹ For example, cats could evoke a sympathetic reaction from humans, which an important component of the more general culture of sentimentality. Shirley Samuels argues that sentimentality produces spectacles that cross race, class and gender boundaries. A case could be made that sentimentality also crosses species boundaries, something which is already touched upon by Susan Pearson in her work of animal- and children's protection.³⁰ Regarding the animal's experience – that is, trying to understand their experience and how they acted and reacted –, it is important to recognize the limitations of this approach. As Erica Fudge points out, while it might be impossible to really grasp this aspect, we should continue to attempt this approach; it could yield interesting new perspectives. Sarah Cockram adds that in order to do so, historians must engage with the imaginative, so that we might make some sense of another being's world.³¹ This research occasionally includes this perspective as well.

One of the themes that is addressed in this thesis is the role of class. This can be seen in the context of differentiation between purebred cats and common cats – corresponding with the differences between higher- and lower-classes. Feral cats, for example, were not owned, they were not part of a home (anymore). This could quickly turn the role of beloved pet into that of nuisance that could, and should, be exterminated. Supposed class differences within cat society were often connected to what kind of breed the cat belonged to, therefore notions of breed, breeding or being purebred are addressed as well.³² The role of class is likewise visible in that those who

²⁹ Grier, *Pets in America*, 9; Howell, 'Animals, Agency, and History', 197-198; Wischermann, 'Liminality', 1; Fudge, 'Milking Other Men's Beast', 18, 28; Pearson, 'Dogs, History, and Agency', 129, 130, 132; Baratay, 'The Giraffe's Journey in France', 93; Tague, 'The History of Emotional Attachment', 358.

³⁰ Samuels, *The Culture of Sentiment*, 4-5, 6; Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 4, 9-10, 12-13; Lauren Berlant (ed.), *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York 2004) 4; Teresa Mangum, 'Narrative Dominion or The Animals Write Back? Animal Genres in Literature and the Arts', in: Kathleen Kete, *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire* (London 2014) 173; Jong, *Sentimentalism in Nineteenth-Century-American Literary and Cultural Practices*, 3; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 107-108; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 116-117; Tague, 'The History of Emotional Attachment', 353, 356, 358.

³¹ Fudge, 'Milking Other Men's Beast', 17-18; Sarah Cockram, 'Sleeve cat and lap dog: Affection, aesthetics and proximity to companion animals in Renaissance Mantua', in: idem and Andrew Wells, *Interspecies Interaction: Animals and Humans Between the Middle Ages and Modernity* (London and New York 2018) 34, 51-53; Cockram, *Animals and Humans*, 4, 5, 6-7; Baratay, 'The Giraffe's Journey in France', 91-93.

³² Philip Howell, 'Between Wild and Domestic, Animal and Human, Life and Death: The Problem of the Stray in the Victorian City', in: idem, Clemens Wischermann and Aline Steinbrecher, *Animal History in the Modern City: Exploring Liminality* (London 2018) 145, 147, 155; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, vii, 55-56; Philip Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 19-21; Wischermann, 'Liminality', 6, 7-8; Pemberton, 'Breeding and Breed', 394, 403, 409, 412; Grier, *Pets in America*, 10-11; Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 84, 85-91, 115-120; Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir*, 2, 137-138; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 149-150.

fought most for the bettering of animal welfare were from the higher- and middle-classes – sometimes even being accused of merely being motivated by class concerns. Nevertheless, Diana Beers in her history of American animal advocacy plainly dismisses this argument.³³

As it is not the intention to analyze the rise of petkeeping or domesticity, this research covers a period starting in 1870, when both topics were already well established.³⁴ Conversely, the status of cats as pets was still questioned – continuing to be victims of casual cruelty – making it interesting to study their specific role within the practice of petkeeping and domesticity in addition to the changes that occurred in this period.³⁵ Moreover, as pointed out above, animals were omnipresent in the past. This makes for the fact that they are present in many sources.³⁶ Therefore this research includes information from a variety of sources, also to incorporate many facets in the cultural interpretation of cats within the notion of domesticity. Due to many source results, a selection is made that focusses specifically on cats and domesticity, thereby risking the potential to be ignoring different perspectives on cats. This paper is aware of the limitation and does not deny the existence of other outlooks. Nonetheless, it is not the intention of the paper to include all possible connections this animal has had with human society in this period.

One of the sources used to conduct this research is literature on animals, or specifically cats. Manuals on taking care of pets, for example, grew in number at the end of the nineteenth century.³⁷ This literature addressed several points, such as how to take care of cats, diseases and their treatment, feline history, how to show and breed cats and what kind of animal they actually were. The books that were rather anecdotal in nature were aimed at a more juvenile public and, just like the other books, they addressed clearly the position the cat held in American society. Several books – both those aimed specifically at the cat or (domesticated) animals in general – have a more critical standpoint regarding felines; they counterbalance the books

³³ Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty*, 8-9; Lovett, *Conceiving the Future*, 7, 144, 146.

³⁴ Grier, *Pets in America*, 15-16; Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 5; Smith, 'New Paths to Power', 369, 375, 385.

³⁵ Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 15-16; Engels, *Classical Cats*, 159; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 149; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 2, 5; Kean, 'The Moments of Greyfriars Bobby', 28; Brantz, 'The Domestication of Empire', 77.

³⁶ Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 4; Grier, *Pets in America*, 132; Fudge, 'Milking Other Men's Beast', 17.

³⁷ Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 17; Several; Brantz, 'The Domestication of Empire', 79; Several databases are used to research these books: *A History of Cats, 1858-1922* <<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/browse/collection/HistoryOfCats>>; *MessyBeast Cats: Historical Cat Books*, only the American books <<http://messybeast.com/bookshelf/bookshelf-index.htm>>; *Hathi Trust Digital Library* <<https://www.hathitrust.org/>>.

written by cat-enthusiasts and provide a more nuanced image of cats and their place within society and domesticity.

Additionally, another kind of manual is included in this research, namely how to behave properly as a true woman and how to manage a home. During the nineteenth century, this kind of literature increased due to the new valorization of the home. Women were expected to know precisely how to create the perfect home.³⁸ However, some books showed how women could earn some money, taking care of her household in a different way. Articles from the woman's magazines *Harper's Bazaar* and *Good Housekeeping* are part of this research as well.³⁹ These books and magazines addressed the topics of cats, domestic ideals and divergent ways the cat could contribute to a household.

Newspapers that were published in the cities of Boston (Cambridge), Chicago and New York are also part of this research.⁴⁰ For each city, three newspapers are analyzed.⁴¹ They provide information on a variety of cat-related topics; ranging from cat shows to unusual stories about cats and their 'shenanigans'.⁴² It is not the intention of this paper to address the different newspapers – regarding their editor, circulation, political affiliation, etcetera – since this is not particularly relevant for this specific topic. Their main function is to include not just an animal-lover perspective, which is part of most other sources used for this research. Moreover, the cities of New York, Boston and Chicago all had their own SPCA's, who in turn published their own magazines. Articles from these magazines are used as sources as it tells more on the position the cat had, what still needed improvement and more on their care.⁴³ Finally, this research includes the first four volumes of the registers of the Beresford Cat Club – located in Chicago – to provide more insight into the operations of such a club.⁴⁴

³⁸ Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 21, 109-111, 145-146; Smith, 'New Paths to Power', 365-366; The databases used to access these books: *Home Economics Archive: Research, Tradition, History* <<http://hearth.library.cornell.edu/h/hearth/>>; *Hathi Trust Digital Library* <<https://www.hathitrust.org/>>.

³⁹ *Home Economics Archive: Research, Tradition, History* <<http://hearth.library.cornell.edu/h/hearth/>>.

⁴⁰ For the New York and Chicago newspapers: *Library of Congress: Chronicling America*: <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>>; for the Boston area (Cambridge) newspapers: *Cambridge Public Library's Historic Cambridge Newspaper Collection* <<https://cambridge.dlconsulting.com/>>; there were no newspapers available online for the city of Boston itself.

⁴¹ New York: *The New York Herald*; *New York Tribune*; *The Sun*; Chicago: *Chicago Daily Tribune*; *Chicago Eagle*; *The Day Book*; Boston: *Cambridge Chronicle*; *Cambridge Tribune*; *Cambridge Sentinel*.

⁴² Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 114-115.

⁴³ New York: *Our Animal Friends*; Chicago: *Humane Advocate*; Boston: *Our Dumb Animal Friends*; the database used to analyze these magazines is: *Hathi Trust Digital Library* <<https://www.hathitrust.org/>>.

⁴⁴ These sources are provided by John Smithson, who is the curator of the Harrison Weir Collection – where many of the sources are part of – and co-editor of The History Project (from the Cat Fanciers' Association Foundation) <<http://www.cat-o-pedia.org/>>. He also provided the book: Frances Simpson, *The Book of Cat* (London 1903).

As pointed out above, regarding domesticity it is always important to keep in mind the difference between ideal and practice. This also holds true for the woman's literature and articles that gave advice as this was from the standpoint of a model household. The literature on pets for a juvenile audience likewise had a higher aim in mind: be kind to animals. Although perhaps to a lesser degree, the manuals and articles in the SPCA magazines on taking care of pets can also be seen as such. All these sources told how it should be done, how a household should look like and how to interact with your pet cat. Several books and articles also explored why this animal was not actually part of this ideal image. Nevertheless, this focus on an ideal image – where reality might be obscured – does not have to be a problem as this research is interested in ideal and practice. The newspaper articles and also several articles from the SPCA's magazines tell more about cats and what actually did happen with these animals. The interaction between cats and domesticity, analyzing both the ideal and practice, can be interpreted with the collection of sources aimed specifically at this interplay.

The first chapter focuses on the more general imagery of the cat in American society. It portrays the cat in a positive light, naming the cat as graceful, dignified and loving. However, it also casts the cat as ruthless, undomesticated and useless. The second chapter addresses the cat within the home environment and his or her role as family member. The different kind of cats that could live within the household – respectively, your parlor- and kitchen cats – are considered as well. The final chapter shows how the cat and domesticity could be transmitted to the public sphere, for example via business ventures where the cat was considered a crucial component.

1. A CIVILIZATION DIVIDED: FROM BIRD DEFENDERS TO CAT INTELLECTUALS

The first chapter discusses in a more general way how the cat was perceived in American society. Where some people saw this animal as a wild, ruthless predator, others saw cats as delicate creatures, who were capable of showing love and intelligence. A frequent source of dispute between cat lovers and -haters was bird protection and the role of the cat within, this discussion is addressed as well.

Depending on the used definition for domestication, it could be argued that cats were only domesticated a little more than a century ago, when their breeding was to a degree controlled by humans. Yet, there are multiple examples of cat-human relationships that go back in time a long way. For example, when cats chose, to a certain extent, to enter a relationship with humans by settling close to human settlements most likely in ancient Egypt. After a while, humans could probably handle kittens and eventually full-grown cats as they recognized their potential. They were welcomed because of their value as cult-object, economic purpose and even as a companion. This evolution has mostly been the story of zoology, evolutionary biology, anthropology and archeology. However, this research rather focuses on the cultural side of domestication and how animals were established as part of human society and families – or how they were actually not part of this according to some.¹ This is done by highlighting in this chapter several characteristics, or supposed characteristics, of the cat. It shows that once animals came into contact with humans they were attributed a cultural identity; where the focus was less on biology and more and more on human culture and views.² Regarding the cat, it became visible that cats were given several cultural identities, showing their ambivalent status. These identities could also strengthen their connection with domesticity or problematize this. It could also affect how they were treated.

‘[The cat] never was but half-domesticated at best, (...) he is yet essentially a wild animal, almost incapable of true domestication’, apparently, some people were convinced that the cat was not really a domesticated animal – striking at the core of what it meant to be a pet.³ Domestication is the conquering of the wild, taming it and placing it as part of civilization – animals could represent ‘the wild’ or nature, and

¹ James A. Serpell, ‘The domestication and history of the cat’, in: Dennis C. Turner and Patrick Bateson, *The Domestic Cat: the Biology of its Behaviour* (Cambridge 2014) 152-153; McKenna, *Pets, People, and Pragmatism*, 185; Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 12, 18-19; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 7-8; Engels, *Classical Cats*, ix.

² Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 4; McKenna, *Pets, People, and Pragmatism*, 14; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 16.

³ Eugene Davenport, *Domesticated Animals and Plants: A Brief Treatise Upon the Origin and Development of Domesticated Races, With Special Reference to the Methods of Improvement* (Boston 1910) 25.

pets the ultimately tamed 'wild animal'. Yi-Fu Tuan, who specializes in human geography, points out that domestication is domination, it is not a relation between equals. Most important, it is mastery and control over another being in order to manage said being. He, and with him many authors, see the dog, in the role of pet, as domesticated animal *par excellence*. This animal, as pet, shows both affection and dominance; they give humans the opportunity to show love, devotion and self-sacrifice, but also to exercise arbitrary power over this dependent animal.⁴

Terms such as conquering, civilization, domination all remind one of the violence that accompanied human conquest – something which historian Harriet Ritvo notes as well. Her work is on British animal-human relations, therefore the link with human conquest is quite clear – as it were the heydays of British imperialism.⁵ Nonetheless, in the United States such a link also existed as there was a strong 'us versus them' feeling when more and more non-white non-Anglo people entered the country. These could be Italian and Irish immigrants on the East coast, or immigrants from Asian origin and Mexicans and indigenous people already living in the area on the West coast. 'They' were different, considered as less and most importantly they were in dire need of civilizing, American influences. They likewise needed to be 'conquered', 'dominated' and 'civilized', just as happened with animals such as pets. Therefore, the notion that pets became increasingly part of- and dominated by human civilization was part of an overall sentiment in American society. In addition, just the fact that certain people – in this case white Anglo-Americans – were capable of domesticating and utilizing animals was a sign of being civilized: it showed your capabilities to control the world, nature and animals around you to do what you wanted, to make them work for you.⁶

Within the period studied the cat was seen as merely tamed, living outside of human civilization and thus out or reach of human control. A cat could not necessarily be used to boast about controlling nature and taming the wild as they were considered unconquered and undomesticated and thus not under human control. This clearly shows how the cat as pet might not be as suited as, for example, a dog and considered of as not being a domestic animal. Even judges ruled that cats were not really domesticated animals. Cats had no standing in the eyes of the law. Someone had shot a dog chasing a cat. The shooter was sued and was found guilty as the

⁴ Tuan, *Dominance & Affection*, 99, 101, 102, 171; Other examples: Kaplan, 'Manifest Domesticity', 184; Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 3, 17-23, 40; Morey, *Picturing Dogs*, 19, 25; Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 2; Brantz, 'The Domestication of Empire', 76; Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 18-19.

⁵ Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 17.

⁶ Brantz, 'The Domestication of Empire', 75-76.

dog was chasing a non-domestic animal. The judge stated the convict had no reason to shoot the dog. Cats were seen as selfish; they only stayed around or ‘acted domesticated’ to get some comforts of civilization: ‘[The cat] has not been subdued, confined or controlled, except in rare cases, but is to all intents and purposes a wild animal. In most cases it stays in the home of man, mainly because of the warmth of his fire, the food that it eats and its affection for the location where it was reared.’⁷

However, cat lovers could agree on the fact that the cat might be not that domesticated – although they rather called it independence. For instance, veterinarian and cat enthusiast Rush Huidekoper explained it in a more nuanced way. Despite their long association with mankind and domestication, cats have just preserved more of their ancestral traits than other domestic animals, he stated.⁸ Essayist Agnes Repplier defended the undomesticated tendencies of the cat even further, simultaneously criticizing those who could not appreciate the independent, ‘undomesticated’ inclinations of felines: ‘Rude and masterful souls resent this fine self-sufficiency in a domestic animal, and require that it shall have no will but theirs, no pleasure that does not emanate from them’, she contemplated on her experiences as a cat owner.⁹ The independent predisposition of the cat is further addressed below.

Another characteristic associated with cats was their predatory and carnivorous nature. They were even being called ‘the most perfect embodiment of the idea of a “beast of prey”’ since their entire body was built for predatory purpose – see image 1 and 2.¹⁰ Nowadays, cats

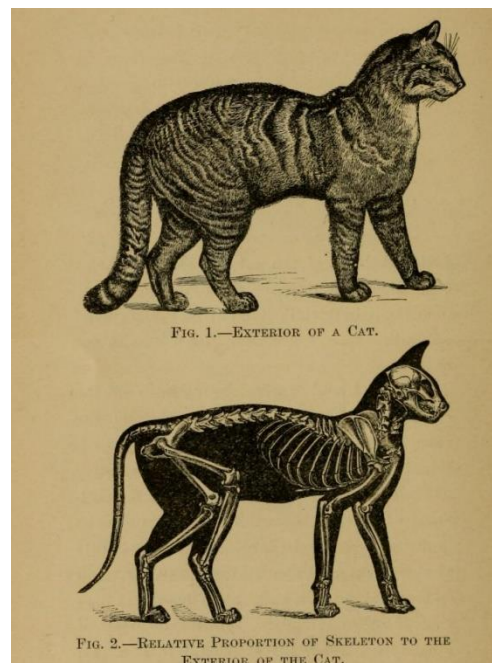


Image 1: Body and skeleton of the cat. Huidekoper, *The Cat*, 22 (1895).

⁷ Edward Howe Forbush, *The Domestic Cat: Bird Killer, Mouser and Destroyer of Wild Life, Means of Utilizing and Controlling it* (Boston 1916) 24-25, 7, 16; Other examples: Gos DeVooigt and Charles William Burkett (US editor, *Our Domestic Animals: Their Habits, Intelligence and Usefulness* (Boston 1907) 76; Ernest Menault, *The Intelligence of Animals, With Illustrative Anecdotes* (New York 1872) 180; Ernest Ingersoll, ‘Cat, Domestic’, in: George Edwin Rines, *The Encyclopedia Americana* (1920); W.B. Thornton, ‘The Case Against the Housecat’, *Good Housekeeping* V.42 (April 1906) 388; ‘Cats and Cat Lovers’, *Cambridge Chronicle* (April 20, 1895) 12; ‘Judge Rules Kitty Cat is a Wild Beast’, *The Day Book* (April 9, 1912) 31; Mivart, *The Cat*, 1.

⁸ Rush Shippen Huidekoper, *The Cat, a Guide to the Classification and Varieties of Cats and a Short Treatise Upon Their Care, Diseases, and Treatment* (New York 1895) 35, 37-38.

⁹ Agnes Repplier is quoted by Helen Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 70-71.

¹⁰ Davenport, *Domesticated Animals and Plants*, 65; Other examples: Marvin R. Clark and Alphonse Leon Grimaldi, *Pussy and Her Language; Including a Paper on the Wonderful Discovery of the Cat Language* (New York 1895) 80; James, *The Angora Cat*, 10, 25, 68; Mivart, *The Cat*, 2, 493; Winslow, *Concerning*

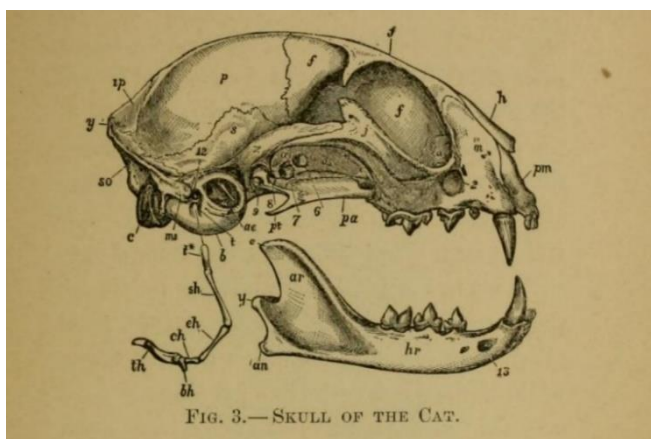


Image 2: Skull of the cat; showing the canines used for the cat's predatory nature. Huidekoper, *The Cat*, 25 (1895).

are still seen as skilled predators who have created specialized hunting techniques to maximize their success.¹¹ A great advantage of course was that this could be deployed against the rodents that were a problem in many buildings.¹² Although scientists do not necessarily agree on why cats bring home prey, some argue that for the cat, offering dead animals to his or hers human owner, is

a way to show the cooperative component of cat-human relationships.¹³ Still, many – even cat lovers – questioned, or condemned the way numerous cats played with their prey, mutilating them in the process. Some justified this behavior: it was a way for the cat to practice hunting. Every time a mouse escaped he or she was caught again, creating a more perfect killing machine with every pounce.¹⁴ The cat's predatory nature, combined with the cruelty they could inflict on their prey, was enough for many to see the cat as a depraved animal. For example cats were seen as 'a thoroughly selfish animal (...). Sly and treacherous as her untamed kindred of the forests (...) she receives no higher commendation, and is even accused of concealing her talons in her velvety paws when matters go pleasantly with her, and ready to use them (...) when crossed in her purposes.'¹⁵

The amount of literature that stated that the cat should get only a little meat is noteworthy. Meat would be unhealthy for them or it could ruin their coats – which,

Cats, 263; Menault, *The Intelligence of Animals*, 298; Huidekoper, *The Cat*, 2-4; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 7, 14, 28-29; Thornton, 'The Case Against the Housecat', 387.

¹¹ Dennis C. Turner and Othmar Meister, 'Hunting Behavior of the domestic cat', in: idem and Patrick Bateson, *The Domestic Cat: The Biology of its Behaviour* (Cambridge 2014) 111, 112; Engels, *Classical Cats*, 3-5.

¹² Lee Saunders Crandall, *Pets and How to Care for Them* (New York 1921) 31; Thomas G. Gentry, *Intelligence in Plants and Animals* (New York 1900) 297; Olive Thorne-Miller, 'Pets in the Home: VII – Cats of High Degree', *Harper's Bazaar* V.26 (March 25, 1893) 232; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 14; Mivart, *The Cat*, 1.

¹³ John W.S. Bradshaw, *Cat Sense: How the New Feline Science Can Make You a Better Friend to Your Pet* (New York 2013) 205; McKenna, *Pets, People, and Pragmatism*, 211.

¹⁴ Olive Thorne Miller, *Funny Friends, or, Queer Pets at Marcy's* (New York c. 1892) 97, 140; Mivart, *The Cat*, 368-369; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 7, 14-15; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 242.

¹⁵ Gentry, *Intelligence in Plants and Animals* (New York 1900) 295; Other examples: Laura C. Holloway, *Hearthstone; or, Life at Home, a Household Manual. Containing Hints and Helps for Home Making; Home Furnishing; Decoration Amusement; Health Directions; the Sick-Room; the Nursery; the Library; the Laundry; etc.* (Chicago 1886) 341; Kate Thorn, 'Kate Thorn's Defense of Cats', *Our Dumb Animals* V.7 (September 1874) 27; Dr. Stables, "Don't You Believe It!" *Our Dumb Animals* V.33 (October 1900) 58; *Cats – Ancient and Modern*, *Humane Advocate* V.6 (May 1911) 157-158; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 13.

during the heydays of cat showing, would be a major problem. Cats rather needed milk – preferably on their own, special saucer: ‘Milk is not only the traditional diet of the cat, but also forms one of the principal articles of food for it. (...) Bread (...) and the ordinary crackers, water biscuits, or oatmeal biscuit, can be added to the milk. (...) vegetables should be given from time to time’, meat was only mentioned as something occasional.¹⁶ Fortunately, for the cat’s health, not everyone agreed with this. As cats are hypercarnivores, they absolutely require meat and cannot digest milk.¹⁷ Dorothy Champion, in her book on cats and considered a classic, pointed out: ‘(...) cats are carnivorous animals (...). These being the natural condition, why should we not follow them, instead of thinking we can alter nature by trying to raise carnivorous animals on cooked meat, milk and cereals?’¹⁸ Within the collection of sources used for this research she was one of the few who specifically noted this. This is striking if one considers the above paragraphs and the emphasis her contemporaries placed on the predator and carnivorous nature of the feline species. As Champion rightly so questioned, why would one want to alter this natural tendency?

When again looking at *Dominance & Affection* by Tuan it could be a way to create a more desirable pet. A pet must be submissive and lose much of his or hers natural vigor and tendencies to have a place within the household. Philosopher Erin McKenna does place valid warning regarding this viewpoint: if domesticated animals, and especially pets, are not natural and that they thus show no natural behavior in the human conditions in which they are kept, it consequently relies on the notion of nature that places humans outside, or even above it – which is not a desirable viewpoint. With this warning in mind the practice of giving cats milk still raises questions. As most felines continued to roam about – the only domesticated animal to do so – doing their ‘cat-thing’, the domestic or submissive nature of the cat was questioned by cat lovers and opponents alike. By trying to get them adjusted to a non-carnivorous, human-made diet it could be a way to still alter at least one natural, or detrimental, tendency of cats: their predatory, or even cruel, predisposition. Cat’s

¹⁶ Huidekoper, *The Cat*, 79-80; Other examples: John Woodroffe Hill *The Diseases of the Cat* (New York 1901) 3; Thomas M. Earl, *Pets of the Household: Their Care in Health and Disease* (Columbus 1895) 156; Nelson Slater Mayo, *The Care of Animals: A book of Brief and Popular Advice on the Diseases and Ailments of Farm Animals* (New York and London 1903) 37; Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 53; James, *The Angora Cat*, 16.

¹⁷ Bradshaw, *Cat Sense*, 70-72, 88.

¹⁸ Dorothy Bevill Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book: Containing Chapters on ‘colour breeding’, ‘showing’, ‘conditioning’, ‘judging’, ‘diseases and their treatment’, ‘how to raise and treat the show and pet cat’, and many valuable prescriptions* (New York 1909) 60, 63-64, 80-81; Another example: A.T.D., ‘Mistakes About Cats’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.5 (August 1872) 223.

carnivorous nature rather gave them the inclination to challenge human power, rather than to flee or serve them – of course the size of the housecat not being to their advantage.¹⁹

Another recurrent sentiment in society was the supposed uselessness of the cat: '(...) the only animal which has been tolerated, esteemed, and at times worshipped, without having a single distinctly valuable quality.'²⁰ An obvious way to show the fault in this line of thinking would be to point out the services cats have provided in catching rodents who threatened the health and property of humans. Historian Donald Engels even argues that the cat-human relationship has been the most important relationship in the last four millennia as cats played a fundamental, although frequently overlooked, role in the development of European society. He claims that Europe would have been substantially poorer and sicker for the last millennia if it was not for the rodent-catching abilities of cats.²¹ Nevertheless, this view was rebuked during the research period covered by this paper. Those who considered cats useless thought they did not really catch that many mice and rats – see image 3. It is true that it depends on individual cats whether they are successful hunters

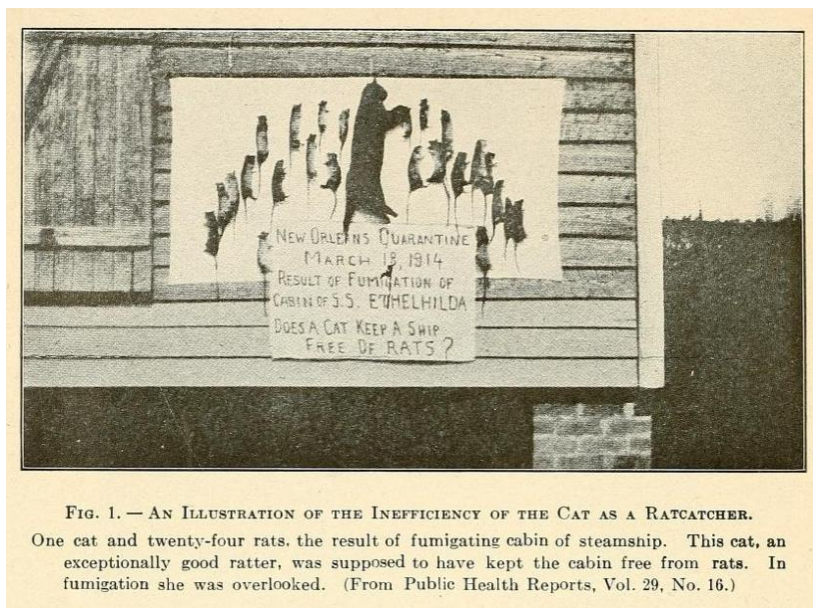


FIG. 1. — AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE INEFFICIENCY OF THE CAT AS A RATCATCHER. One cat and twenty-four rats, the result of fumigating cabin of steamship. This cat, an exceptionally good ratter, was supposed to have kept the cabin free from rats. In fumigation she was overlooked. (From Public Health Reports, Vol. 29, No. 16.)

Image 3: 'Proof' of the uselessness of the cat. He was killed with all the rats he was supposed to catch. Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 62-63 (1916).

or not.²² Still, even if this quality was acknowledged it was still questionable if this was seen as good enough, as one author stated it: 'Catching mice is scarcely ground enough for placing the cat among the aristocracy of animals. (...) We must seek further then (...) to account for the privileges allowed to cats in the economy of

¹⁹ Tuan, *Dominance & Affection*, 107; McKenna, *Pets, People, and Pragmatism*, 16; Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 261 Kean, 'The Moments of Greyfriars Bobby', 37; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 119.

²⁰ Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, *Domesticated Animals, Their Relation to Man and to His Advancement in Civilization* (New York 1895) 51; Other examples: 'Concerning the Cat', *Our Animal Friends* V.23 (July 1896) 244; 'The Domestic Cat', *Cambridge Chronicle* (December 14, 1878) 8; Davenport, *Domesticated Animals and Plants*, 235; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 87; Gentry, *Intelligence in Plants and Animals*, 297.

²¹ Engels, *Classical Cats*, 1-2, 14.

²² Turner, 'Hunting behavior of the domestic cat', 115.

the home.²³ Ritvo, in *The Animal Estate*, points out that humans liked animals who showed qualities of an ‘industrious, docile and willing human servant’ best – such as dogs and horses; animals who in a way proved that they were created for humans to use. As cats were deemed useless by some it is understandable why some people did not like them: they were not the perfect docile servant, they could not please humans.²⁴

Thus far the mostly negative image of the cat has been addressed. These sentiments seemed to culminate in the bird protection that really started to become important around the turn of the century. Cats were accused of being the most dangerous threat to song- and insect-eating birds. Obviously cats themselves were unable to differentiate between the value of a rodent or bird, or at least, they did not care which animal they caught. Cat’s hunting

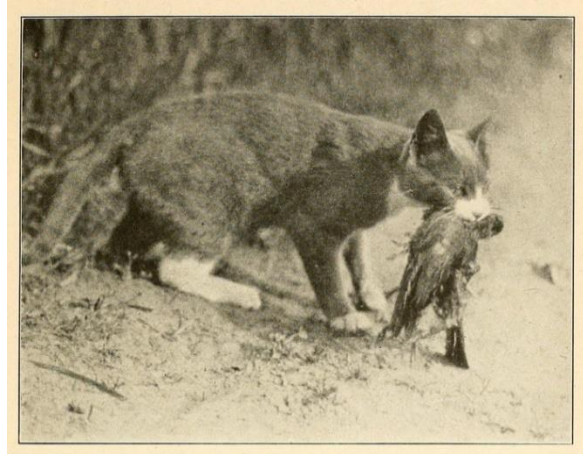


Image 4: Vagabond cat with robin. Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 22-23 (1916).

technique can best be described as opportunistic; they caught prey more randomly or in proportion to their availability.²⁵ Felines that had become feral were the worst; as they knew human society they ventured to enter it, coming in places where wild animals never dared to come. Newspapers featured warnings to cat owners, if they could please keep their cats inside, especially during the night and breeding season.²⁶ Eugene Davenport, professor in thremmatology (the science of breeding animals and plants under domestication) was not a fan of cats, especially because of the havoc they caused among the bird population. ‘(...) as a relentless foe of birds he has really become an enemy of our civilization. The sooner he could become extinct the better for our song birds on which we depend so much not only for our pleasure but for

²³ Holloway, *Hearthstone*, 340; Other examples: Arthur Chapouille, ‘The House Cat: A Family Friend whose superabundance becomes a peril – A Plea for Puss and Her Victims’, *Good Housekeeping* V.52 (May 1911) 569; ‘Cats’, *The New York Herald* (July 23, 1879) 6; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 67; Thornton, ‘The Case Against the Housecat’, 387.

²⁴ Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 17-23, 37-38; Tuan, *Dominance & Affection*, 2; Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 3; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 7-8.

²⁵ Turner, ‘Hunting behavior of the domestic cat’, 113-114, 120.

²⁶ ‘Scat the Cats’, *Cambridge Chronicle* (May 22, 1920) 5; ‘Watch Your Cats and Give Birds a Chance’, *Cambridge Tribune* (May 22, 1920) 5; ‘Much Money Wasted in Feeding Homeless Cats’, *Chicago Eagle* (May 5, 1917) 9; Mayo, *The Care of Animals*, 37; Shaler, *Domesticated Animals*, 55, 258; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 94; Davenport, *Domesticated Animals and Plants*, 56; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 29, 49; Chapouille, ‘A Plea for Puss and Her Victims’, 566, 567, 569; Thornton, ‘The Case Against the Housecat’, 388.

protection against the depredations of insects', showing that he not only saw the cat as threat to birds, but as a threat for the entire civilization.²⁷

This was even taken a nudge further at the time the First World War broke out. It was stated that birds were trying to do their part in the war effort by protecting the crops from insects, thus helping to feed the hungry masses both within the country and abroad. Therefore, it was reasoned, should we, humans, do all we can to assist this creature.²⁸ The cat was a threat to the war effort, for that what the country, American civilization, fought for overseas. Another article specifically links this to the supposed uselessness of felines:

Consider the number of these animals in this country which are daily fed with good food from their masters' tables and one can readily see that thousands of tons of food which we and our allies need are wasted in the upkeep of animal which is almost if not entirely useless. (...) almost every luxury is taxed that we may feed and clothe our soldiers and wage a righteous war. The greatest luxury and the most useless that we have, the house cat, is left unnoticed.

Here it was not so much the threat cats posed for human's allies, birds, but rather cats themselves in their role as pets – that is, being fed and not necessarily providing services. They were fed the best steak and lamb daily, but what about starving Belgian children or Serbian soldiers fighting against the 'world enemy', the author wondered.²⁹

Ornithologist Edward Forbush centered his book around the bird-killing propensities of the housecat. Although he admitted that it was not really the cats fault – as they were brought to the New World by men, causing a disturbance in the natural balance, and just followed their natural tendencies – he was still not enthusiastic about them. Continuing in the line of the earlier mentioned views on the cruelty of cats towards their prey he stated that the cat's 'path is a trail of blood'. With his book Forbush wanted to proof the destructive habits of the cat, as he thought most cat owners were oblivious to this behavior of their beloved pet. His main solution was to eliminate all strays and to confine all cats just as all other domestic animals were confined in homes, stables or cages. They would become a wild animal the moment they were allowed to roam free, only to be controlled by a rifle – see image 5 and 6.

²⁷ Davenport, *Domesticated Animals and Plants*, 235; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 59.

²⁸ 'Birds Versus Cats', *Cambridge Tribune* (May 25, 1918) 5.

²⁹ 'War and the Cat', *The Sun* (November 22, 1917) 8.

Forbush concluded his work in the following way: 'Animals were domesticated because of their utility to man in his struggle upward from savagery. The sympathy which he feels for his helpers and pets (...) is of secondary consideration. (...) Insomuch as the creatures fails in [destroying rodents], in so far as it destroys other more useful or nobler forms of life, in such measure it becomes an evil and a pest.'³⁰ Again showing how cats were seen as standing outside of civilization – fitting with the discourse on cats and their domestication. They were useless and other beings were more valuable and nobler – in that they protected crops from insects, were beautiful to see and hear and were reserved for human beings to be killed as game. Friends of the cat came to their

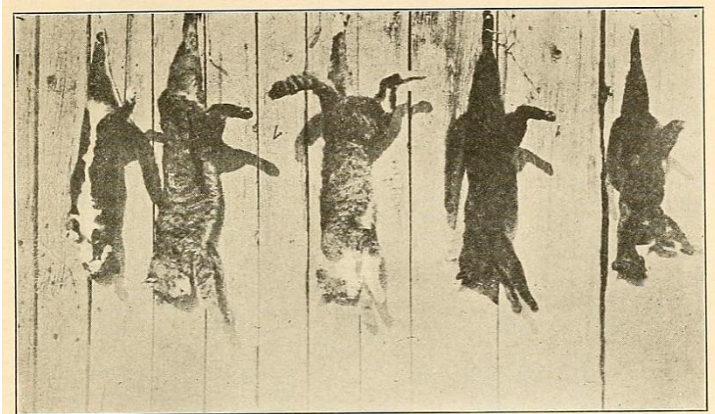


FIG. 1. — EXPENSIVE CATS.
Five cats which, it is estimated, cost New York \$1,000 by destroying game birds at the State Game Farm. (Photograph by courtesy of Mr. Herbert K. Job. See page 49.)

Image 5: Cats killed who cost the state money because they destroyed birds. Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 48-49 (1916).

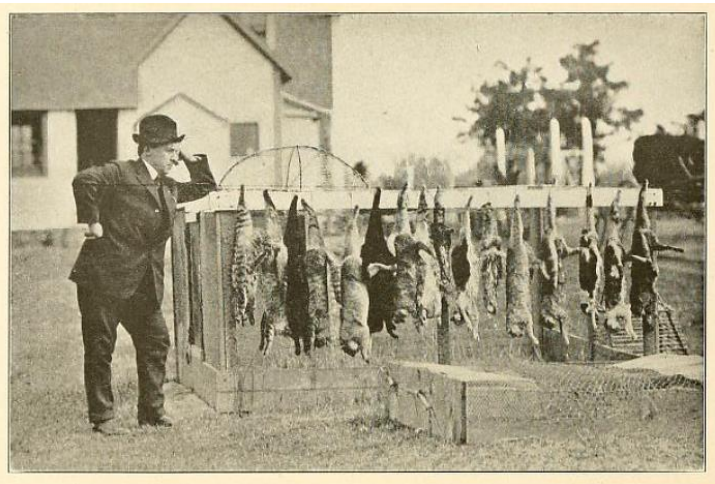


Image 6: Cats killed by Massachusetts state authorities to preserve game birds. Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 22-23 (1916).

defense: many more birds were slaughtered for millinery use or by sportsmen than killed by cats, they stated – see image 7.³¹ Moreover, only the predatory nature of cats was under attack, while dogs possessed this as well.³²

At present, cats still try to balance their natural tendency and legacy of being predators and their new role as companions – where this tendency is not appreciated.³³ While it cannot be denied that cats hunt on birds, ecologist B.M. Fitzgerald points out that actually there has been little research on feline impact on bird population. He finds this remarkable as many people notice cats catching birds – as this

³⁰ Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 7-8, 15, 28-29, 32, 59, 80, 87, 97, 108.

³¹ 'Cats – Ancient and Modern', *Humane Advocate* V.6 (May 1911) 158; Mary Craige Yarrow, 'A Defense of Cats', *Humane Advocate* V.11 (June 1916) 179.

³² Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 161.

³³ Bradshaw, *Cat Sense*, 207.

often happens during the day – and people like to have birds in their garden and thus care more about cats killing birds than rodents. It shows that the debate on the cats predatory nature continues today. Still, overall it seems that cats do not really influence bird population – except when it concerns populations living on islands; they rather catch small mammals.³⁴ While it would be incorrect to just implement this result in the context of 1870-1920, it is presumable that the influence of the cat on bird populations was more or less exaggerated. Anthrozoologist John Bradshaw points out that currently cats are still used as scapegoat when bird populations decline – for example in present-day debates in Australia. This probably has to do with the fact that all the hunting the pet cat does is in principle unnecessary – as they have sufficient food at home –, that it is a quite visible practice and the continued existence of anti-cat sentiments – even within the scientific community.³⁵

Even though some people thus saw felines as useless, cruel and wild, others attributed the animal with great intelligence and affection. Marvin Clark even wrote his book on cat language specifically to help the cat as ‘the suffering and the tears and the cries of the Cat command the sympathy of all right-minded people who rest

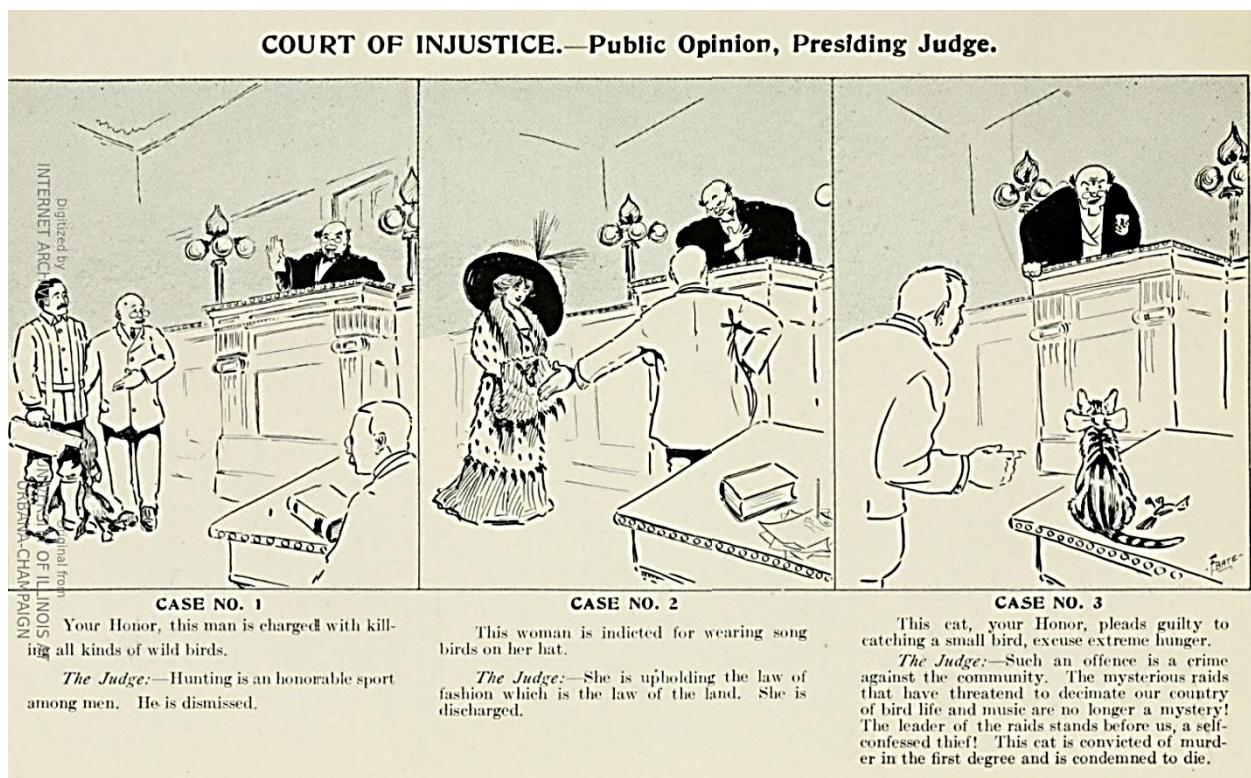


Image 7: Court of injustice; a cat is sentenced to death for killing birds, while the sportsmen and the woman wearing a feathered hat walk away freely. *Humane Advocate* V.6, 159 (1911).

³⁴ B.M. Fitzgerald, ‘Diet of domestic cats and their impact on prey populations’, Dennis C. Turner and Patrick Bateson, *The Domestic Cat: The Biology of its Behaviour* (Cambridge 2014) 141, 144; Bradshaw, *Cat Sense*, xxi.

³⁵ Bradshaw, *Cat Sense*, 141-142.

in peace under the “Banner of Freedom”.³⁶ He wanted to redeem the cat as they had such a bad reputation. For instance, this could be done by referring to the cat’s intelligence. This, in turn, could be demonstrated by pointing out that they possessed a degree of reasoning as they observed humans opening doors and were able to imitate this action. Many also stated how they thought their cats could do tricks or that they were even smarter than dogs.³⁷ The most common example that people gave to proof the intelligence of cats was their capability to find their homes back over great distances. Not only would this show intelligence, but also the love the cat had for example her kittens. Sometimes even travelling an enormous distance of perhaps forty miles multiple times to collect an entire litter.³⁸ Nevertheless, many people also used this trait of cats to proof their inability to love people. They only loved the place where they lived and not their housemates.³⁹

An approach where the intelligence of cats was shown was deemed necessary. Often people used the term ‘sagacity’ to indicate intelligence in animals – since only humans could be truly ‘intelligent’. However, sagacity rather specified the animal’s ability to adapt to their human surroundings and to please people – that is those animals that were the best servants. By using this term it again reinforced human dominion over those animals possessing sagacity.⁴⁰ Therefore, by showing that cats were intelligent beings, their defenders actually tried to make them more part of human civilization, showing that feline usefulness existed as well.

Alphonse Grimaldi in his essay on cat language – as part of Clark’s book – made an interesting remark: ‘(...) the dog has been given far more and better opportunities for learning and refinement than the Cat. The dog is the constant companion of man. He goes with him everywhere, to his place of business, to his farm, to his work of every nature, (...) to the enjoyment of his sports, to the tavern (...)’ Subsequently, according to him, the cat did not have the same chances in the public sphere as the dog, as he continued: ‘(...) the Cat has never been given such privilege; consequently, to compare the Cat with the dog, in the matter of intelligence, is an apparent

³⁶ Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 5, 7.

³⁷ John Hayne Acton, *Uncle Jack’s Discovery: Sixty Short, True, Strange, Interesting and Instructive Stories About Animals, Birds, Fishes, Reptiles and Insects* (Portland 1915) 56-59; Mivart, *The Cat*, 10, 366-367, 385-386; Menault, *The Intelligence of Animals*, 299; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 9, 11; Shaler, *Domesticated Animals* 51; James, *The Angora Cat*, 24; Gentry, *Intelligence in Plants and Animals*, 296. Ingersoll, ‘Cat, Domestic’.

³⁸ Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 52; Menault, *The Intelligence of Animals*, 299-301; Mivart, *The Cat*, 366; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 21, 31; DeVoogt, *Our Domesticated Animals*, 81.

³⁹ Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 13, 71; Shaler, *Domesticated Animals*, 50, 51, 55; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 16, 18; Gentry, *Intelligence in Plants and Animals*, 295; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 42; ‘Concerning the Cat’, 244; Ingersoll, ‘Cat, Domestic’.

⁴⁰ Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 37-38; Kean, ‘The Moments of Greyfriars Bobby’, 38.

injustice.⁴¹ Such a statement made on behalf of the cat brings to mind another creature that did not have the same kind of opportunities in the outside world: female humans. It was questioned whether higher education would distract a woman from her more important task in life: being a mother, wife and homemaker. For most people, the study of homemaking would remain the most important education women could receive. Women also pointed out that they were not necessarily less intelligent than men, they just did not have the opportunity to grow intellectually.⁴² This can be considered an example in the way the interlinkage between women and cats could manifest itself: both suffered the same injustices, were barred from the public sphere and unable to reach their full potential.

Cat lovers were obviously more positive on their favorite animal. ‘There is something about the cat’s soft, quiet ways, dignified reserve and graceful movements (...)’, as shown, enthusiasts rather saw them as graceful, refined and dignified animals.⁴³ This gracefulness of felines could stem from their appearance. Their facial features were human-like, or even baby-like, without much interference in the breeding process, making them have a visual appeal – see image 8. Combined with the fact that they were open for a relationship with humans, this is what made them for many appealing as companion.⁴⁴

Nonetheless, cats cherished their freedom too much to give it up for servility to man. As said, cat lovers actually appreciated the independent nature of their pet cats; they had retained their self-respect: ‘They come as homeless beggars to your door and claim you hospitality as a right, not as a

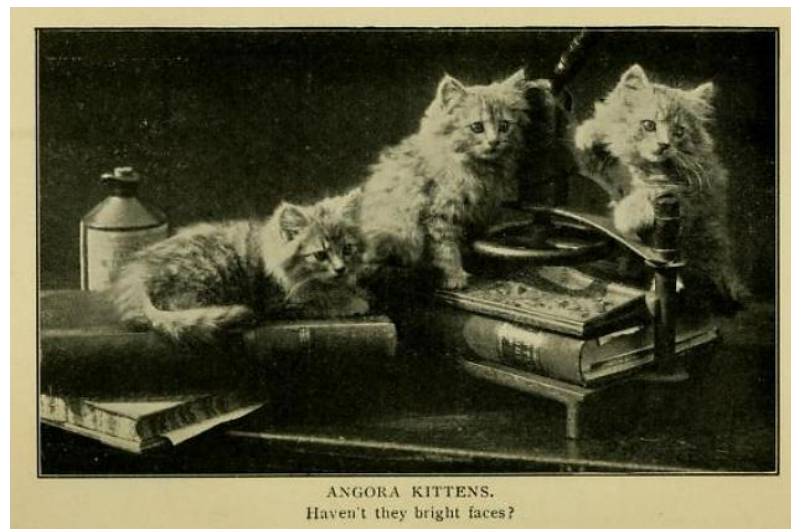


Image 8: Angora kittens with bright faces. Biggle, *Biggle's Pet Book*, 6 (1900).

⁴¹ Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 81, 102.

⁴² Welter, ‘The Cult of True Womanhood’, 166-168; Arnold-Scerbo, ‘Cats & Women’ [April 4, 2019].

⁴³ ‘Cats and their Care’, *Human Advocate* V.6 (November 1910) 29; Other examples: Grace Greenwood, *Heads and Tails: Studies and Stories of Pets* (New York 1874) 135; Sam Rockwell Reed, *Offthoughts About Women and Other Things* (Chicago 1888) 4; L.B.U., ‘Cats’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.5 (September 1872) 231; ‘Cats’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.6 (September 1873) 32; ‘Queen Puss’s Reign’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.40 (October 1907) 77; ‘Library Chat’, *Cambridge Tribune* (January 16, 1892) 6; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 36, 161; Mivart, *The Cat*, 2, 366; Thorne-Miller, *Funny Friends*, 54, 190; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 31, 51, 83-84, 102; Crandall, *Pets and How to Care for Them*, 31.

⁴⁴ Bradshaw, *Cat Sense*, 188-190.

charity.’ When called, cats only came when it pleased them. Moreover, every cat was seen as an individual with their own personality – whereas dogs were either a good or a bad dog.⁴⁵ However, this graceful, or even sensual character could also be pulled to the extreme: ‘(...) cats possess strong passions (...). The strength of their sexual feelings is notorious (...)’.⁴⁶

It is striking to see that within the collection of sources used for this research only one specific reference to this so-called sexual nature of the cat is found – perhaps because of the more prudish time. Other examples were more indirect mentions, namely by referring to cats being sensual or how at night they would intermingle with the ‘wrong crowd’ – making at the same time a great deal of noise, sometimes referred to as the ‘midnight orchestra’.⁴⁷ Furthermore, secondary literature refers to this supposed promiscuous nature of the cat; for example, Professor in English Katharine Rogers states that cats helped in the creation of a cold, unfaithful image of femininity. This, in turn, could be used to validate resentment to unanswered love of a man towards a woman. Accordingly, the natural propensities of the cat – that is, searching, or loudly vocalizing, for a mate or several mates – were seen as immoral for human females, while both were condemned for this supposed immorality. Or cats became a tool to convey a sense of sensuality on the female subject.⁴⁸ Within the context of domesticity the sexuality of women was often encountered as problematic as they were supposed to lack any sexual passion and stay clear of any sexual indulgences;

⁴⁵ Marguerite Tracy, ‘Queer Things About Cats’, *Our Animal Friends* V.22 (July 1895) 248; Other examples: ‘The First Cats’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.9 (August 1876) 19; ‘Cat’s Caprices’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.40 (March 1908) 163; ‘The Companionable Cat’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.44 (September 1911) 63; Frances M. Butler, ‘The Cat of History and Folk-Lore’, *Our Animal Friends* V.33 (September 1905) 30; ‘Interesting Facts About Cats’, *Humane Advocate* V.13 (July 1918) 178; Olive, Thorne-Miller, ‘Pets of the Household: The Queen of All’, *Harper’s Bazaar* V.20 (June 11, 1887) 415; ‘Home Duties and Pleasures: they of Nine Lives’, *Good Housekeeping* V.21 (November 1895) 204; Agnes Repplier, ‘The House Cat: A Family Friend whose superabundance becomes a peril – The Freeborn Cat’, *Good Housekeeping* V.52 (May 1911) 564-565; ‘Taught Etiquette’, *Chicago Eagle* (June 1, 1895) 2; William Hosea Ballou, ‘Cats’, *Harper’s Bazaar* V.17 (October 25, 1884) 683; Crandall, *Pets and How to Care for Them*, 30, 31; Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book*, 13; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 74, 88; James, *The Angora Cat*, 92; Thorne-Miller, *Funny Friends*, 76, 266; Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 52-53; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 17; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 238-239; ‘Cats – Ancient and Modern’, 157.

⁴⁶ Mivart, *The Cat*, 368.

⁴⁷ See footnote 43 for several references to the cat as sensual; Olive Thorne-Miller, ‘Pets in the Home: the Care of the Cat’, *Harper’s Bazaar* V.26 (May 13, 1893) 381; ‘Chit Chat’, *Cambridge Tribune* (March 21, 1896) 3; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 77; James, *The Angora Cat*, 23; Crandall, *Pets and How to Care for Them*, 34; Thorne-Miller, *Funny Friends*, 271; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 7; ‘Cats and Cat Lovers’, 12; Thornton, ‘The Case Against the Housecat’, 388.

⁴⁸ Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 173; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 79, 92-93; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 48; Brantz, ‘The Domestication of Empire’, 77.

the home was supposed to be a safe haven away from the outside world of temptation.⁴⁹ Therefore this relation between cats, women and sexuality is noteworthy.

Moreover, according to cat lovers – but also ‘cat moderates’ – cats could show affection towards both human and nonhuman creatures – and not merely to places. Regarding the latter there were examples given of cats bonding with their ‘natural enemies’, that is dogs and birds.⁵⁰ Cats could also show their affection to their human owners and be good companions – there were even stories circulating of cats dying of grief. This behavior was often connected to how the cat was treated. If you were nice to your cat, than the cat would be nice to you. This theme is further addressed in the final chapter as this was part of SPCA campaigns. Perhaps they were less demonstrative than dogs, but still they were capable of love: ‘(...) cats love people – in their dignified, reserved way, and when they feel that their love is not wasted.’⁵¹ There is, however, an explanation for why many cats indeed often show a more reserved kind of love and devotion than many humans are used to receive from dogs. It is not to say ‘unreal’ as it is also proven that cats genuinely do feel affection for humans – which is not necessarily motivated by food. Domestication has allowed cats to extend their social relationships, therefore, they can also include humans and not just other cats in their social network. Still, since cat society is less developed in terms of social relationships than one would find amongst dogs or wolves, it would be unrealistic to expect the same degree of love and devotion from an animal who comes from a less complex and developed social background.⁵²

In addition, cats possessed strong motherly feelings, while also being strict teachers. This was often described in humanly ways, as this story of a mother cat shows: ‘She stole in among the helpless creatures so gently, so carefully, giving out at each step that indescribable mother-pussy murmur, (...) laid herself down, and called them to breakfast. (...) it was touching to observe the love, the joy, the utter

⁴⁹ Elaine Tyler-May, ‘Pushing the Limits: 1940-1961’, in: Nancy F. Cott (ed.), *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States* (Oxford and New York 2000) 507; Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 28-29; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 171.

⁵⁰ Menault, *The Intelligence of Animals*, 301; Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book*, 14; ‘A Cat Saved My Rabbits’, *Our Dumb Animals V.5* (October 1872) 243; ‘Queer Cats’, *Our Dumb Animals V.7* (June 1874) 2; ‘How the Cat Was Good to a Bird’, *Our Dumb Animals V.21* (September 1888) 43.

⁵¹ Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 9-10, 21-22; Other examples: ‘Affection of Cats’, *Our Dumb Animals V.10* (December 1877) 55; L.B.U. ‘Cats’, *Our Dumb Animals V.11* (February 1879) 67; idem, ‘Cats’, (1872) 231; Eva J. Demarsh, “‘Only a Cat’”, *Our Dumb Animals V.51* (December 1918) 110; Edith V.B. Matthews, ‘Lady Jane Grey and Her Predecessors’, *Our Animal Friends V.22* (November 1894) 65; ‘Cats: Their Humane and Rational Treatment’, *Harper’s Bazaar V.16* (December 1, 1883) 762; ‘Breeding Fine Cats’, *The New York Tribune* (December 9, 1900) 7; ‘In Behalf of the Cat’, *Chicago Eagle* (January 9, 1909) 8; Earl, *Pets of the Household*, 155; Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*., 52; Mivart, *The Cat*, 1, 368; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 14; James, *The Angora Cat*, 69, 92; Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book*, 13-14; ‘The Companionable Cat’, 63; ‘Cats and Their Care’, (1910) 29; ‘Library Chat’, 6.

⁵² Bradshaw, *Cat Sense*, 190-192.

content, with which the fair young mother regarded her treasures.⁵³ Furthermore, many stories appeared of cats nursing chicks, foxes, rats and puppies – showing that their motherly love had no boundaries. See image 9 for an example. A cat had adopted five goslings for her family, of which she took good care.⁵⁴ Cats were wonderful mothers, just as human mothers were supposed to be the ideal, loving, attentive mothers. The creation of a loving and safe home where she could raise her children was the highest and most noble task a woman had. It was also becoming a more time-consuming activity as women spent more time on childrearing. Such stories or anecdotes of cats as ideal mothers and the use of anthropomorphic terms was loaded with a clear moral: cats served as an ideal type of mother, where a human mother could learn something from.⁵⁵

What has become clear so far in this chapter is the existence of disparate views of the cat within American society: ‘[The cat] is the most pampered individual of the household, or he is driven off the premises, relegated to the cellar or barn maybe, and always kept well out of sight.’

Accordingly, contemporaries noticed how everyone seemed to have an opinion on this animal – already before the cat was a mainstay of petkeeping culture.⁵⁶ This per se was not peculiar. The nineteenth century saw a growing interest in natural history, which also found expression in a growing discourse

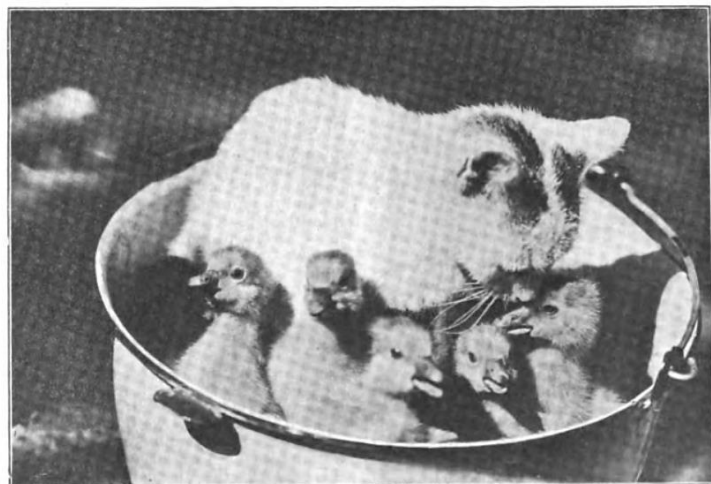


Image 9: A family consisting of a cat and five goslings. ‘Cat Mothers Goslings’, *Our Dumb Animals* (1911).

⁵³ Greenwood, *Heads and Tails*, 131-132; Other examples: Royal Dixon, *The Human Side of Animals* (New York 1918) 33; Agnes Repplier, *The Fireside Sphinx* (Boston and New York 1901) 254, 255-260; Acton, *Uncle Jack’s Discovery*, 29-30; Woodroffe, *The Diseases of the Cat*, 56; Mivart, *The Cat*, 368; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 19; James, *The Angora Cat*, 88; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 15; Gentry, *Intelligence in Plants and Animals*, 296; Matthews, ‘Lady Jane Grey’, 63; ‘The Companionable Cat’, 63; ‘Library Chat’, 6.

⁵⁴ ‘Cat Mothers Goslings’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.44 (August 1911) 39; Thorne-Miller, *Funny Friends*, 76; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 89.

⁵⁵ Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 9, 10; Wayne, *Women’s Roles*, 3; Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 30; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 171; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 66-67, 87-88, 115; Welter, ‘The Cult of True Womanhood’, 171; Stearns, ‘The Role of Fear’, 66; Smith, ‘New Paths to Power’, 360, 365.

⁵⁶ Lillie Hamilton-French, ‘The First New York Cat Show’, *Harper’s Bazaar* V.28 (May 11, 1895) 381; Other examples: ‘Lovers and Hater of Cats’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.8 (August 1875) 18; L.B.U., ‘Cats’, (1872) 231; ‘Grimalkin and Tabitha’, *The Sun* (June 21, 1880) 3; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 3, 14; Earl, *Pets of the Household*, 155; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 94; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 237; ‘Cats – Ancient and Modern’, 157; Repplier, ‘The Freeborn Cat’, 564.

on physical and behavioral features of animals, their place in the natural order and how they were related to humans.⁵⁷ Notable, however, is that such division between cat enthusiasts and opponents, or even haters, still seems to exist. While there has been improvement – for example, replacing the dog as most kept pet, acknowledging the social nature of felines or the existence of large-scale cat conventions – cats are still seen as more disposable, too independent or indifferent for many and are regularly victims of cruelty. Apparently, they still have not acquired the role of human servant – to the dissatisfaction of many.⁵⁸ Contemporary cat lovers often pointed out the esteemed history of the cat: how they were worshipped by the ancient Egyptians, loved by prominent men of the past – such as Mohammed and Richelieu – or adored by poets and writers. This also gave rise to another opinion: only more sophisticated and learned people could appreciate and understand the cat – the cat being also more favorable to such persons. Writer and cat lover Helen Winslow remarked: ‘Women, poets, and especially artists like cats; delicate nature only can realize their sensitive nervous systems.’⁵⁹ Moreover, when this division was created women frequently were, or thought to be, on team-cat.

Another development is clear as well, namely how with time the positive connotations seemed to grow. Cats might have been part of human society for a long time, but during this research period their role as pet became more and more appreciated. The next chapters show how this was also connected to a growing interest in purebred cats – that is, the ‘cat fancy’. Nonetheless, it is also clear that the battle for better treatment of the cat was not won yet. In the 1870s it was mentioned that it was custom to abuse cats – connected with the above outlined bad standing cats mostly had. For example, it was to a large degree deemed acceptable to shoot a cat when he or she annoyed people at night or it was causally noted how a cat was beheaded with an axe. Such casual cruelty lasted throughout the research period of this paper.⁶⁰ While the final chapter addresses how people tried to improve this, for

⁵⁷ Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 6-13.

⁵⁸ McKenna, *Pets, People, and Pragmatism*, 184, 185-188, 190, 192-193; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 49; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 5; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 156, 162-164; Serpell, ‘Domestication and history’, 157.

⁵⁹ Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 36, 16, 161; Other examples: H.M. Hobson, ‘Mrs. Cat in the Literary World’, *Our Dumb Animals V.50* (August 1917) 45; Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book*, 13; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 74, 76; Reed, *Offthoughts About Women*, 47; Tracy, ‘Queer Things’, 248; Thorne-Miller, ‘Pets in the Home: VII’, 232; Repplier, ‘The Freeborn Cat’, 564; ‘In Behalf of the Cat’, 8.

⁶⁰ Annie Austin Flint, ‘Animal Adages: to Fight Like Two Kilkenny Cats’, *Our Animal Friends V.33* (September 1905) 33; ‘An Outrage of Personal Liberty’, *The Sun* (June 20, 1871) 2; ‘Butchering a Cat in Kansas’, *The Sun* (November 5, 1876) 7; ‘Killing a Cat’, *Chicago Daily Tribune* (November 3, 1878) 3; Thorn, ‘Kate Thorn’s Defense of Cats’, 27; ‘Cats: Their Humane and Rational Treatment’, 763; ‘Chit Chat’, 3.

Engels, *Classical Cats*, 159; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 2.

now it suffices to demonstrate several reasons why this was still necessary. In 1918 a poem published in *Our Dumb Animals* still mentions that ‘only a cat’ was the synonym of cruelty against this animal.⁶¹ In addition, pet cats continued to be stolen to be sold to medical or scientific schools – where cruelty awaited them.⁶² It has to be noticed that the mistreatment here was mostly referred to the fact that people – often young boys – stole these pets; that it came to their mind, and not so much the treatment cats received in laboratories. Those working there did not see this as cruelty and many people still deemed (certain) research necessary.

An interesting example in this context was the continued use of cat fur – whether that be as ‘real cat’ or to pass for an exotic animal. Even though cats were becoming more and more loved pets in so many households the large-scale usage of cat’s coats continued. Nowadays in countries where the cat is a precious pet no one would want to wear cat fur deliberately. ‘(...) it is good sport popping them off the fences and stone walls along the roadside’, was even given as another reason to use cat fur in an article that argued it was a waste to ‘just kill’ cats. Still in 1920 it was celebrated that the cat fur was becoming more profitable.⁶³ In 1913 – when the cat fancy was already an established fact – someone decided to create a cat farm and he told the newspapers about his plans. He planned to start with one cat, who will have kittens and whose kittens will have kittens, and so on. In four years this should lead to 100.000 cats, whose skins would sell at average for thirty cents. ‘He proposes to breed rats to feed the cats and to feed the rats on the carcasses of the skinned cats’, was another cunning plan of this new business venture.⁶⁴ Notwithstanding he was not really ground-breaking in establishing a cat farm; apparently the Netherlands and Canada had large cat farms. Although, it also turns out that not everyone was positive on cat furs as ‘they go by another name in polite commerce so as not to hurt the sensibilities of tender hearted women.’⁶⁵

⁶¹ Demarsh, ‘Only a Cat’, 110.

⁶² No title, *Cambridge Tribune* (January 11, 1896) 4; ‘Cause of the Cats’, *Cambridge Tribune* (December 8, 1900) 2; Alice E. Wood, ‘Watch Pet Cats and Dogs!’, *Cambridge Tribune* (February 8, 1919) 7.

⁶³ ‘Cats Going to Waste’, *The Sun* (October 30, 1887) 8; Other examples: ‘The Chronicler’, *Cambridge Chronicle* (February 28, 1920) 2; ‘News of Interest to Women: Meow! Cat Farm for Corona’, *The New York Tribune* (December 25, 1911) 5; ‘Splendid Season for N.Y. Trappers’, *The Sun* (February 16, 1919) 7; ‘Danger of Anthrax in the Chin-Chin! Beware! Beware!’, *The Day Book* (December 10, 1915) 14; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 94.

⁶⁴ ‘Make \$800 Daily on Cats: Just Read How this Skowhegan Maine, Man Has It All Figured Out’, *Cambridge Sentinel* (February 15, 1913) 10; Other examples: ED. H. Packard, ‘The Neighborhood Cat: Care of Cats and Tabby Tales – Items of Interest Concerning Our Mutual Friend, the House Cat – By a Cat Lover’, *Cambridge Tribune* (February 8, 1913) 9.

⁶⁵ M.W. Mount, ‘Man Skins All His Dumb Mates – No Animal Can Escape His Rage for Clothes’, *The New York Tribune* (February 9, 1908) 7; Other example: ‘World War on Animals’, *The Day Book* (November 17, 1915) 21.

That the cat was given a cultural identity became clear in this chapter. It is, however, questionable if this can be considered a clear identity; opinions on the cat seemed to go from one extreme to the other, showing how ambivalent society's relationship with felines was – just as domesticity was an ambivalent phenomenon. On the one hand, the fierce predator was deemed useless as they could not be utilized to show human power over nature or animals. They were considered as outside of human civilization or even a threat to it. This was probably also the root of the hate which appeared to exist towards felines. Everybody not useful or not a good servant for mankind was by many believed to be useless and, hence, not worthy of human time, money and consideration. On the other hand, cats were praised for their independence and loving tendencies. Both of which can be seen as valid characteristics when looking at present-day insights on cat behavior. When considering how often they were aligned with the female part of the population, the stress placed on their independence is interesting. Women were not supposed to be independent. As they went from their father's household to her husbands, women were supposed to be in a (financially) dependent situation, only being in charge of their domestic duties – as in line with the ideal of domesticity.

The cat was a creature that was praised and hated for his or hers independence, while at the same time women were considered questionable when they were trying to be independent – the next chapter addresses this occurrence in more detail. With regard to another injustice cats and women were likewise connected: their lack of access to the outside world. For women, this was in large part due to the notion of domesticity. This inability caused both to not reach their full potential as they never had the opportunity to do so. Still, cats could also be used to elevate women to a certain extent by pointing out how artists, poets and great men of the past had loved cats. Showing how not just the delicate woman, but also great, perhaps more sensitive, men of the past could like cats. The second chapter continues with this theme, but in a more domestic environment by exploring another feature of cat: their homely nature.

2. THE FIRESIDE COMPANION OF SPINSTERS AND LADIES

The second chapter centers more specifically around the cat in a domestic environment. This is twofold as, first of all, the cat was seen as a particularly homely animal; second, some cats were seen as an important part of the family. What kind of cats could live within the household differed greatly. Besides, the strong link which seemed to exist between women and cats – as already touched upon in the previous chapter – is further worked out within the setting of the home.

Within the ideal of domesticity, the home was of crucial importance. This was the place where the woman, as homemaker, performed her womanly and domestic duties. It was supposed to be the safe haven where children and husband were lovingly received and cared for. Therefore, this chapter delves into how the cat was so intrinsically linked to the home environment – almost as much as womankind – showing how the cat likewise seemed to be crucial to create a loving home. This would make the cat an important factor to create the ideal of domesticity. A notion which was sometimes even explicitly stated in the sources analyzed for this research, as felines were considered animals who particularly possessed domestic tendencies. The loving home obviously consisted of a loving family, which, at the end of the nineteenth century, could also include a quadruped friend. Showing yet another way in which the cat was placed within the notion of domesticity by turning this creature into a family member which needed care and love as well. This family dynamic is likewise part of this chapter.

That cats really liked their home was already pointed out in the previous chapter – as they had the ability to always find their way back to their dwelling place. Still, in the collected sources for this research there are many references to how cats were connected to homes or the imagery around the home. As already outlined in the introduction, the home was vital for the notion of domesticity and thus a crucial place during the period covered in this research. References to the heart of the house in the shape of the fireplace, or the hearthstone, particularly referred to the home as a safe haven and the place the family gathered.¹ Therefore, when the cat was placed in such a setting, it strengthened his or her attachment to the home and the domestic sphere:

There is indeed no pet to be taken out of the brute creation that so adds to the picture of home as puss does in the moments when she stretches herself before

¹ Holloway, *Hearthstone*, iv-v.

McHugh, *American Domesticity*, 6; Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood', 163.

the fire (...). One naturally thinks of the gentleness and domestic feeling of the people in the house when one sees this velvety pet (...); and it is that gentleness and domestic feeling, combined with the appearance of comfort, which make up much of the idea of home.²

This example clearly shows the extent to which cats were seen as a homely animal since a cat snoozing in front of the fire would remind one of home. Or rather, an ideal home, such as is the case in the notion domesticity. The woman as homemaker had created the loving and homely environment, which the cat in front of the fire could complete. This connection could also be in a more general domestic setting: 'It is essential to the maintenance of the highest qualities of the cat that he should have the full benefit of the refining and educating influences of the home'.³ Manifestly, cats were not only important to create a domestic setting, it also worked the other way around since cats needed such a domestic setting to maintain their civilized qualities. Otherwise they would just be uncivilized barbarians. Apparently, the home not only had, ideally, a civilizing effect on its human inhabitants, this should likewise be extended to the feline part of it. Both examples show how a cat could remind people of a (ideal) homely setting, which is telling on how felines could be employed in order to carry out the domesticity ideal.

Nathaniel Shaler, cat-despiser and specialist on the implications of evolution, considered the home the reason people started to domesticate animals. The home represented the stability – as supposed to roaming about – that was encouraged by the care of dependent animals which humankind had gathered around him.⁴ Accordingly, the home and domesticated animals were seen as essential for each other – and as became visible in the previous chapter, was important for the notion of being civilized. Although Shaler probably did not think of the cat in his explanation of the

² 'Puss', *Harper's Bazaar* V.22 (January 19, 1889) 47; Other examples: 'Solitary Housekeeping', *Harper's Bazaar* V.2 (June 12, 1869) 379; E.W.B. Canning, 'A Cat with a Conscience', *Good Housekeeping* V.10 (April 26, 1890) 312; Olive Thorne-Miller, 'Pets in the Home: VIII – The Common Pussy', *Harper's Bazaar* V.26 (April 1, 1893) 252; Adelaide Soule, 'The Wish That Came True', *Our Animal Friends* V.33 (March 1906) 324; Louis Wain, 'The Domestic Cat', *Humane Advocate* V.11 (June 1916) 183; 'The Wife's Dream', *Cambridge Chronicle* (August 23, 1879) 6; Repplier, *Fireside Sphinx*, 275-276, 300, 304; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 7; Earl, *Pest of the Household*, 155; Mivart, *The Cat*, 367; Reed, *Offthoughts About Women*, 46-47; Ingersoll, 'Cat, Domestic'; 'The Companionable Cat', 63; 'Cats', (1879) 6.

³ James, *The Angora Cat*, 89-90, 9; Other examples: Kate V. Saint-Maur, *A Self-Supporting Home* (New York 1905) 244; 'Cats', *Our Dumb Animals* V.8 (January 1876) 59; 'Poor Little Prin; A True Story', *Harper's Bazaar* V.12 (October 25, 1879) 682; 'Cats as Imitators', *Our Dumb Animals* V.45 (July 1912) 28; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 7; Mayo, *The Care of Animals*, 39; Greenwood, *Heads and Tails*, 148; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 263-264; Acton, *Uncle Jack's Discovery*, 56; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 90; Repplier *The Fireside Sphinx*, 300, 304; Repplier, 'The Freeborn Cat', 565; Matthews, 'Lady Jane Grey and Her Predecessors', 63; Wain, 'The Domestic Cat', 185; 'Library Chat', 6; 'In Behalf of the Cat', 8.

⁴ Shaler, *Domesticated Animals*, 219.

linkage between domesticated animals and the home. In general people started to perceive animals as pets as icons of the family and the home from the 1850s onwards. As the home was transformed in a crucial place in creating morally rights humans, pets gained an essential new role within this process. They became ‘morally mandatory’, especially in the middle-class household.⁵ How this worked out, especially with regard to children, is further discussed below.

The end of the nineteenth century is in the literature often seen as the moment during which petkeeping as a practice really established itself. For dogs this had already begun earlier. Cats were only seen as suitable pets by the general public around the turn of the century – although the previous chapter showed their status continued to be questionable, perhaps even to our present-day.⁶ Still, before that time, it seems that cats were already ubiquitous in many households, even considered a ‘household necessity’. Apparently, they were deemed that important that the United States shipped thousands of cats to France during the First World War in order to protect the soldiers in the trenches against rodents – showing again another perspective on the supposed ‘uselessness’ of cats. Perhaps it also helped the soldiers, far away from everything they knew, to create a sense of home. Their omnipresence was visible in the overall many references to cats and homes, as addressed above, but also more explicitly. As scientist George Mivart pointed out: ‘The Domestic Cat is an animal so common and familiar that its utility is sometimes apt to be lost sight of.’⁷ Marvin Clark took it even further as he stated:

In every household, in the hovel of the poorest as well as in the mansion of the richest, in the storehouse, (...) the newspaper office, the schoolhouse, the hospital, the theatre, (...) the great library, (...) political headquarters (...) and

⁵ Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 32-33; Grier, *Pets in America*, 10; Kete, *A Cultural History of Animals*, 16; Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 12; Tague, ‘The history of emotional attachment’, 359.

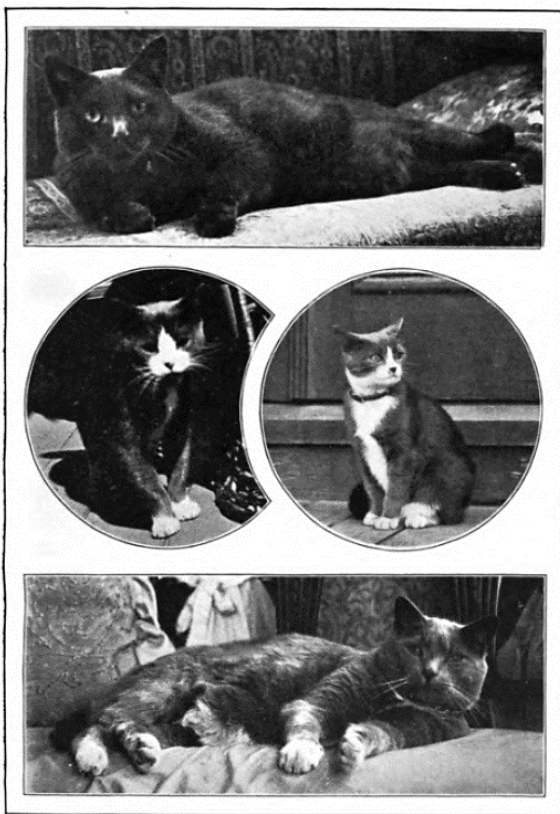
⁶ Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 10, 15, 27-28; Kean, ‘The Moments of Greyfriars Bobby’, 28; Brantz, ‘Domestication of Empire’, 77.

⁷ See footnote 2 and 3; Mivart, *The Cat*, 1; Other examples: ‘A Witch’, *Harper’s Bazaar* V.27 (March 17, 1894) 222; ‘A Friend of Man, and his Feline Foes’, *Harper’s Bazaar* V.11 (August 10, 1878) 512; ‘The “Young Kittens” and the Cat’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.12 (June 1879) 7; ‘An Exhibition of Cats’, *Our Animal Friends* V.22 (July 1895) 242; ‘One of the Sufferers’, *Cambridge Chronicle* (September 4, 1885) 4; ‘Plea for the Defenseless Cat’, *Cambridge Tribune* (March 8, 1902) 2; ‘Feline Legislation’, *Cambridge Chronicle* (January 27, 1912) 2; ‘Pet Cats’ Pictures’, *The Sun* (February 5, 1885) 3; ‘The Cat’, *Chicago Eagle* (April 8, 1893) 9; Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book*, 13; Crandall, *Pets and How to Care for Them*, 30; Woodroffe, *The Diseases of the Cat*, 2; Repplier, *The Fireside Sphinx*, 304; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 2, 73; Biggle, *Biggles Pet Book*, 57; Reed, *Offthoughts About Women*, 46; Saint-Maur, *A Self-Supporting Home*, 252; Thorne-Miller, ‘Pets in the Home: VIII’, 252; Thornton, ‘The Case Against the Housecat’, 387; ‘Queen Puss’s Reign’, 77; ‘Interesting Facts About Cats’, 178; ‘Cats’, (1879) 6.

almost everywhere throughout the whole inhabitable globe, there exists a spy upon whose ears fall the secrets of a nation (...).⁸

Even though cats were thus present in many households early on, with time their status specifically as pets became more and more apparent. They were becoming truly part of the evolving petkeeping culture in the United States. This was, amongst others, visible in meat sold by butchers which was specifically meant for cats or that cats and their owners were referred to as ‘fashionable’.⁹ The final chapter delves further into this feline fashion trend.

Although cats were apparent in many households even before they were a mainstay of petkeeping culture, numerous felines probably did not live there as pets. It is more likely that the majority had to work as mouser or ratter to earn a living.



1. Pompanita; 2. Jane; 3. The Pretty Lady; 4. Thomas Erastus: important members of the author's family.

Image 10: Note especially the text underneath the image. Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 14-15 (1900).

Nonetheless, as petkeeping had become more common in the last few decades it was easier for pet owners to attribute awareness to their pets. By forming intimate friendships with them these particular animals were perceived as individuals. This created the possibility for pets, to become part of a human family – see image 10.¹⁰ While cats only joined the practice of petkeeping late, early on it seems that some families did not consider cats as just a living-inn servant, they rather saw them with far greater affection – the earliest example from this research even stems from 1869. ‘(...) there never was a family so devoted to cats as ours. It is a hereditary trait. (...) As a family, we are “cat mad”.’ This was part of an article from *Harper’s Bazaar* and it has

⁸ Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 8-9, 14, 41.

⁹ ‘Only Woman’s Page: The Popular Pet – Breeding of Fine Cats Becomes a Regular Occupation’, *The New York Tribune* (January 24, 1900) 7; ‘Woman’s Realm: Cats of High Degree – Persians and Angoras at Coming Cat Show’, *The New York Tribune* (December 28, 1902) 4; ‘Gleanings’, *The New York Tribune* (August 30, 1904) 7; Woodroffe, *The Diseases of the Cat*, 125; ‘Queen Puss’s Reign’, 77; ‘An Exhibition of Cats’, 242.

¹⁰ Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 56; Idem, *Beauty and the Beast*, 28; Kean, ‘The Moments of Greyfriars Bobby’, 39.

to be noted that this supposedly hereditary trait was passed on via the maternal lineage. While this quote already clearly shows that cats could be part of a family, the following example of the same article makes this even clearer: ‘Lovely and cherished in their lives, in death they are not divided. A whole dynasty sleep in the garden (...) with a neat slab of shingle to mark his resting-place, bearing the name of the departed (...). Genuine tears water these graves.’¹¹ This example from 1871 shows the extent to which the cat could be part of the family. Most of the time cats would not have received a proper burial, ‘instead of that we sweep them on the manure heap or fling them into the water.’¹² Nonetheless, this particular family took the effort to reserve a special spot of land to bury their feline family members, even attributing them with makeshift gravestones. Another family took the effort to place an obituary in Boston’s SPCA magazine, *Our Dumb Animals*, in 1873 of their deceased cat. The obituary also pointed out that they lived above a store, indicating that this was a family of modest means. Having a cat as true family member before they were even deemed really part of petkeeping culture was thus not just a quirky luxury of the rich.¹³

Another good example that shows the extent that cats were considered part of the family is that of Mopsa. She jumped on the shoulders of her family while they were eating dinner. With her dainty paw she would try to get the food to her; this would result in her being fed with a tea-spoon.¹⁴ Obviously, the fact that this cat was allowed to do this is telling on the status this feline pet had within the family; she was included in the family ritual of dinning together. Furthermore, the analyzed newspapers occasionally featured adverts for missing cats. A reward for finding the cats was offered as well. People clearly put in the time, effort and money to find their beloved family member back. One lady even had the police on the lookout for her precious cat.¹⁵ It has to be pointed out that most advertisements for missing cats

¹¹ ‘A Cat With Nine Lives’, *Harper’s Bazaar* V.4 (April 8, 1871) 218; Other examples: ‘Something About Cats’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.45 (April 1913) 173; Thorne-Miller, *Funny Friends*, 264; Holloway, *Hearthstone*, 337, 340; Repplier, *The Fireside Sphinx*, 5; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 20; ‘Solitary Housekeeping’, 379.

¹² DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 95.

Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 31.

¹³ A., ‘To the Memory of a Favorite Cat’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.5 (May 1873) 308; Other example: Beatrice, ‘Passed Into Space, Nov. 15 Kitty Clover’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.6 (January 1874) 65; Demarsh, “‘Only a Cat’”, 110.

¹⁴ Thorne-Miller, *Funny Friends*, 266-267; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 40.

¹⁵ ‘\$2,500 Reward for a Lost Cat’, *Cambridge Tribune* (May 17, 1890) 8; ‘Old Cambridge’, *Cambridge Tribune* (February 20, 1892) 7; ‘Lost’, *Cambridge Tribune* (May 5, 1894) 8; ‘Lost or Stolen’, *Cambridge Tribune* (September 28, 1895) 5; ‘Angora Cat’, *Cambridge Tribune* (June 19, 1897) 5; ‘Lost a Valuable Cat’, *Cambridge Tribune* (October 6, 1906) 12; ‘Lost and Found’, *Chicago Daily Tribune* (March 6, 1881) 13.

were aimed at purebred cats, who were of course much more valuable than the common tabby.

It was likewise implied that cats liked to be part of their human family. This was already made clear in the previous chapter as many people considered cats capable of feeling love and showing affection, also towards the biped part of the family. Being a companion and part of the family was the only task the cat needed and wanted to perform, was argued – providing an excuse for their alleged ‘uselessness’. For example, one cat, supposedly, called her mistress ‘mommer’. She rather lived in her humble home with her ‘mommer’ than in a fancy cattery.¹⁶ Their desire for this could even be expressed in the most dramatical manner. Cat lover Helen Winslow recounted a story of how she could not take a cat from her summer home back to the city for the winter. Despite bringing her to a friend who took good care of her, the cat would not be happy, with ‘actual tears [in her] lovely green eyes and ran down her aristocratic nose (...)’ Eventually the distressed cat ran away and was seen no more. Winslow wondered ‘whether she sought a new and more constant mistress, or whether in her grief at my shameless abandonment of her, she went to some lonely pier and threw herself off the dock (...)’¹⁷ It appears thus that cats cherished their human family life greatly and, by lack of this, could allegedly even commit suicide. Obviously, it is highly unlikely that a cat would do this. Nonetheless, by portraying it in this manner, it shows the attachment people attributed to their cats and their connection to the family. Professor of sociology and anthropology Arnold Arluke and his co-author Lauren Rolfe gather from the photographs they analyzed that cats reciprocated their relation with their human owners by sitting still enough to take a photograph and by seeming to be satisfied in their owners presence or home. They do not think it unreasonable that cats knew to a certain extent that they were safe and also enjoyed being cared for and loved within the household. Moreover, John Bradshaw confirms cats capability to genuinely have affectionate feelings towards humans.¹⁸

‘(...) the cat is the favorite animals of the nursery (...)’, the magazine *Our Dumb Animals*, stated. Children could be a more explicit reason that cats were part of the household. Cats, but especially kittens, would be the perfect companions for children as they were graceful and patient little creatures. ‘Much I marveled at the great

¹⁶ ‘Grimalkin to the Fore’, *The New York Tribune* (November 6, 1874) 4; ‘Woman & Progress – Civic & Domestic: Harmon Cattery Provokes Discussion’, *The New York Tribune* (October 12, 1913) 9; Repplier, *The Fireside Sphinx*, 275-276, 304.

¹⁷ See footnote 52 of chapter 1 on how cats could love their owners; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 12; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 20; James, *The Angora Cat*, 65.

¹⁸ Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 117; Bradshaw, *Cat Sense*, 190-192.

patience of the little victims, whose satin paws sheathed such keen weapons of defense', was said on kittens and children. However, some questioned how the kittens themselves experienced all this rough interaction with children. This view was part of SPCA campaigns and will come back in the next chapter.¹⁹ Children and cats were key in a higher moral plan.²⁰ It was argued that having any animal in the household, including cats and kittens, led to higher responsibility of the household. Extending sympathy to animals, and especially to those living in the household and providing for mankind, could be considered the next step in the development of civilization as it gave human beings a new duty. It strengthened the notion that the home, and the homemaker within, were the highest mark of civilization and should both be employed in morally uplifting tasks.²¹ Having domesticated animals around would help 'to arouse and broaden the sympathies given men, that humane spirit without which the best of our higher culture cannot be attained.'²² Evidently, it was especially deemed important that children acquired this sentiment and learned to be kind, gentle and benevolent towards animals and humans, as they were the future citizens and mothers of the nation. The final chapter further addresses how animals, or particularly cats, could evoke this sympathy.

Cats and children were also connected in another way, namely in that the feline housemate was seen, or should be seen, as a child: 'Cats are like little children, they enjoy being noticed, talked to, and petted (...).' Cats could even be used as a replacement of children: 'We must all love something, and to a poor lone creature who is trying to make a home without a husband and without children, the cat recommends itself by its persistent domesticity.'²³ This similarity mostly came from their cherished and dependent status since both were an emotional investment. Arluke and Rolfe point out regarding family photographs that included both cats and

¹⁹ 'The Cat', *Our Dumb Animals V.40* (April 1908) 177; Greenwood, *Heads and Tails*, 136, 129, 132; Other examples: 'A Few Reminders', *Our Dumb Animals V.45* (July 1912) 28; 'First Love', *Cambridge Chronicle* (January 3, 1880) 3; Elizabeth Robbins-Berry, 'Dumb Civilizers', *Cambridge Tribune* (November 23, 1901) 8; 'Household Pets', *Chicago Daily Tribune* (November 24, 1872) 8; Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 8, 51; Saint-Maur, *A Self-Supporting Home*, 254; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 7; 'A Friend of Man, and his Feline Foes', 512; 'Poor Little Prin', *A True Story*, 682; Canning, 'A Cat with a Conscience', 312; Thorne-Miller, 'Pets in the Home: VIII', 253; 'The "Young Kittens" and the Cat', 7; Hobson, 'Mrs. Cat in the Literary World', 45; 'An Exhibition of Cats', 242.

²⁰ Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 21-22, 28-29, 32-33; Grier, *Pets in America*, 14, 130; Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 32-33; Idem, *The Photographed Cat*, 66; Morey, *Picturing Dogs, Seeing Ourselves*, 105; Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 18.

²¹ Grier, *Pets in America*, 130; Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood', 164.

²² Shaler, *Domesticated Animals*, 222, 4, 204-207, 238.

²³ Matthews, 'Lady Jane Grey and Her Predecessors', 65; 'Grimalkin to the Fore', 4; Other examples: Mabel Cornish-Bond, 'Cat Raising as a Business', *Munsey's Magazine V.25* (1901) 844; Dr. Arthur W. May, 'Care of Dogs and Cats', *Our Dumb Animals V.46* (January 1914) 119; J.S., 'Cats and Dogs', *Cambridge Chronicle* (May 12, 1906) 10; James, *The Angora Cat*, 53; Thorne-Miller, 'Pets in the Home', 381, 382.

children that it made a statement of how a family and a home should look, namely as a safe place for children to grow up, but also a safe place for cats.²⁴ By some it was likewise observed that several housecats were treated better than the average child: ‘All the good little girls and boys should be thankful that this pretty pussy has such a happy existence. Think how it might have suffered if it had been born a baby boy or girl – in Lawrence, Mass.!', the Chicago newspaper *The Day Book* mockingly stated – see image 11.²⁵

We are inclined to see the phenomenon of perceiving pets as family members or even as children as something recent; for instance, currently more Americans – that is, 63% or 71 million households – live with a pet instead of having children of their own. The present-day pets can have legal trusts, wear clothing or are called ‘babies’ while their human owners call themselves ‘parents’.²⁶ Still, as it turns out, pet cats could already be seen as an intimate part of the family in the 1870s. By



Image 11: This was the ‘pretty pussy’ the newspaper article referred to. ‘Diamond Crown, Ermine Robe, Sterilized Milk and Special Maid – For a Cat!’, *The Day Book*, 12 (1912).

extending the status of family member to cats it provided the middle-class family a way to perform one of its main reasons for existing within the framework of domesticity, namely caring.²⁷ Especially women had this caring role, which was aimed at children and husbands, but of course pets were cared for as well. Women just extended their caretaking task to the quadruped part of the family. Furthermore, different from human children, pets remained dependent and child-like – and if they died you could ‘just’ acquire a new one. It was even advised that the care of pet animals should not be left to the servants, as they would not be as meticulous as the lady

²⁴ Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 58-59, 62, 88; Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 32-33; Grier, *Pets in America*, 13; Kete, *A Cultural History of Animals*, 7-8; Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 17-18.

²⁵ ‘Diamond Crown, Ermine Robe, Sterilized Milk and Special Maid – For a Cat!’, *The Day Book* (April 3, 1912) 11-12.

In Lawrence, Mass., there was a massive textile strike from January to March. As this happened in the winter time there were many starving children.

²⁶ McKenna, *Pets, People, and Pragmatism*, 2, 7; Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 249-250; Idem, *The Photographed Cat*, 3; Kete, *A Cultural History of Animals*, 15-16; Demello, ‘The Present and Future of Animal Domestication’, 92-93.

²⁷ Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 37-38; Tuan, *Dominance & Affection*, 112; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 87; Brantz, ‘Domestication of Empire’, 77.

of the house would be.²⁸ Moreover, mostly for middle-class homemakers less time needed to be spend on domestic tasks – due to greater availability of utensils and store-bought food and other items – this, in turn, could be spend on taking care of a depend creature such as a cat.²⁹

Obviously, the more the cat was deemed a family member – such as the cats from the ‘cat-mad family’ – the more care and attention was extended to this animal. *Dominance & Affection* by Yi-Fu Tuan is again relevant. Although ‘caring’ might seem a loving term as it comes from genuine affection and even friendship toward a specific animal, it is also tainted by patronage. It is not a relationship between equals, as was already pointed out in the first chapter. The pet as a child could be deemed as the ultimate de-animalized animal. According to historian Kathleen Kete it is a way to deny our own human nature: that humans are perhaps aggressive and dominating beings is hidden within the practice of petkeeping. Animals as pets were placed in the hierarchy of the family and were expected to obey, just like human children.³⁰

The growing affection people had for the feline species was likewise visible in another element, namely in the fact that they became veterinary patients. Before there were any small-animal veterinary practices people also spend time and attention on taking care of their sick cats by publishing on several cat diseases and their home-made treatments. It was even argued that they should be treated ‘as a human patient’.³¹ People started to care enough about their pets to bring them to a veterinarian and pay for their treatment, even though these particular animals did not provide financially for them. Although small-animal veterinary practices would not be



PUSSY HAS A BAD LEG.

Image 12: Cat being treated for an injury. Biggle, *Biggle's Pet Book*, 66 (1900).

²⁸ L.B.U., ‘Neglect of Pets’, *Our Dumb Animals V.12* (November 1879) 48; Huidekoper, *The Cat*, 74; Thorne-Miller, *Furry Friends*, 240; A.T.D., ‘Mistakes About Cats’, 223.

²⁹ Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 10-11; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 14; Smith, ‘New Paths to Power’, 375.

³⁰ Tuan, *Dominance & Affection*, 5; Kete, *A Cultural History of Animals*, 15; Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 10, 17; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 7-9, 88.

³¹ Earl, *Pets of the Household*, 157; Other examples: Woodroffe, *The Diseases of the Cat*; Champion, *Everybody's Cat Book*, 91-116; Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 67-82; Huidekoper, *The Cat*, 87-121; Thorne-Miller, *Funny Friends*, 272.

common until after the 1920s.³² Historian and former veterinarian Abigail Woods in her article on veterinary medicine elaborates on how animals became victims and patients instead of merely disease transmitters. This happened not necessarily because of biological vulnerability, but rather because humans noticed this and cared enough to do something about it.³³ Frances Willard in her book on appropriate occupations for women stated that women could enter the veterinary profession – only one woman in the United States could call herself veterinarian at that time. ‘The expensive pets of fashionable women would probably be taken to a woman in preference to a man (...)’, she pointed out.³⁴ Women in their role as nurses in their own homes and their overall supposed fondness for small pets such as cats was probably behind this reasoning.³⁵

What kind of cats could constitute the quadruped part of the family differed greatly, especially as time went on. Only at the end of the 1880s people started to pay attention to so-called purebred cats. This was already long the case for other thoroughbred animals. What was different with regard to the breeding of pedigree dogs and cats was that this was more available to people from the middle-class.³⁶ As pointed out in the first chapter, every cat was a graceful being. Nonetheless, purebred cats were even more graceful, delicate, dainty and, not to mention, beautiful. They were a ‘wonderful charm for those who do not desire a mere echo of themselves’, thus still stressing their independent nature. These cats were considered the aristocrats of cat society. In this time period the most referred to purebred cats were Persians and Angora’s – although it is questionable the extent to which they were actually different breeds.³⁷ ‘The hundred dollar cats don’t seem to have nine lives like the common barn cats,’ therefore, fancy pedigree cats were likewise considered too

³² A.F. Matthewson, ‘Pussy in the Corner’, *Good Housekeeping* V.8 (February 16, 1889) 449; ‘New Hospital for Animals’, *Cambridge Tribune* (December 27, 1902) 10; ‘New Hospital for Animals’, *Cambridge Tribune* (August 29, 1903) 6; ‘City Notices’, *Cambridge Chronicle* (February 29, 1908) 7; ‘Do You Want to Buy a Cat?’, *The Sun* (May 16, 1897) 5; Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 65; Mayo, *The Care of Animals*, 42; Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book*, 115; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 89.

Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 30.

³³ Abigail Woods, ‘Animals in the History of Human and Veterinary Medicine’, in: Hilda Kean and Philip Howell, *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History* (London and New York 2018) 147, 154, 157.

³⁴ Willard, *Occupations For Women*, 449-450.

³⁵ Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 14, 87-89; Yuan, *Dominance & Affection*, 111; Welter, ‘The Cult of True Womanhood’, 163.

³⁶ Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 87-91; Pemberton, ‘Breeding and breed’, 394.

³⁷ Thorne-Miller, ‘Pets of the Household: The Queen of All’, 415; Other examples: Grace Aspinwall, ‘Pussies, Plebian and Royal’, *Good Housekeeping* V.49 (August 1909) 178; ‘For and About Women: Some Cat Gossip’, *The New York Tribune* (January 6, 1905) 7; ‘The Finest House in the World – for Cats’, *The Day Book* (May 17, 1913) 22; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 16; James, *The Angora Cat*, 8; Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book*, 17; Thorne-Miller, ‘Pets in the Home: VII’, 232-233; Cornish-Bond, ‘Cat Raising as a Business’, 841, 842.

delicate to nurse four kittens or more. For that reason foster-cats were arranged. This were often the common short-haired cats, who were considered more sturdy. ‘As lady’s maid [Jane, the cat of commoner strain] must bathe Lady Betty (...), as the more finely strung Angora succumbed to the nervous strain of kittenrearing, and she turned affectionately to Jane for comfort’, apparently, this foster-cat of humble origins also had, in addition to feeding and raising kittens, the task to support her lady in more domestic tasks as she herself was too fragile to do everything alone.³⁸

However, before cat breeds rose in importance, there was a human-imposed division on cat society in the 1870s that was not necessarily based on possessing a pedigree. This was the so-called division between parlor and kitchen cats. It depended on the cat’s personality and behavior where they would end up, such as how dainty they were or their quality as mouser; looks mattered, but only a little in the context of this particular division – your regular tabby could end up as the upstairs cat. Historian Donald Engels even calls this ‘distinct cultures’ of cats, which kittens learned from adult cats and which was shaped by their natural and human environments.³⁹ ‘(...) [the parlor cat] would have vulgar associates – the kitchen cats, who spent their evenings out on the roofs and fences, and would teach her who knows what vagabond tastes’, was pointed out as a warning for a parlor cat socializing with kitchen cats. It was even indicated that cats were aware of such a division; for example, a simple tabby knew she should keep her place in the housekeeper’s room.⁴⁰

All these reference to the more common, plebeian cats on the one hand, and the aristocratic, purebred parlor cats on the other were obviously derived from human class perceptions. Kete in her work on petkeeping in nineteenth century Paris states that Parisians used the practice of petkeeping to envision a more manageable version of the world. It made clear how people wanted the world to be divided and it could even displace class anxieties. Some dogs were deemed ‘bourgeois’, while others were deemed ‘working-class’ because people wanted them to be, it created order. The same held true regarding the idea the pet as child. It provided people with a fantasy, yet clear relationship – as pointed out, perhaps also one which obscured dominating

³⁸ Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 33-35; Other examples: ‘Cats Are Rising Socially’, *The Sun* (October 14, 1906) 7; ‘Woman’s Realm: Money in Cats – One Woman’s Profits’, *The New York Tribune* (December 12, 1909) 2; Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book*, 14, 69-71; Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 57; Saint-Maur, *A Self-Supporting Home*, 252-253; ‘For and About Women’, 7.

³⁹ Engels, *Classical Cat*, 10.

⁴⁰ Thorne-Miller, *Funny Friends*, 271, 264, 265; Other examples: Ruth, ‘Peter’, *Our Dumb Animals V.5* (November 1872) 247; DeVogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 85; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 18, 135; Greenwood, *Head and Tails*, 115; ‘Puss’, 47; Thorne-Miller, ‘Pets in the Home: VII’, 232-233; Idem, ‘Pets in the Home’, 382; ‘The Companionable Cat’, 63; Elliott, ‘Guess and Bet’, 135; Matthews, ‘Lady Jane Grey and Her Predecessors’, 63-65; ‘Household Pets’, 8.

tendencies.⁴¹ The United States during this research period and their division imposed on their feline companions likewise shows how people ordered what they perceived around them. Such differences were deemed important enough to extent to cat society. As shown, at first this was aimed at the parlor- and kitchen cats. Later on a 'biological justification' could even be given as the purebred cats were on the rise; they had allegedly aristocratic blood running through their veins. The above-mentioned example of the fancy, yet delicate Lady Betty and her maid and nurse, the common Jane clearly reminds one of a human situation where the lady of the house is much more nervous and delicate. It is important to point out that people of all classes and ethnic groups had pets.⁴² Nonetheless, since this research is specifically interested in cats and domesticity the main focus is on the (white) middle-class.

These so-called kitchen cats – or stable companions – had a more practical function as opposed to the aristocratic parlor cats or later on the Angora's and Persians. The ordinary kitchen cats had to get their velvety paws dirty chasing rodents; they were not above working. On the other hand, the parlor and purebred cats mostly had the function of being 'ornamental' and a 'pleasure' to have around, 'a proper and necessary ornament to [a ladies] palace'. They were the ones with the nicest saucers, the best quality of food and had the loveliest ribbons around their necks – see image 14.⁴³ Here again human notions of class are clear as there was a difference between working-class women and society ladies. The former had to work outside the home to earn a living, while the latter could spend more time on their looks, society events or create the ideal home domesticity required women to do so. Noteworthy is that it was often pointed out that the fancy cats were not as

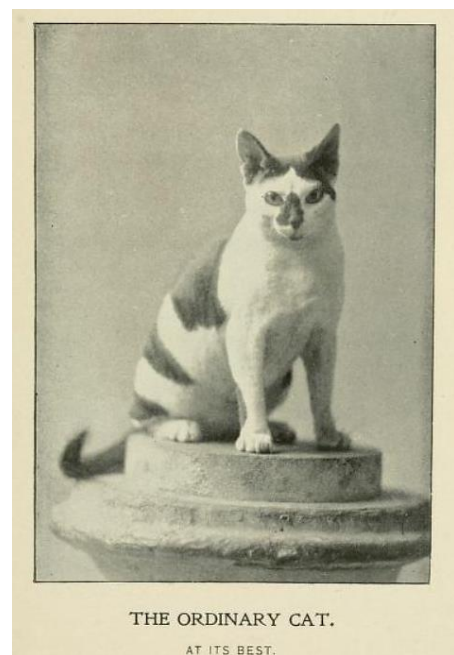


Image 13: A common cat, 'at its best'. James, *The Angora Cat*, 98-99 (1898).

⁴¹ Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir*, 2, 137-138; Idem, *A Cultural History of Animals*, 15; Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 84; Grier, *Pets in America*, 5; Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 12; Brantz, 'Domestication of Empire', 80.

⁴² Grier, *Pets in America*, 10-11.

⁴³ James, *The Angora Cat*, 82, 3; Other examples: 'Persian Kittens Bring Large Income to This Busy Young Woman', *The Day Book* (January 25, 1912) 30; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 85; Huidekoper, *The Cat*, v; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 18; Thorne-Miller, 'Pets in the Home: VII', 232-233; Mabel, 'Cat Raising as a Business', 842; L.B.U., 'Cats', (1872) 231; Poole, 'A Parlor Cat', 126; Elliott, 'Guess and Bet', 135; Matthews, 'Lady Jane Grey and Her Predecessors', 63-65; 'Grimalkin and Tabitha', 3.

smart as your ordinary, 'less pre-tentious', short-haired housecat. '(...) this famous Eastern beauty is not so intelligent and mentally alert as some of his short-haired brothers of the West, but the life of luxury to which he is destined demands not so much mental as physical gifts; in his case certainly "beauty is its own excuse for being"', was said on the Angora cat.⁴⁴

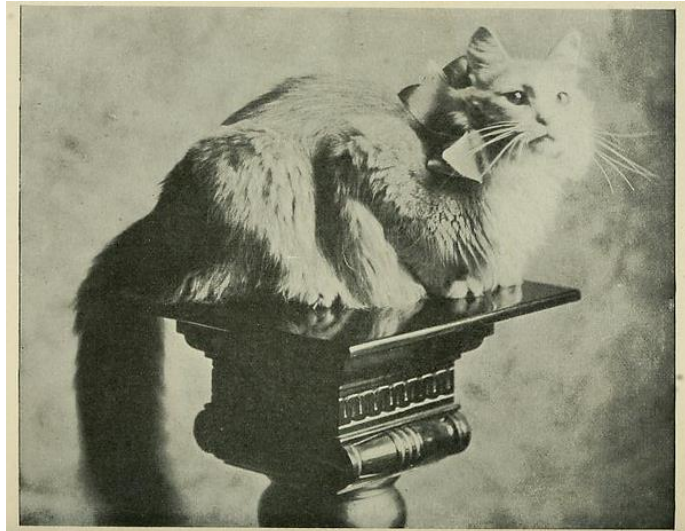


Image 14: A fancy cat with a bowtie, probably a purebred as well. James, *The Angora Cat*, 26-27 (1898).

Therefore, the parlor- and pedigree cats can be deemed the ultimate pet as they only existed for human pleasure – whether this was for ornamental or affectionate purposes. The common house-cat, on the other side, still could have the job of mouser – although, as discussed above, this could be combined with the function of family member. The fact that some cats merely existed for the sake of human pleasure again shows the inequality of the relationship and also how this could affect the living environment of a specific cat the moment said was not deemed as a pleasure anymore.⁴⁵

Moreover, as pointed out above certain aspects of the home, like the fireplace – which was likely to be in the parlor – were considered the heart of the house. When the cat was allowed there, or even specifically meant to be in the parlor, it showed that he or she was part of the home environment and to a large extent also the family, while he or she could also be used to entertain friends and family. Within the context of domesticity the home was reframed as a place of private social interaction. So evidently, where a cat was allowed to roam in the house – or whether he or she was even allowed in the house – was important for his or her status.⁴⁶ Therefore when it was mentioned that some cats were allowed to go into the most private place of the home, that is the bedroom, it also revealed something about their status.⁴⁷ As this was the absolute most private place, the 'ornamental' aspect was no longer relevant – there

⁴⁴ Thorne-Miller, 'Pets in the Home: VII', 232; Other examples: Louella C. Poole, 'A Parlor Cat', *Our Dumb Animals* V.51 (January 1919) 126; Harriet Elliott, 'Guess and Bet', *Our Animal Friends* V.21 (February 1894) 135; Thorne-Miller, 'Pets of the Household: The Queen of All', 415; Idem, 'Pets in the Home: VIII', 253.

⁴⁵ Yuan, *Dominance & Affection*, 88; Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 36; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 59.

⁴⁶ Morey, *Picturing Dogs, Seeing Ourselves*, 113; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 2, 14, 68, 71-73; Brantz, 'The Domestication of Empire', 76, 77.

⁴⁷ Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 71-72.

were no guests present there to show off your pretty Angora. Rather, it shows how the felines allowed in the bedroom were part of the private sphere of the family. They were sometimes even sleeping in the same bed, the absolute most intimate space in the entire house. 'I have lost many an hour of much-needed sleep from my cat's habit of coming upstairs at four A.M. and jumping suddenly upon the bed', Winslow complained about her cat Pretty Lady. Nonetheless, this did not really bother her as she rather accepted it: 'I remember to have often made sleepy but pleasant remarks to the faithful little friend whose affection for me and whose desire to behold my countenance was too great to permit her to wait till breakfast time.'⁴⁸

Thus far, it has become clear that cats lived in many households. Although there could be substantial differences between cats according to their human owners, they did have one thing in common: they all had the need to procreate. Of course, for pedigree cats this was supposed to be more restricted; but for common cats there were little limitations. Seldom someone took the effort to castrate a tomcat and spaying female cats was still deemed an unsafe procedure – and not worth the effort of many. Nonetheless, their numbers needed to be controlled or rather 'destroyed' – especially as they rose in popularity as pets. For instance, a cat who lived for nine years had 93 kittens over this relatively brief period. Generally, the destruction happened by taking most kittens, except the prettiest and strongest one. The remainder were then killed either by chloroforming or drowning them, or a combination of both. The aim was to do it as humanely as possible. 'By (...) taking them soon after they are ushered into this mortal world, a family of small kittens can be carried into non-existence with no knowledge of the transition on their own part', Winslow pointed out. She had executed this procedure many times before since one of her cats birthed

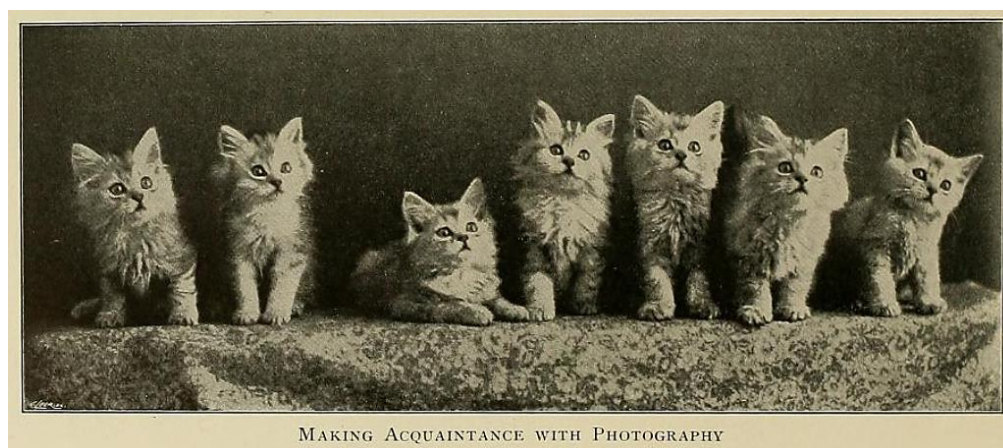


Image 15: Many kittens – probably one litter – looking at the photographer. DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 92 (1907).

⁴⁸ Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 13-16; Other examples: Thorne-Miller, *Funny Friends*, 10, 267; Greenwood, *Heads and Tails*, 142.

those 93 kittens. This was also the faith of the kittens of the foster-cats, as they rather needed to focus on the pedigree kittens who were worth much more. Valuable kittens were rarely destroyed.⁴⁹ Although such a practice seems cruel, it was mostly done from a caring perspective. If there were not enough good homes for those surplus kittens they would end up in bad homes. Or they would end up on the streets, where they would only be a nuisance. Cat owners made their own ethical estimates based on the possibilities of future owners, their own financial situation, customs and their understanding of the sentience of newborn kittens.⁵⁰ Noteworthy is how some authors who addressed this topic tried to reconcile this with the maternal instincts of the mother cat in question. For instance, that the mother complained a little and then had peace with it, or even that she thought something was wrong until all but one kitten was removed.⁵¹

Overall, people could be mocked for liking or loving cats.⁵² Often these were women, particularly single maiden who lived alone with their cats. This was not a typical American phenomenon. The ‘crazy cat ladies’ of West Europe were still harassed, or even killed, in the mid-nineteenth century.⁵³ During this period the number of women who never got married by their own choice increased, so the notion of the ‘old spinster’ grew as well.⁵⁴ References to such women and their cats were already common to hear in the 1870s. These particular women could also have many cats as they took in the abandoned ones – the following chapter discusses this phenomenon in more detail. That the notion of the old spinsters living with a cat was not always necessarily positive is shown in the following example, which was written in the context of the first held cat show in London: ‘Certainly it is a great triumph to the single lady and her cat when, after all the ridicule of which they have stood in the receipt, they are able to assure us that these shows are held and these prizes given in the interest both of science and humanity.’ Apparently, (single) women could be ridiculed if they lived with a cat – fitting in with the still existing ‘crazy cat lady’ trope. Often

⁴⁹ Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 281, 10, 13; Other examples: ‘Good Advice About Cats’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.45 (February 1913) 141; Woodroffe, *The Diseases of the Cat*, 8; Earl, *Pets in the Household*, 156-157; Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book*, 16, 70; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 88; Crandall, *Pets and How to Care for Them*, 34; Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 82; Huidekoper, *The Cat*, 75, 83-84, 134-136; Thorne-Miller, ‘Pets in the Home’, 382; ‘A Few Reminders’, 28; ‘Cats Going to Waste’, 8.

Engels, *Classical Cats*, 8.

⁵⁰ Grier, *Pets in America*, 10.

⁵¹ Thorne-Miller, *Funny Friends*, 75-76; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 26-27.

⁵² The Woman House Cat – Professor Thomas Again Disparages the Female Sex’, *The New York Tribune* (September 25, 1908) 8; Holloway, *Hearthstone*, 341; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 16; Repplier, *The Fire-side Sphinx*, 297-298; ‘J.S., ‘Cats and Dogs’, 10; ‘Lovers and Haters of Cats’, 18; ‘\$2,500 Reward for a Lost Cat’, 8; ‘Do You Want to Buy a Cat?’, 5; ‘Household Pets’, 8.

⁵³ Engels, *Classical Cats*, 158.

⁵⁴ Wayne, *Women’s Roles in Nineteenth-Century America*, 6; Sklar, *Catharine Beecher*, 167.

these women were portrayed to be a little weird, old, lonely and their living space disorderly. Still, the author of this article questioned why this was the case: 'Why the good woman could not have been permitted to make her own free choice out of the animal kingdom, and take a cat for her plaything without a slur from that portion of the race who take a horse or a dog for theirs, is a question for metaphysical analysis.' The author concluded that all women, both the maidens and married ladies, should have the right for innocent whims – just like men had with their dogs.⁵⁵ Possibly a reason that such women was ridiculed stemmed from their independence, as touched upon in the first chapter. The independent woman with her independent feline could be regarded as a threat to what people normally expected of women.

Accordingly, contemporaries saw a link between women and cats in general. This link already existed at least two millennia and was likewise be aimed at phenomenon as marriage, fertility and motherhood, next to women in general. As Kete points out, women were perceived to be closer to nature because of their reproductive and emotional needs, while men had reason on their side. Hence, the former had a more natural tendency to be fond of animals.⁵⁶ The *Cambridge Tribune* dedicated an article, 'Are Women Feline?', to this topic. It asked several physicians about their professional opinion. The responses were mixed; some considered it a ridiculous question, others thought it was preposterous to compare women with cats or any type of animal or did not consider women treacherous like cats were. Still, some did indeed see several connections. For example, how both women and cats got their way by utilizing diplomacy – instead of physical force –, softness and 'purring attributes'. 'The cat-like woman – not an uncommon type – who knows how to purr, etc., (...) and by means of feline gifts and graces manage to attain a lofty place here, there, anywhere', another article confirmed. Finally, a newspaper article pointed out the perceived similarity between cat shows with cats behind bars and a harem; in both places 'femininity is carefully tended'.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ 'The Single Lady and Her Cat', *Harper's Bazaar* V.7 (February 14, 1874) 106; Other examples: M.E.G., 'A Cat Boarding House', *Good Housekeeping* V.42 (May 1906) 580; 'Disinterested Services', *Our Dumb Animals* V.12 (May 1880) 97; 'Brave Service', *Our Dumb Animals* V.13 (June 1880) 5; Elizabeth L. Saxton, 'A Valuable Cat', *Our Dumb Animals* V.21 (December 1888) 81; 'Literary Cat Lovers', *Our Dumb Animals* V.33 (October 1900) 54; "'The Spectator" and the Cat Lady', *Our Dumb Animals* V.44 (August 1911) 39; 'Beggar Mary's Cat Farm', *The Sun* (December 21, 1886) 4; 'Hearth & Boudoir: A Lover of Cats – Some of the Pathetic History of Miss Ewen's Twenty Pets', *The New York Tribune* (September 4, 1904) 3; Reed, *Offthoughts About Women*, 49; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 90; 'Puss', 47; 'Lovers and Haters of Cats', 18; J.S., 'Cats and Dogs', 10; 'Grimalkin to the Fore', 4; 'Gleanings', 7; 'Household Pets', 8.

⁵⁶ Kete, *A Cultural History of Animals*, 8; Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 23; Engels, *Classical Cats*, 2, 152, 153, 163; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 101, 165-169, 171, 173; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 14, 78-79; Arnold-Scerbo, 'Cats & Women' [April 4, 2019].

⁵⁷ 'Are Women Feline?', *Cambridge Tribune* (August 29, 1896) 6; J.S., 'Cats and Dogs', 10; 'Fancy Cats Made Fancier', *The Sun* (January 9, 1910) 8; Another example: 'Women are Women', *Cambridge Sentinel* (February 6, 1909) 5.

Still, there were more manifestations of the interconnection, whether real or perceived, between women and cats. For example, women omitting money or property to their cats, another way of including them in the human family. ‘An eccentric old lady died to other day in a Brooklyn Insane Asylum, bequeathing all of her property (...) to her favorite cat’, after which the article further reflected on how the cat felt about her new status as heiress. Although it has to be pointed out that this particular type of situation did not always occur in an insane asylum setting – able-minded women were also capable of including felines in their wills. Yet another women threatened to sue her husband if he would not provide for the money to feed her cats and dogs.⁵⁸ Again, these kind of incidents already happened before the cat was of major importance in American petkeeping culture. The connection was likewise visible in the growing market of cat products. This were not only produces *for* cats, but also feline-inspired articles for humans, especially for women, such as wallpaper, brooch pins, umbrella’s, parasols and handbags.⁵⁹

In perhaps a more simple way this link was visible in the fact cats were frequently referred to as ‘she’ and the actual sex did not matter. Or that in most articles and books featuring pet cats they had a *mistress*. According to Robert James, in his book on how take care of an Angora – or high bred cats in general – ‘only the thorough patient teaching on the part of the mistress’ can truly make a feline housebroken.⁶⁰ The notion that cats



Image 16: A woman brushing her cat. Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 36-37 (1900).

⁵⁸ ‘Where is the Cat?’, *Chicago Daily Tribune* (February 10, 1878) 11; ‘Said her Pets Were Starving’, *The New York Tribune* (February 7, 1900) 12; Other examples: ‘That Cat’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.5 (November 1872) 251; ‘Telegraph Briefs’, *The Day Book* (February 19, 1916) 30; Reed, *Offthoughts About Women*, 49; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 189; ‘A Cat With Nine Lives’, 218; ‘Household Pets’, 8.

⁵⁹ ‘Queen Puss’s Reign’, 77.

⁶⁰ James, *The Angora Cat*, 9, 10; Other examples: Frances Simpson, *The Book of Cat* (London 1903) vii; A., ‘To the Memory of a Favorite Cat’, 308; A.F. Matthewson, ‘Pussy in the Corner’, *Good Housekeeping* V.8 (February 16, 1889) 181; No title, *Our Animal Friends* (February 1893) 126; S.A.R., ‘Snowball’s Story: A Chapter Out of a Kitten’s Life’, *Our Animal Friends* V.20 (April 1893) 208; ‘Why Not the Cats?’, *The New York Herald* (July 28, 1878) 8; ‘Somewhat Strange – Accidents and Incidents of Every Day Life’, *Chicago Eagle* (April 1, 1893) 7; Woodroffe, *The Diseases of the Cat*, 71; Willard, *Occupations For Women*, 116; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 44, 51, 52, 58, 79-88; Thorne-Miller, *Funny Friends*, 273; ‘The “Young Kittens” and the Cat’, 7; Saxton, ‘A Valuable Cat’, 81; ‘Literary Cat Lovers’, 54; ‘An Exhibition of Cats’, 242; ‘Do You Want to Buy a Cat?’, 5; ‘Woman’s Realm: Cats of High Degree’, 4.

rather have servants instead of an owner was also already heard during this research period. According to Edward Forbush – who was not a fan of cats in general – women were particularly susceptible to attend their cats every need: ‘(...) abject slavery to a cat’s every whim sometimes seems to win its real regard and affection (...). Rarely is such a service offered except by women, whose superlatively affectionate and maternal natures lead them to make any sacrifice for those they love, and sometimes to make even greater exertions to please when the object of their attentions manifests only indifference.’⁶¹ While caring and nursing were important female qualities especially in the domesticity framework, Forbush referred here to an, in his eyes, over the top expression of these features.

Even though there are almost only references to cats having a mistress, and of course the overall interlinkage people perceived between felines and females, it does not mean that men did not have cats. While they are not sure if the photographs analyzed by them show a real gender difference or whether they were a staged gender performance that obscure interaction between men and cats, Arluke and Rolfe point out that this was a more complicated relationship. The photographs rarely show the intimacy that women showed towards cats or men towards other animals such as dogs. Perhaps this had something to do with the small size of cats and that they could be held as infants, this showed too much a caring and maternal connection – contradicting contemporary gender roles.⁶² Still, there are a few examples of male cat owners in the selected sources for this research. For instance, a male cat owner stated that he liked cats but that this statement was not a bid for matrimony; apparently women also liked men who liked cats.⁶³ Another example is on how gender norms of the period were applied to felines; projecting the domesticity framework once again on cat society, although now by showing the other, male, side. How this happened with cats and women is already addressed and is also further considered below, yet for men it could happen in several ways as well. For instance, a tomcat who had a ‘paternal air’ around the female part of his family – whether cat or human – even though he might not be home that much, that he was the head of the cat family, that

⁶¹ Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 17, 14; Other examples: Mivart, *The Cat*, 367; ‘A Cat With Nine Lives’, 218.

⁶² Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 14-15, 80-87, 89.

⁶³ ‘Cats and Dogs: A Plea for Pussy and Her Possibilities as a Pet’, *Good Housekeeping* V.9 (May 11, 1889) 16; Other examples: ‘Curious Cats’, *Chicago Daily Tribune* (July 17, 1881) 6; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 189-190; James, *The Angora Cat*, 92; ‘Queen Puss’s Reign’, 77; ‘Woman’s Realm: Cats of High Degree’, 4.

he was cared and nurtured for by the female cat (his 'wife!') or that he escorted all females of the family home.⁶⁴

'Much has been said about the affinity between the two most domestic, most graceful, most capricious, and, withal, most lovable of creatures', wrote Mabel Cornish-Bond – physician, parasitologist and cat breeder – on the link between women and cats. This shows that both beings were explicitly linked in their mutual possession of fine, reserved, gracious and dignified manners. This could happen in how they acted, reacted, ate or just the overall appearance and behavior. The resemblance in 'ladylike' behavior caused them to have a mutual liking for each other, so it was stated.⁶⁵ A woman's delicate nature was something to be treasured and protected. Therefore, it was argued that the home was the best place to be as it would keep her safe and gave her the opportunity to perform her domestic duties.⁶⁶

Both women and cats ideally had certain domestic qualities; again showing the homely nature of felines, also by portraying cat 'families' as human families. Especially in the homely setting, by the fireplace, could cats demonstrate their domestic attributes. One such quality was cleanliness. Only when the Western world discovered that sanitation was something good – regarding the spreading of disease and hygiene in general – cats started their redemption by protecting the house from rodents and by leading by example in cleanliness.⁶⁷ One article in *Our Animal Friends* even pointed out that, as the virtue of cleanliness was next to godliness, it would be presumable that the cat would be an extremely pious person – another important



AN EXTREMELY BUSY DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN INDUSTRIOUS TABBY

Image 17: A tabby cat busy with domestic duties. 'An Extremely Busy Day in the Life of an Industrious Tabby', *Our Dumb Animals* V.46, 61 (1913).

⁶⁴ Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 28, 37-39, 40-41; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 16-20.

⁶⁵ Mabel, 'Cat Raising as a Business', 842; Other examples: Helen M. Winslow, 'Cats of High Degree', *Harper's Bazaar* V.31 (December 24, 1898) 1110; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 3, 9, 23, 30-31, 40; Replier, *The Fireside Sphinx*, 275-276; Dixon, *The Human Side of Animals*, 121-122; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 83; Holloway, *Hearthstone*, 341; DeVogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 94; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 7, 16; Tracy, 'Queer Things About Cats', 249; 'A Witch', 222.

⁶⁶ McHugh, *American Domesticity*, 192; Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood', 162.

⁶⁷ Engels, *Classical Cats*, 172; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 101-103.

element within the context of domesticity. As Mivart said explicitly: 'it is a home-loving animal and one exceptionally clean and orderly in its habits, and thus naturally commends itself to the good will of the thrifty housewife.'⁶⁸

On the other hand, Clark in his work on the existence of cat language rather thought it worked the other way around: '[The cat] in a more delicate manner, soon takes upon herself the temper, mannerisms, actions and ways of her mistress, and in her life imitates the actions of the one who is her admiration and involuntary teacher.'⁶⁹ So apparently the cat did not naturally have 'domestic tendencies'; only by following her mistress did the cat acquire them. As pointed out in the beginning of this chapter, a cat reminded one of a homely, clean, calm and safe domestic setting – just as a 'proper woman' should create within the ideal notion of domesticity. Women in this time period were likewise considered domestic, private, (economically) unproductive and serving society by providing company and emotional support. A cat could be the epiphany of domesticity as many members of cat society were seen in a similar manner, also because they shared the living space of the home – whether that was the parlor or the kitchen – with their human family. Katharine Rogers adds a more negative twist to the story. Of all companion animals, the cat was the less esteemed and regarding sexes, women were less esteemed. By linking them together both were placed in simply defined roles and could easily be discredited.⁷⁰ The above-mentioned quote of Forbush, of women responding to the cat's every whim, seems to be a case in point.

Grace Greenwood in her anecdotal book on pets made an interesting remark regarding a kitten she observed chasing his or her tail. She wondered why the kitten was so engaged in this activity. To this remark she thought that the kitten responded the following: 'Nay, thou sad-eyed champion of womanhood, thou pale pen-drudge, thou weary student of politics, in what is the round of a woman of fashion nobler than my merry chase?'⁷¹ So it seemed as if the kitten wondered why a woman, engaged in political study would do this. She was only a woman after all, what could she ever accomplish outside her own homely realm? The next chapter addresses ways

⁶⁸ Mivart, *The Cat*, 1; Other examples: Nena Thomas-Medairy, 'A Midnight Journey', *Our Animal Friends* V.23 (November 1895) 62; Earl, *Pets in the Household*, 155; Greenwood, *Heads and Tails*, 142; Dixon, *The Human Side of Animals*, 33, 121; Mayo, *The Care of Animals*, 36-37; Reed, *Offthoughts About Women*, 49-50; Clark, *Pussy and her Language*, 16-20; Repplier, *The Fireside Sphinx*, 299-300; A., 'To the Memory of a Favorite Cat', 308; 'The Companionable Cat', 63; 'Concerning the Cat', 245.

⁶⁹ Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 14-15.

⁷⁰ Grier, *Pets in America*, 136; Rogers, *Cats and the Human Imagination*, 171, 173, 185; Arluke, *The Photographed Cat*, 94; Tague, 'The history of emotional attachment', 359; Arnold-Scerbo, 'Cats & Dogs' [April 4, 2019].

⁷¹ Greenwood, *Heads and Tails*, 134; Other examples: Repplier, *The Fireside Sphinx*, 228; 'One of the Sufferers', 4; 'Feline Legislation', 2.

in which the cat could actually assist women in trying to enter the public world, demonstrating that it was perhaps not merely a 'merry chase'.

That a clear link existed between cats and the home became clear in this chapter. This happened by placing the housecat specifically in the domestic environment. The home was deemed the most important pillar of society and domesticity, considered as a place where new citizens and mothers were born and taught their republican and moral values. This is telling on the status of the cat because like other pets, they were important in creating the imagery around the home and domesticity. What was unique about cats was how, on the one hand, they were considered in this negative, supposedly undomesticated way outside of human civilization, while on the other hand they reminded people of home, possessed domestic qualities themselves or were crucial in order to create a perfect home, placing them directly into the center of human civilization. This was taken even a step further when cats were included as family members. It showed that they mattered and that they should be cared for as they were part of family, thereby in the process actually becoming more human-like and thus even more worthy for human care and attention. As caring was an important feature of domesticity it shows yet again another way in which this animal was important within this context.

Next to the home, women were critical in order to implement the notion of domesticity. When considering this as an ideal to live up to, women were supposed to be gentle, graceful, caring and domestic. By attributing the same qualities to cats they likewise fitted in the framework of domesticity. When looking at womanly and domestic tendencies, frustrations seem to come to the fore. While felines and women allegedly shared qualities we consider domestic and noble, at the same time both were considered as the lesser domesticated animal and the lesser sex; by linking them together they could both be discredited.

The independence nature of the cat and the lack of access to the public world could be interpreted as more frustrations that were present in society: how women were becoming more independent – which could frustrate those in favor of more traditional gender roles – or how women still had trouble in reaching their full potential in the public world – to the frustration of those fighting for woman's rights. The example of the kittens 'merry chase' continued with this theme. Greenwood, by using the 'voice' of the kitten, complained about the situation of womankind. The situation of cats and women had many similarities: independence was disapproved or outright rejected by many, they were confined to the home and to a large extent were barred

access to the outside world and both were only good within (the imagery of) the home, which gave the opportunity to downgrade both on these grounds as well. Perhaps the situation of the cat made Greenwood and other women realize something on their own circumstances. Although this remains speculative, the cat might have influenced women not only to think about their own place in society, but perhaps even to act in the outside world. The final chapter looks into the situation of cats and women in the public realm.

3. THE HOUSECAT AS GATEWAY TO THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The third and final chapter of this thesis looks into how cats were used by women to enter the public domain. This could happen in several ways and was related to the growing interest in cats as pets, especially regarding purebreds. Cat shows, starting a cattery, opening up a boarding house for cats, or participating in SPCA campaigns that fought for better treatment of cats are all examples of the interaction between cats and women in the outside world which are addressed in this chapter.

An important element of domesticity according to historians is how this framework contained its own destruction. Because, if women were considered, ideally speaking, morally perfect creatures then why were they not present in the outside world? This was considered as a more or less bad place, with ruthless competition and temptation, mostly caused by men who needed the refining influences of their wives at home. Yet, precisely this attribute of women could be used as justification of their presence in the public sphere. Perhaps she could uplift morality in this sphere by her refining touch, instead of just at home. Women saw this loophole within the ideal of domesticity as well and tried to use it to their advantage, for example by doing charity- and church work. Both were perfect places where women could use their moral expertise, while infiltrating the public sphere.¹ This chapter shows how the framework of domesticity, combined with the growing interest in the cat as pet, was used by women to enter the public world and escape this allegedly strict dichotomy. Showing yet again another way in which cats and women were interconnected. It turned out that they made together a great team.

The fact that pets rose in popularity was expressed in the growing interest for bettering their treatment, for example via numerous SPCA's across the country in which many women were involved. An important factor emphasized by both SPCA's and cat lovers in general, was how important it was to treat your cat well. In line with how people thought these animals loved, you had to be worthy of their love and affection. Therefore, by being kind to your cat, the cat would be nice to you as well. Only cats who were not fed properly would turn into the thieves or bird-destroyers many people already accused them of being. This warning was repeated over and over again, starting in 1872 – although people thought it was a lot of fuss over a cat – and continued until the end of the period covered by this research. 'Some people look upon poor pussy as simply a kind of clever invention for catching mice, an animated

¹ Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley 1990) 4, 8-9; Samuels, *The Culture of Sentiment*, 4; Sklar, *Catharine Beecher*, xiv; Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 36, 44, 57, 62, 71-72, 89, 138-139; Davidson, *No More Separate Spheres*, 18-19; Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood', 174; Smith, 'New Paths to Power', 363; Warren, 'Separate Spheres', 263, 265-267.

vermin trap, a creature that never requires any food except that which she herself may capture, and no attention or kindness of any kind.’ Accordingly, the fact that many people did not feed their cats was predicated on the notion that a hungry cat would make a better hunter; a fable which turned out to be difficult to eradicate. ‘Think for a moment how her winning ways and pretty playfulness have amused you for many an hour and won a warm place in your heart for the little household pet, then justify her for helping herself when you either forgot or refused to give her the nourishment she had so richly earned’, Marvin Clark decried, and he was not alone. Many people showed tremendous anger on the issue of not feeding your cat, even questioning the citizenry of those omitting to do so. Defenders of the housecat rather argued that a hungry feline would not have to energy to chase rodents.²

Another practice which the SPCA and cat lovers wanted to eradicate was how cat owners, mostly *mistresses*, left the city for the summer months, leaving their cats behind to fend for themselves on the streets. This turned out to be another custom, already present in the 1870s, which was hard to eliminate as warnings were still issued around 1920. To reach not just animal lovers via SPCA magazines, newspapers published such warnings as



THE LAMENT OF A FORSAKEN CAT.
By ELIZABETH HARCOCK MITCHELL, in *The Animal World*.

Image 18: A cat abandoned for the summer. ‘The Lament of a Forsaken Cat’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.32, 122 (1900).

well. The fact that many people continued to abandon their pet likewise stemmed from the notion that cats could catch their own food. The messages from the SPCA pointed out how selfish it was to leave your little servant, who you loved and cared for all year, behind as it was just for convenience sake. This case of ‘cold blooded cat murder’ was attacked in the same angry tones as expressed on the previous

² ‘Cats: Their Humane and Rational Treatment’, 762; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 14; Other examples: ‘How and Irish Maid Judges Families By Their Cats’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.40 (April 1908) 177; ‘The Proper Care of Cats’, *Our Animal Friends* V.21 (July 1894) 260; ‘Cats and Their Care’, *Humane Advocate* V.6 (April 1911) 139-140; ‘The Lore of the Feline’, *The New York Tribune* (April 21, 1912) 8; Earl, *Pets of the Household*, 156; James, *The Angora Cat*, 26; Crandall, *Pets and How to Care for Them*, 31; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 266-269; A.T.D., ‘Mistakes About Cats’, 223; Thorn, ‘Kate Thorn’s Defense of Cats’, 27; L.B.U., ‘Cats’, (1879) 67; Stables, ‘Don’t You Believe It!’, 58; ‘Cats – Ancient and Modern’, 158; Thorne-Miller, ‘Pets of the Household: The Queen of All’, 415; Idem, ‘Pets in the Home: the Care of the Cat’, 381-382; ‘A Witch’, 222.

issue: 'It ought not be necessary to remind one of (...) the duty of providing for the household cat, while the family of which it is a member are away.' The poor felines would be rewarded for their rodent-catching and loving services during the winter, with starvation, abandonment and, likely, death in the summer. Moreover, it gave them an opportunity to procreate, contributing to the growing stray problem in large cities. People were encouraged to tell on people who committed this atrocity, in order to persuade them to make arrangements for their pet – whether that be a boarding house, staying with friends or even to have the animal mercifully killed. In the 1900s Bostonians received \$10 for providing evidence and abandoners could be fined up to \$250 or even end up a year in jail.³ The families that left the city for the summer months obviously had the financial means to do so. This aligns with the conclusion of historian Diane Beers in her work on origins of American animal welfare: those involved wanted to uplift the entire society, it was not just about controlling the 'less civilized' lower classes, who needed to be thought how to interact with animals; well to do people were also capable of mistreating their precious pets.⁴

The SPCA and cat lovers in general questioned the extent to which kittens were suitable playmates for young children. While virtually everybody believed in the benefits arising from youngsters interacting with animals, apparently there were also incidents of inconsiderate treatment of kittens. Many families just acquired this cute and tiny creature for their child, which was frequently disposed of when kitten or child had grown or the moment the kitten started to bite and scratch in his or her defense. 'When [the child] came, she was swinging a miserable, stunted kitten by its ears. It was dripping with soapsuds, the child having been giving the poor creature a bath (...).' Yet, when complaining to the mother about this abusive treatment she proclaimed that the child loved the kitten, moreover, he does not mind it. 'And yet, this woman read her Bible daily, and talked earnestly about "the Christian life."' This example was considered wrong in two ways. First, the mother did not recognize the

³ 'Deserted Cats', *Our Dumb Animals* V.11 (July 1878) 12; Other examples: Geo T. Angell, 'A City Official With a Kind Heart', *Our Dumb Animals* V.24 (May 1892) 140; Idem, 'Boston Daily Papers: Black Bay and Other Cats', *Our Dumb Animals* V.24 (May 1892) 143; Idem, 'To Prevent the Abandoning of Cats', *Our Dumb Animals* V.40 (October 1907) 72; Elizabeth Harcourt-Mitchell, 'The Lament of a Forsaken Cat', *Our Dumb Animals* V.32 (September 1899) 51; 'Sensible Sir Thomas', *Our Dumb Animals* V.50 (November 1917) 88; No title, *Cambridge Tribune* (August 13, 1892) 4; 'A Plea for the Cats', *Cambridge Tribune* (June 11, 1898) 4; 'Do Not Leave Your Cat to Starve', *Cambridge Tribune* (June 15, 1912) 6; 'Cats', *The New York Tribune* (July 13, 1905) 6; Woodroffe, *The Diseases of the Cat*, 1-2; Mayo, *The Care of Animals*, 39; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 25-26; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 266-267; 'Cats: Their Humane and Rational Treatment', 763; Thorne-Miller, 'Pets in the Home: the Care of the Cat', 382; 'One of the Sufferers', 4; Packard, 'The Neighborhood Cat', 9.

⁴ Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty*, 8-9, 53.

kitten as one of God's creatures; second, she taught her daughter cruelty, selfishness and indifference to suffering.⁵

Next to the SPCA, another institution was founded in New York in 1903 to shelter stray animals, the Bide-a-Wee Home. This institution was noteworthy as it was the first no-kill shelter in the United States. It was founded and led by women and many wealthy women had donated money to establish it. Particularly the involvement of numerous women was used to criticize the institution they had founded. In *Our Animal Friends* the New York SPCA dedicated an editorial on the in their eyes ill-managed enterprise. It was argued that the many ladies who had made donations did not understand what the actual work and responsibilities entailed. '[There] are a few women, perfectly well known as uncontrollable sentimentalists, whose vagaries have made them conspicuous heretofore and whose impracticable schemes have always ended in disaster.' The author could not see how sentimental women – who did not understand how the real world worked – could make it a success; that is, maintaining so many animals instead of killing them.⁶ Obviously, one can indeed question how this could work, nonetheless, they did succeed eventually as the Bide-a-Wee Home still exists. Moreover, Beers considers this the start of a changing sentiment regarding the handling of strays. Many women were also involved in the abovementioned SPCA campaigns. Yet they were not the leaders or organizers. They were rather the financiers and 'foot soldiers', as they reported incidents of mistreatment or wrote how one should treat animals.⁷

SPCA shelters also took in stray animals. Their strategy was rather to end the nuisance these animals were perceived to be and to end their suffering caused by their homelessness – which was still the most common method in the country and would continue to be for a long time. The law in New York stated that cats with a collar who were not claimed within 48 hours would be killed, although fancy specimens were often kept a little longer. Just like private persons, this institution used chloroform, but on a larger scale by pumping it into a tank into which multiple cats or dogs could be placed. In 1911 the city of New York alone destroyed 303,949 unclaimed or unwanted cats. Although New York stands out in this massive amount,

⁵ Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 264-266; 228; Other examples: 'The Lesson of Love', *Our Animal Friends* V.22 (August 1895) 279; 'Bands of Mercy', *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Illinois Humane Society* (May 1884) 7-9; Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 51; Thorn, 'Kate Thorn's Defense of Cats', 27; 'A Few Reminders', 28; S.A.R., 'Snowball's Story', 208-209; 'Cats and Their Care', 139-140; Thorne-Miller, 'Pets in the Home: VIII', 253.

⁶ 'Editorial: The "Bide-a-Wee Home" Experiment', *Our Animal Friends* V.31 (August 1904) 535-538; Clark, *Pussy and Her Language*, 38-39.

⁷ Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty*, 9-10, 53-54, 75; Grier, *Pets in America*, 132.

other cities likewise had large numbers of destroyed cats. Only a fraction of the captured cats were replaced into new homes. In a similar manner regarding the Bide-a-Wee Home, women were more or less blamed for this problem, as kindhearted mistress's could not bear to kill superfluous kittens.⁸ Many people did not see the hypocrisy of living with their pet cats, while killing them in such massive numbers as well. As Dorothee Brantz points out, strays did not belong to a home or a human owner, therefore they were not worthy of protection. They were considered a threat as they were not tamed, but rather a wild animal, hence not subdued to civilization. People were more concerned whether the killing happened in a humane way as in line with their own civilized morality.⁹

On a smaller scale individual women were also involved in sheltering homeless cats. Occasionally these were the aforementioned 'crazy cat ladies' who were sometimes a little over their heads in their effort to do good. These women took in sick or abandoned cats and sheltered them or they put them out of their misery – sometimes with the help of the local SPCA: '(...) she is nothing but a single woman, eccentric and wealthy, whose love for cats amounts to a passion, and who finds nothing incompatible with the Ten Commandments in making her house a refuge for all the abandoned, starving, hunted felines that any one will take the trouble to bring to her door.' Frequently people could also bring their newborn, unwanted kittens to them, if they themselves could not bear it to kill them. One woman was even called the 'Providence of cats'.¹⁰ The problem of stray cats and dogs was a major problem for many cities around the turn of the century and generated plenty of discussion.¹¹ Nonetheless, as the entirety of that debate does not fit within the boundaries of this research, the information just provided should suffice.

This growing interest in animal welfare was not something unexpected. Nathaniel Shaler provided a clear narrative explaining how domesticated animals and listening to their needs and suffering was important for the development of

⁸ Geo T. Angell, 'The Cat', *Our Dumb Animals V.32* (September 1899) 51; 'Why Don't You?', *Our Dumb Animals V.32* (March 1900) 122; F.H.R., 'Cats and Dogs', *Our Dumb Animals V.44* (October 1911) 74; 'Should Cats Be Licensed?', *Our Dumb Animals V.44* (April 1912) 171-172; 'Shelter for Lost, Strayed, and Homeless Animals', *Our Animal Friends V.21* (April 1894) 169-170; Huidekoper, *The Cat*, 135, 142-148; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 20-21; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 262; Chapouille, 'A Plea for Puss and Her Victims', 566; 'Grimalkin and Tabitha', 3.

⁹ Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty*, 74; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 55-56; Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 21; Idem, 'Between Wild and Domestic', 145, 155; Brantz, 'Domestication of Empire', 79-80.

¹⁰ 'Hearth & Boudoir: A Lover of Cats', 3; Other examples: 'A Cat Intelligence Office', *Our Dumb Animals V.8* (March 1876) 78; 'Disinterested Services', *Our Dumb Animals V.12* (May 1880) 97; 'Caring for Cats', *Our Dumb Animals V.40* (March 1908) 163; Joseph Henry Adams, 'A Cat Farm with a Mission', *Good Housekeeping V.44* (March 1907) 260; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 83; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 199; 'Brave Service', 5; 'The Spectator', 39; 'Do You Want to Buy a Cat?', 5.

¹¹ Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty*, 73.

civilization. He argued that possessing domesticated animals enabled humankind to go beyond its savage state. Taking care of animals would give a household a new responsibility, bring about agriculture and assist in creating wealth and commerce – giving mankind the opportunity to go upward and attain higher culture.¹² Mankind, by caring for the animals in his household, extended his sympathies to all sentient beings in society. Being able to put yourself in their place would help in foreseeing in their needs, Shaler argued. He compared it with the just finished struggle against slavery. The ‘great tide of mercy and justice’ had moved on from the bad treatment of human slaves, to slaves of a lower estate, namely domestic animals. People noticed how it could be a pleasure to have them around and to ‘win’ them for their homes – another example of sympathy, Shaler thought.¹³

While sympathy was thus key in his explanation of the massive role domesticated animals had played in the development of human civilization, domination was another important element he thought:

We thus see that the matter of domesticated animals is but a part of the larger problem which includes all that relates to man’s destined mastery of the earth. (...) a large part of the life of this sphere is to be committed to his care, to survive or perish as he wills, to change at his bidding, to give (...) whatever of profit or pleasure they may contribute to his endless advancement.¹⁴

At least, he believed this to be true for only part of humankind. One important component of his narrative is how he believed that the process of domestication created an opportunity for human selection. This was in line with the sentiment in society addressed in chapter one, namely the extent to which one was capable to control nature and animals reflected how advanced and civilized someone was. Shaler believed that only the ‘Aryan race’ – or explicitly the most advanced variety, namely the English-speaking portion – was able to rule all animals.¹⁵ Other ‘races’ were not capable to extent their sympathies towards other creatures or appreciate their presence, therefore they could be considered as a less civilized people. Although on multiple occasions it has already been pointed out that people of all classes and ethnicities

¹² Shaler, *Domesticated Animals*, 2-4, 5-6, 9; Another example: Davenport, *Domesticated Animals and Plants*, 26; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, iii, 82; Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 108; Robbins-Berry, ‘Dumb Civilizers’, 8.

¹³ Shaler, *Domesticated Animals*, 4-5, 204, 206-209, 221; Other examples: DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 5; ‘The Lesson of Love’, 279; Robbins-Berry, ‘Dumb Civilizers’, 8.

¹⁴ Shaler, *Domesticated Animals*, 8.

¹⁵ *Ibidm.*, 4, 206-209, 220.

had pets, within the sources selected for this research there is little indication of this statistic. In fact, there was only one explicit reference to an African-American family having a pet cat.¹⁶ Since this research used sources that were specifically aimed at cats and domesticity, the latter which was rather aimed at the (white) middle-class it can be understandable why a more diverse cat-ownership appears to be lacking. Notwithstanding, the extent to which people who were not part of the white middle-class were able or allowed to participate in the growing cat fancy could be questioned as well.

For Shaler and almost all his American contemporaries, such as those who supported SPCA campaigns, extending sympathy towards and domination over quadrupeds was a sign of being civilized. In earlier times this could also be the farm animals which almost everyone owned. At the end of the nineteenth century pets had mostly replaced them. By having them around, humankind could continue to benefit from this civilizing influence by being sympathetic to the needs of these depended creatures. Shaler said of cats that they have ‘awakened a measure of sympathy which it hardly deserves’, and as the first chapter demonstrated, he was not alone.¹⁷ Yet, others disagreed and were sympathetic to their needs. This was part of an overall culture of civilizing ideas and sentimentality. In this particular case the suffering of cats was used to reach out to people, to play on their emotions and to create feelings of sympathy to make people act. The authors of these texts first had themselves to be made to act as well. Most likely this happened when they encountered a cat who was treated badly. In line with the argument of Shirley Samuels – where sentimentality creates spectacles that cross race, class and gender boundaries – it seems that in this particular case sentimentality had crossed the species boundary as well. The cat had influenced people to act and to try to improve society by being kind to animals, including the most hated pet of all: the cat. This kind of narrative could especially help women, as within the framework of domesticity they were considered more sentimental, caring, sympathetic and morally higher creatures anyway. It justified their role as reformer and they gladly took up this role within the SPCA, the Bide-a-Wee Home or by sheltering stray cats in their own homes, thereby creating a place for themselves in the public world.¹⁸

¹⁶ ‘A Clever Cat’, *Our Dumb Animals* V.22 (November 1889) 72.

¹⁷ Shaler, *Domesticated Animals*, 51; Another example: Forbush, *The Domestic Cat*, 14. Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 35-36.

¹⁸ See footnote 7 on the involvement of women in SPCA’s; Lauren Berlant, ‘The Female Woman: Fanny Fern and the Form of Sentiment’, in: Shirley Samuels (ed.), *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford and New York 1992) 267, 270; Majorie Garber, ‘Compassion’, in: Lauren Berlant (ed.), *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, (New York

Cat shows provided another incentive to improve the situation of cats. The first show in London happened in 1871 under the auspice of Harrison Weir and was considered the start of the cat fancy in Great Britain. His aim was to better the treatment of cats in general and to elevate their status.¹⁹ In the

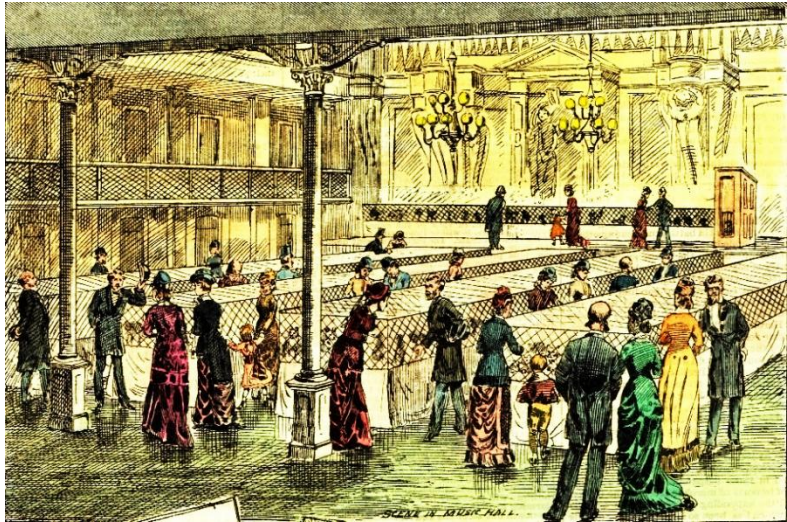


Image 19: Boston cat show in the music hall. *The Daily Graphic* (1880). This image is part of the Harrison Weir collection.

United States the start of the cat fancy was pinpointed at the cat show in Madison Square Garden in New York in 1895, after which several cat clubs would be established and more shows would follow. This event, with 250 entries, was likewise in corporation with the SPCA as they displayed several of the cats who were recently taken off the streets. 'It is one of a multitude of things which at once indicate and tend to cultivate a sentiment of kindness to animals', was said on the show. There even was the happy incident that a 'little mistress' found her pet cat among the captives. Nonetheless, before that time cats were already shown on smaller scale or as part of poultry and pigeon shows. *Our Dumb Animals* already referred to a small scale cat show with around 30 entries that occurred in 1876. This event, and other earlier shows, seemed less serious and centered not so much around fancy cats and more around novelty cats, such as famous mousers or those who could perform tricks. Moreover, many people still thought it was a peculiar, or even idiotic, phenomenon.²⁰

2004) 24; Kara B. Clevinger, "These Human Flowers": Sentimentalizing Children and Fashioning Maternal Authority in Godey's Lady's Book', in: Mary G. de Jong (eds.), *Sentimentalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literary and Cultural Practices* (Madison 2013) 16; Samuels, *The Culture of Sentiment*, 4-5, 6; Berlant, *Compassion*, 4, 7; Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, 4, 7-9, 13; Jong, *Sentimentalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literary and Cultural Practices*, 2-3; Kean, *Animal Rights*, 10-11; Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty*, 53-54; Grier, *Pets in America*, 132; Kete, *A Cultural History of Animals*, 3; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 50-51; Brantz, 'The Domestication of Empire', 75.

¹⁹ DeVogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 82-83; 'The Single Lady and Her Cat', 106.

Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 116-117; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 149; Kean, 'The Moments of Greyfriars Bobby', 28.

²⁰ 'An Exhibition of Cats', 242; Other examples: *Catalogue of the Grand American Cat Show* (October 15, 1883, Boston), this catalogue is part of the Harrison Weir Collection; 'Cat Show in Massachusetts', *Our Dumb Animals V.9* (December 1876) 51; 'Cat Show', *Our Dumb Animals V.10* (March 1878) 79; 'Boston Poultry, Pigeon and Cat Show', *Cambridge Chronicle* (January 14, 1899) 9; 'Boston Poultry Show', *Cambridge Chronicle* (January 12, 1901) 14; 'A Feline Show', *The New York Herald* (December 12, 1877) 8; 'Cats' Meow', *The New York Herald* (December 18, 1877) 10; 'Local Miscellany: Cats of Low and High Degree', *The New York Tribune* (March 8, 1881) 8; 'An Interesting Show', *The Sun* (February 5, 1885) 3; 'Only Woman's Page: Caring for Angoras', *The New York Tribune* (September 16, 1901) 7; 'Boston - The

Cat shows were places where you could flaunt your fancy cat. It showed what kind of cats, or cats in general, were ‘all the rage’ while in the 1870s they were not considered objects of fashion yet. ‘Tabby and Grimalkin (...) are now likely to be changed from reasonable objects of domesticity into pets of fashion (...). [Many women will] at once begin to promote the kitchen cat to a place in the parlor, till she can find a substitute from Persia (...),’ was proclaimed at the end of the 1880s. Many rich and fashionable society ladies would attend these beautifully decorated events, who made it a success socially while exhibiting their cats.²¹ It is important to not interpret the cat fancy around 1900 as merely a fashion craze but rather consider it as the starting point of the cat becoming truly a part of petkeeping culture as we are still experiencing today. Several newspaper articles thought it was just another temporary, foolish, fashion mania. They even claimed that the furriers were playing in on this new trend by designing outfits with furs that would match the new pet cats – instead of the ‘old-fashioned’ poodles; fox and ermine were found to be suitable to wear.²²

Women were also important in the organization and management of the event. Dorothy Champion, who bred and showed cats herself and was key player in the emerging American cat fancy, stated that it was best to do all the organizing and managing yourself – as a woman. Many factors needed to be considered, such as the administration, hiring pens, acquiring disinfectants, pans of sand and food, ensuring that the ventilation worked and making sure all the shipped cats were properly cared for and that they would be send back to the right owner.

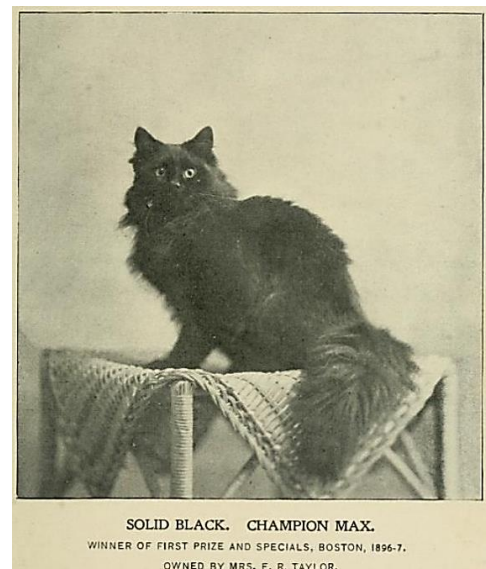


Image 20: Max, the winner of the first prize. James, *The Angora Cat*, 14-15 (1898).

Recent Great Cat-Show at Music Hall’, *Chicago Daily Tribune* (February 3, 1878) 16; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 133-136; Simpson, *The Book of Cat*, 303; Ingersoll, ‘Cat, Domestic’; Hamilton-French, ‘The First New York Cat Show’, 381; Robbins-Berry, ‘Dumb Civilizers’, 8; ‘Do You Want to Buy a Cat?’, 5; ‘Woman’s Realm: Cats of High Degree’, 4.

Sarah Hartwell, ‘Cats & Cat Care Through the Ages. Birth of the Cat Fancy. Cat Clubs & Early Cat Shows (North America)’, *Messybeast Cats* <<http://messybeast.com/catarchive.htm>> [April 4, 2019].

²¹ ‘Puss’, 47; Other examples: Jennie van Allen, ‘The Recent Chicago Cat Show’, *Harper’s Bazaar* V.31 (December 24, 1898) 1111; ‘Cats!’, *Cambridge Chronicle* (January 29, 1898) 10; ‘She Raises Pets: Unique and Successful Occupation of a Young Cambridge Woman – Little Animals in Her Care’, *Cambridge Tribune* (February 7, 1903) 7; ‘Meows From the Cat Show’, *The Sun* (February 29, 1896) 3; ‘Pets, Good, Bad, and Indifferent’, *Chicago Daily Tribune* (August 10, 1879) 4; James, *The Angora Cat*, 77; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 209; Repplier, *The Fireside Sphinx*, 228; Ingersoll, ‘Cat, Domestic’; ‘Queen Puss’s Reign’, 77; Winslow, ‘Cats of High Degree’, 1110; Packard, ‘the Neighborhood Cat’, 9; ‘Do You Want to Buy a Cat?’, 5; ‘For and About Women: Some Cat Gossip’, 7; ‘Household Pets’, 8.

²² ‘All These Cats are Costly, and One of Them Goes Hunting’, *The Sun* (October 16, 1904) 6; ‘High Bred Cats at Show’, *The New York Tribune* (November 10, 1907) 4; ‘Library Chat’, 6; ‘She Raises Pets’, 7.

Women could also be involved in judging the cats at the shows. Helen Winslow even thought that at least one judge should be female. 'A cat should be handled gently and kept as calm as possible during the judging. Women are naturally more gentle in their methods, and more tenderhearted. When my pets are entered for competition, may some wise, kind woman have the judging of them!', she proclaimed.²³ As stated, cat clubs arose when the cat fancy grew. This was likewise a place where many women were involved. This was not something peculiar as in this time period women organized clubs for all sorts of purposes. However, that does not take away the fact that this was another opportunity to develop their interests outside their homes and into the public world.²⁴ These clubs, of which the most successful and largest was the Beresford Cat Club in Chicago, founded by Clinton Locke, could have a variety of duties. Setting rules and standards for the breeding and showing of cats, creating shelters for strays and organizing shows and events were the most important, which served to generate attention for cats and to better their treatment. Sometimes they would team up with the SPCA or donate money to their cause. For Beresford Club specifically, the entire board of directors were women as is shown in the club register.²⁵

As the cat fancy from Great Britain continued to spread another development came with it: breeding cats specifically to adhere to certain standards, creating the purebred cat who possessed a pedigree. That people started to pay attention to the breeding process of animals, thereby focusing on specific features and qualities of said animal, was not something new. Cattle, horses, poultry, pigeons and dogs – which likewise found expression in a 'hen fever' and 'dog fancy' – had already been subject to this process, but now it was the turn of cat society.²⁶ However, it turned out that it was more difficult to control the breeding process of cats, because of their independent or undomesticated nature. This in combination with the fact that cats were never used for many different purposes – as opposed to the dog – made that there was, and still is, little variation among cat breeds. Whereas dogs could be

²³ Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 139-140; Other examples: Champion, *Everybody's Cat Book*, 72, 74-77, 84.

Arnold-Scerbo, 'Cats & Women' [April 4, 2019].

²⁴ Sigerman, 'Laborers of Liberty', 339-341.

²⁵ *Stud-Book and Register of the Beresford Cat-Club V.1: 1899-1900* (Chicago 1900) 55; *Stud-Book and Register of the Beresford Cat-Club of America V.2: 1900-1901* (Chicago 1901) 89; *Stud-Book and Register of the Beresford Cat-Club of America V.3: 1901-1903* (Chicago 1903) 152; *Stud-Book and Register of the Beresford Cat-Club of America V.4: 1903-1905* (Chicago 1906), all stud-books are part of the Harrison Weir Collection; 'Beresford Cat Show', *Thirty-Second Annual Report of the Illinois Humane Society* (May 1901) 22; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 135-138; Simpson, *The Book of Cat*, 304, 309.

²⁶ Arluke, *Beauty and the Beast*, 5, 11; Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 85-86; Pemberton, 'Breed and breeding', 397-412.

recognized as different breed based on their color, size, fur, shape of their muzzle or tail, the position of their ears, etcetera, for cats the criteria mostly revolved around their colors, or whether they had long hair or not.²⁷

In the previous chapter the importance of the looks of felines was hinted at. Next to being beautiful and graceful, fancy cats also needed to adhere to a certain standard. The division of cat society based on possessing a pedigree or having a certain status in the house really took off after the 1895 show. As veterinarian and cat fancier Rush Huidekoper explained his specific reason for writing his book, *The cat, a Guide to the Classification and Varieties of Cats*: people wanted more information on the different varieties or breeds of cats that existed.²⁸ This information was important for (judging) cat shows, for breeders who tried to reach those standards and for those who were just interested in the latest fancy. Several books were dedicated to precisely outline how each breed should look; what colors they should possess – both in their fur and eyes –, or what colors they absolutely not should possess, or how long the length of their coat or frill should be. ‘A *Brown Tabby* should be *orange-brown*. The dark brownish-gray Tabbies are simply ordinary Tabbies’, was said on the tabby cat variety. The different kind of personality traits each breed ideally should have was addressed as well.²⁹ The fact that several authors devoted lengthy parts of their work to this topic shows the importance many people attributed to their cat’s appearance or that they considered it important to own a feline up to standard, especially when one considered entering their cats in shows.



FIG. 14.—BADLY MARKED TABBY (BANDS TOO BROAD).

Image 20: A badly marked tabby as the bands were too broad. Huidekoper, *The Cat*, 55 (1895).

Nevertheless, it was also recognized that the breeding of cats according to certain standards was still in its infancy. There was no clear distinction between different breeds and highbred cats did not yet catch the same prices as other highbred animals. Only more systematic breeding would create classes or breeds of cats that

²⁷ Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 115-116, 118, 120; Demello, ‘The Present and Future of Animal Domestication’, 82; Arnold-Scerbo, ‘Cats & Dogs’ [April 4, 2019].

²⁸ Huidekoper, *The Cat*, v; Another example: ‘Concerning the Cat’, 244.

²⁹ Huidekoper, *The Cat*, 56, 48-73; Other examples: James, *The Angora Cat*, 14, 52-55; Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book*, 17-46; Ingersoll, ‘Cat, Domestic’; Thorne-Miller, ‘Pets in the Home: VIII’, 253-254; Hamilton-French, ‘The First New York Cat Show’, 381.

would be evident.³⁰ This was likewise linked to how fantastic it would be to ‘create’ the perfect specimen of the feline species. This would be great from both a business and pleasure perspective. Champion explained in her book how you had to breed your own perfect specimens as those were often not for sale: “Therein lies the “sport” of breeding animals. If we were able to breed perfection at the start, there would be nothing else left for us to do.”³¹ Showing yet again another way how controlling or creating an animal could be an expression of human domination over other animals. The breeders chose which cats to breed, which was based on what was stylish and correct according to the rules of several breeds and fashion.³²

Obviously, there were downsides to breeding solely to acquire specific physical factors and these outcries are still heard today. For instance, that the health of the animal should always come first and looks should only be of second or even third importance. A common discussion is often about the short snouts of both dogs and cats which can cause multiple health problems. Such concerns were already heard in the nineteenth century, although they were more focused on the moral health of the animal instead of the physical health: ‘If we obtained beauty in exchange for the domestic virtues of the cat, our loss would be great.’³³

A concern many cat fanciers had rather showed the other side of this outcry, where looks were deemed of vital importance. Warnings such as how cats could be injured, how supposedly the eating of too much meat would be dangerous or that they should not be allowed to roam about that much, were all aimed at preventing the ruining of their beautiful, prize-winning coats. ‘(...) the only way fanciers can help the fancy is to destroy every coloured female bred from whites (...)’ This example shows how a cat’s looks determined whether she lived or not as her bloodline was now deemed worthless for further breeding.³⁴ However, the ultimate expression was perhaps the cat show, where one of the main goals was to parade the appearance of your cat. Yi-Fu Tuan points out it is really only about human vanity and competitiveness – being the creator or owner of a potential price-winning, fancy cat. He believes

³⁰ DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 81-82; Huidekoper, *The Cat*, 45-46; James, *The Angora Cat*, 28; Crandall, *Pets and How to Care for Them*, 34; ‘Breeding Fine Cats’, 7.

³¹ Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book*, 28, 38, 50-51; Other examples: ‘Two Handsome Angoras’, *Cambridge Chronicle* (December 1901) 4; James, *The Angora Cat*, 29, 31, 89; Davenport, *Domesticated Animals and Plants*, 8; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 263; ‘The Single Lady and Her Cat’, 106; ‘Breeding Fine Cats’, 7.

³² Tuan, *Dominance & Affection*, 108-109, 169; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 51; Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 150.

³³ James, *The Angora Cat*, 89, 90; Other examples: Shaler, *Domesticated Animals*, 215.

³⁴ Champion, *Everybody’s Cat Book*, 53-54; Other examples: Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 61; James, *The Angora Cat*, 12, 16, 31; Cornish-Bond, ‘Cat Raising as a Business’, 849.

it to be a public display of power over another being.³⁵ As cats are animals of habit, being taken out of their home environment to a strange place, with many strange cats and people does not sound like something they would be necessarily interested in, or even as something which they would outright reject.³⁶ Some sources also point out that the cats seemed anxious or disinterested in their cages, perhaps rather being merely a ‘fireside companion’ at that moment.³⁷ Still, as every cat was and is an individual some probably did enjoy the show environment and the attention they received.³⁸ Moreover, another goal of the cat show should be remembered as they did try to let people more appreciate all cats as pets – and as the first chapter has shown that was rather necessary.

In addition, this emphasis on looks and ‘being purebred’ could be hinted at how American society looked at human ‘races’. For human beings, to which race you supposedly belonged was considered important and many features of American society would be, and would continue to be, shaped by this fascination. It was part of an overall fascination with classification of both human and nonhuman society, which had started in the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, within the selected sources for this research no explicit links were made between fascination for human race variations and cat breeds. Still, both notions were probably tied to the same sentiment and ideas within society that considered race and being ‘pure’ according to race or breeds standards extremely important.³⁹

That humans perhaps put too much emphasize on the looks of cats was supposedly expressed by the cats themselves as well. One cat, for example, wrote his former mistress a letter. He wished he was born a common cat instead of a fancy one as the former were not sold for money just for his appearance. ‘O! if I could only have made my hair grow faster perhaps I might have stayed. (...) she was always telling people around that I had such short hair, and seemed so disgusted with me’, Max the cat wrote. He ended his letter by saying he might kill himself as he does not know what to do with his life after being abandoned by his owner who did not want him because he was not according up to standard; he was deemed useless from a breeding and showing perspective.⁴⁰ By expressing it in this manner it was another striking example of employing sentimentality in order to get a message across. Max the cat

³⁵ Tuan, *Dominance & Affection*, 107; Hunter, *Pet Politics*, 58.

³⁶ Bradshaw, *Cat Sense*, xiv, 122, 127, 134.

³⁷ Annie Flint, ‘The National Cat Show’, *Our Animal Friends V.23* (April 1896) 177; James, *The Angora Cat*, 34; ‘An Exhibition of Cats’, 242.

³⁸ Bradshaw, *Cat Sense*, 219.

³⁹ Pemberton, ‘Breeding and breed’, 393-394, 403.

⁴⁰ James, *The Angora Cat*, 61-65; Another example: Soule, ‘The Wish That Came True’, 322-324.

himself utilized this strategy. He was made into an actor by the human author of the letter in changing the faith of fancy purebred cats by making people think about their possibly despairing situation, and maybe he even got them to act in order to change it.

In this time period the type of cats mostly valued were the Persian and Angora cats, although you also had, amongst others, Maltese, Russians, Siamese and Coon cats. As already stated, the extent to which they were actual different breeds was debatable and some just referred to difference in color. Moreover, many people used the term 'Angora' indiscriminately to refer to all kinds of long-haired cats.⁴¹ The Coon cat is an interesting case as this can be considered the only American breed at this point in time. They originated in Maine and was supposedly born from a cross between a cat and a raccoon. They were deemed an inferior variety of cats by many fanciers. Mostly because their breeding was not properly managed in the last few decades, which caused them to be of inferior quality or 'spoiled specimens'. Some even argued that the breed would go, or should go, in oblivion.⁴² Obviously this did not happen, as nowadays the officially recognized breed of Maine Coon cats still exists. For a long time, American bred cats of all varieties would not be considered as highly bred as British cats. Just as how the overall fancy, with its shows and catteries, was seen as less developed. In the beginning most felines were imported from British catteries – see image 22. Some even had international careers as they appeared on shows at both sides of the oceans or were registered in both British and American clubs.⁴³ This shows how the

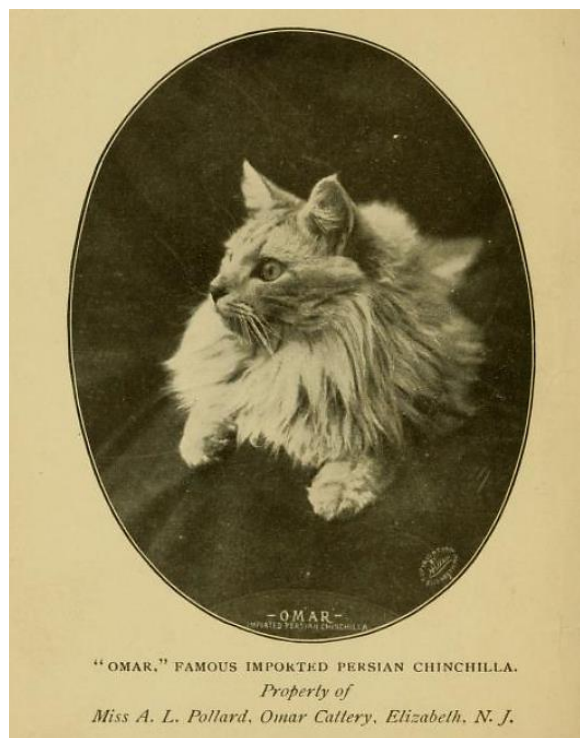


Image 22: The famous cat Omar had recently left for the United States. Woodroffe, *Diseases of the Cat*, cover (1901).

⁴¹ Private correspondence with John Smithson [February 17, 2019]; Champion, *Everybody's Cat Book*, 17.

⁴² Dora B. Champion, 'What is a Maine Cat', *The Cat Journal* V.6 (June 1907); Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 62-63; Champion, *Everybody's Cat Book*, 17, 18-20; Cornish-Bond, 'Cat Raising as a Business', 842-843.

⁴³ 'The Short Haired Cat No Longer Slighted', *The Sun* (October 1, 1905) 4; 'Women's Realm: Money in Cats – One Woman's Profits', *The New York Tribune* (December 12, 1909) 2; Champion, *Everybody's Cat Book*, 21; Woodroffe, *Diseases of the Cat*, 126; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 114, 144; Simpson, *The Book of Cat*, 304; Cornish-Bond, 'Cat Raising as a Business', 843, 845, 846; 'Caring for Cats', 163; Matthewson, 'Pussy in the Corner', 181; Adams, 'A Cat Farm with a Mission', 258; 'Do You Want to Buy a Cat?',

cat fancy can be deemed an international phenomenon – at least in the Anglo-world – of which many women were part. This was likewise visible in how an American cat magazine boasted about being the only one with a British correspondent. In this way they could be up to date on the cat fancy across the ocean.⁴⁴

A decade earlier it would have sound ridiculous to contemporaries, but at the end of the 1890s the breeding of cats was perceived to be a perfect feminine occupation: ‘So, since the time has come when fashion demands high-bred cats in the elegant home, why should not intelligent, kindhearted women adopt cat-raising as a business? They should and they do.’⁴⁵ Considering the supposed similarities between cats and women as addressed in the previous chapters, it was perhaps less noteworthy. Nonetheless, considering that women were supposed to be homemakers within the framework of domesticity and should not be busy with being the financial provider, it does stand out. Women should work out of the love for her family, not for money or ambition. During the nineteenth century women were considered as insignificant members of the industrial workforce as they were no longer supposed to be part of any economic activity. This loss of status was partly resolved by the ideology of domesticity and the importance of self-sacrifice.⁴⁶ However, times were changing. Marriage was no longer the all-encompassing solution to women’s problems; she should also be able to rely on herself.⁴⁷ An article in *Harper’s Bazaar* stated that more women were entering the business world out of necessity. In addition, Frances Willard in her book on appropriate occupations for women, claimed that every woman should have a ‘honorable breadwinning weapon in the world of relentless competition’. Especially the women who had not benefitted from the recent rise in schooling for girls – and who was told to stay at home – found it difficult to find a proper occupation; shrewdness was required: ‘Even the familiar household cat has been made to yield a return (...).’ Furthermore, a cat breeder whom Willard interviewed stated: ‘(...)

5; ‘Breeding Fine Cats’, 7; ‘Woman’s Realm: Cats of High Degree’, 4; ‘Persian Kittens Bring Large Income’, 30.

⁴⁴ Woodroffe, *Diseases of the Cat*, 126.

⁴⁵ Winslow, ‘Cats of High Degree’, 1110-1111; Other examples: Loretta E. Turner, *How Women Earn a Competence* (Oberlin 1902) 261, 268; ‘Women’s Realm: Occupations for Women – On Cat Raising’, *The New York Tribune* (August 26, 1906) 5; ‘Profit in Persian Cats’, *The Sun* (February 13, 1910) 6; James, *The Angora Cat*, 81-83; Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 63; DeVoogt, *Our Domestic Animals*, 82; Saint-Maur, *A Self-Supporting Home*, 7; Cornish-Bond, ‘Cat Raising as a Business’, 842; Ingersoll, ‘Cat, Domestic’; Aspinwall, ‘Pussies, Plebeian and Royal’, 178; ‘Women’s Realm: Money in Cats’, 2.

⁴⁶ Sklar, *Catharine Beecher*, 161, 163, 194; Brown, *Domestic Individualism*, 6; McHugh, *American Domesticity*, 16; Welter, ‘The Cult of True Womanhood’, 153, 159-161; Smith, ‘New Paths to Power’, 365.

⁴⁷ Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 22; Sigerman, ‘Laborers for Liberty’, 312-313, 320-327; Smith, ‘New Paths to Power’, 359.

cat raising is a healthful occupation, and for delicate women who are dependent upon themselves, if a method is persisted in, it will surely prove a success.⁴⁸

With the advent of purebred cats another occupation which was deemed ideal for women came into existence, namely running a cat boarding house. As these cats had pedigrees, hence they were expensive, they were not readily turned onto the streets when their owners left the city for the summer. The fact that so many women entered this business shows how they reacted to new chances which appeared at the end of the 1880s. There were more (expensive) cats that were considered part of the family as pets; and, there was societal pressure from the SPCA and cat lovers to not leave your pets behind. This combined helped to create a market which many women played into in order to earn a living. These boarding houses were a success as many rich ladies were prepared to pay the rent for their precious pets. Several women used this venture to pay their way through college as after the Civil War there were more opportunities for women to attend higher education.⁴⁹ This business would also become more serious as women started to place advertisements in newspapers and ladies' magazines or by asking owners in advance whether a veterinarian should be called if something were to happen. Furthermore, in order to carry out this business only small alterations, such as cat-proofing windows and terraces, were necessary.⁵⁰

Evidently, the breeding and boarding cats was seen as a socially acceptable occupation for women. That many people agreed on the fact that having a cattery was a typical womanly business is clearly visible in how frequently women appear when catteries were listed. The New York newspaper *The Sun* pointed out how one particular stock farm was different as it raises cats instead of, for example, cattle and 'it differs from most stock farms in another respect, it is managed by a woman.'⁵¹ It could also be deemed a suitable activity for some women as it was part of their charity

⁴⁸ Clare Brunce, 'Bread-Winning Avocations on Unfamiliar Lines', *Harper's Bazaar* V.30 (April 17, 1897) 318-319; Willard, *Occupations For Women*, 188, 7, 11, 119.

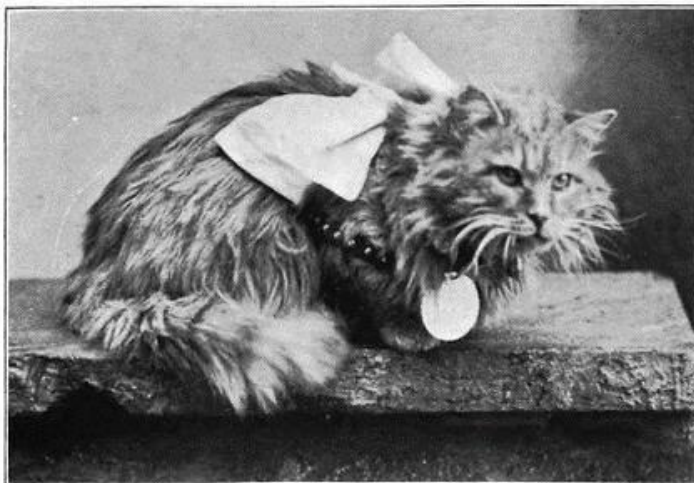
⁴⁹ Sigerman, 'Laborers for Liberty', 312-313; Smith, 'New Paths to Power', 360.

⁵⁰ Hester M. Poole, 'Notions and Novelties – IV: As Montly Noted in the American Metropolis', *Good Housekeeping* v.28 (January 1899) 18-19; 'Openings for Women', *The Sun* (August 15, 1897) 4; M.E.G., 'A Cat Boarding House', *Good Housekeeping* V.42 (May 1906) 580; 'Cats Supply Their Rent – College Young Women Who Take Summer Boarders', *The Sun* (June 20, 1909) 8; 'Fight Over Cat's Board Bill', *The Sun* (February 9, 1914) 1; Willard, *Occupations for Women*, 114-116, 117; Bunce, 'Bread-Winning Avocations on Unfamiliar Lines', 319; 'Women's Realm: Occupations for Women', 5.

⁵¹ 'The Short Haired Cat No Longer Slighted', 4; Other examples: *Stud-Book and Register of the Beresford Cat-Club* V.1, 51-54; *Stud-Book and Register of the Beresford Cat-Club* V.2, 73-76; Helen Blackmer Poole, 'Persian Pussy Cats: Several of Them Let Out of the Bag', *Good Housekeeping* V.46 (March 1908) 248; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 142-147; Simpson, *The Book of Cat*, 304-316; Willard, *Occupations for Women*, 116, 117; Turner, *How Women Earn a Competence*, 261, 268; Winslow, 'Cats of High Degree', 1110; 'She Raises Pets', 7; 'Only Woman's Page: The Popular Pet', 7; 'Woman's Realm: Cats of High Degree', 4; 'All These Cats are Costly', 6.

work.⁵² One woman, the aforementioned Locke, donated all the money she made from selling cats to charity or gave kittens away to other women who could use them to earn a living for themselves.⁵³ Yet, perhaps the closest to the explanation is the remark of this father as his daughter started to raise cats: ‘He said he thought staying at home and raising salable cats was much better than rushing off to town every morning to sit in an office and bang on a typewriter all day.’⁵⁴

The home remained key in his explanation. Still, by working for financial gain within the home it did change an important element of domesticity, namely that home should not be a place of commercial gain.⁵⁵ However, apparently it was considered more important that the woman remained inside the home, even though this meant that the notion of ‘the home’ would change. It was just another way in which the home and domesticity could be used to earn a living and to access the public world while adhering to appropriate gender roles.⁵⁶ It also seems to be an occupation which women could continue to carry out after marriage as many female cat breeders were referred to as *Mrs.*. According to Harriet Sigerman women were only professionally accepted by men if they could proof that their work was an extension of their maternal and caring role, such as with teaching and nursing as profession.⁵⁷ The same could be said when women took care of cats. As already stated pets were the perpetual baby in the home; in addition, cats were even more child-like due to their size, their facial



Napoleon the Great: imported French Angora, owned by Mrs. Charles Weed, Woodhaven, N. Y. Value, \$5000.

Image 23: Napoleon the Great, who was valued at \$5000. Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 150-151 (1900).

features and the fact that you could actually hold them as a baby. By caring for this dependent creature in a homely environment women adhered to the ideal of domesticity, while in reality they could gain a form of financial independence and were presence in the public world by making money and attending shows to show or sell cats.

⁵² Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 46.

⁵³ Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 142; Idem, ‘Cats of High Degree’, 1110; ‘Only Woman’s Page: The Popular Pet’, 7.

⁵⁴ ‘Profit in Persian Cats’, 6; Another example: ‘Persian Kittens Bring Large Income’, 30.

⁵⁵ Sklar, *Catharine Beecher*, 161, 163.

⁵⁶ Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 71-72, 89.

⁵⁷ Sigerman, ‘Laborers of Liberty’, 322; Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty*, 87.

From a small occupation with perhaps a maximum of five cats, or maybe even hobby for some, the breeding of cats did become more organized and grand-scale; the cat business was booming. It helped women to pay for schooling, to contribute to the household, as extra pocket money or in order to sustain a family; one woman told she built herself a new house with 'cat money' after she began one year ago with one cat. It was advertised as something which a woman could turn into a financial success as other ladies were willing to pay large sums of money for a precious new ornament for the house. Although it was likewise pointed out that one should enter this trade because of her love and knowledge of cats and not merely the money. The advancement of the industry was also visible in the fact that some women had around a hundred cats and advertisements started to appear in newspapers. The Walnut Ridge Farm, the self-proclaimed largest breeder of Angora's, sold around 1100 kittens a year. Prices that were mentioned in the selected sources ranged from \$10-50 for kittens to \$1000 or even \$5000 for the finest purebreds and champions – see image 23.⁵⁸ These amounts would be considered as a large sum of money for many, when considering that the average family income was around \$1000-\$3000 a year and it really shows how far the fancy had grown.⁵⁹

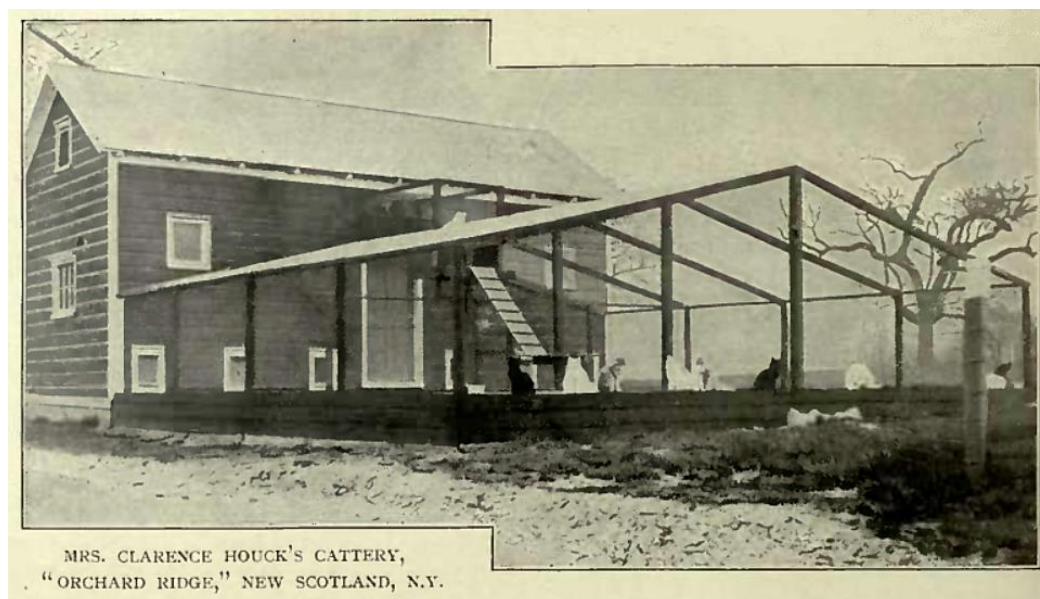


Image 24: A cattery. Simpson, *The Book of Cat*, 322 (1903).

⁵⁸ 'Angora Kittens', *Cambridge Chronicle* (September 24, 1898) 8; 'Angora Cat', *Cambridge Tribune* (December 1, 1900) 8; No title, *Cambridge Chronicle* (December 28, 1901) 3; 'Angora Kittens', *Cambridge Chronicle* (February 15, 1902) 10; 'Where Cats Are Brought Up', *Chicago Eagle* (October 17, 1896) 10; 'Cats Make a Good Living For This Woman', *The Day Book* (February 20, 1914) 14; Biggle, *Biggle Pet Book*, 63-64; James, *The Angora Cat*, 59, 82, 84-85; Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 148; Champion, *Everybody's Cat Book*, 47-48; Willard, *Occupations for Women*, 116-117, 118; Saint-Maur, *A Self-Supporting Home*, 244; Cornish-Bond, 'Cat Raising as a Business', 842, 844; 'Caring for Cats', 163; Winslow, 'Cats of High Degree', 1111; Adams, 'A Cat Farm with a Mission', 261; Poole, 'Persian Pussy Cats', 248-249; 'Two Handsome Angoras', 4; 'Do You Want to Buy a Cat?', 5; 'Only Woman's Page: The Popular Pet', 7; 'Women's Realm: Occupations for Women', 5; 'Women's Realm: Money in Cats', 2.

⁵⁹ Smith, 'New Paths to Power', 389.

This growth was also visible as women had genuine catteries built by creating separate buildings, rooms and cages to house their cats – which is imaginable if you have around a hundred felines running around – as demonstrated in image 24 and 25. Still, ‘having a cattery’ could also refer to just being in the business of breeding and raising cats. By this time, real investments were necessary. Many books and articles explain how a woman should get started and how she should construct a cattery. One woman recommended to buy 10 to 15 acres in order built a separate house for the farmer and the catteries at a little distance from the house.

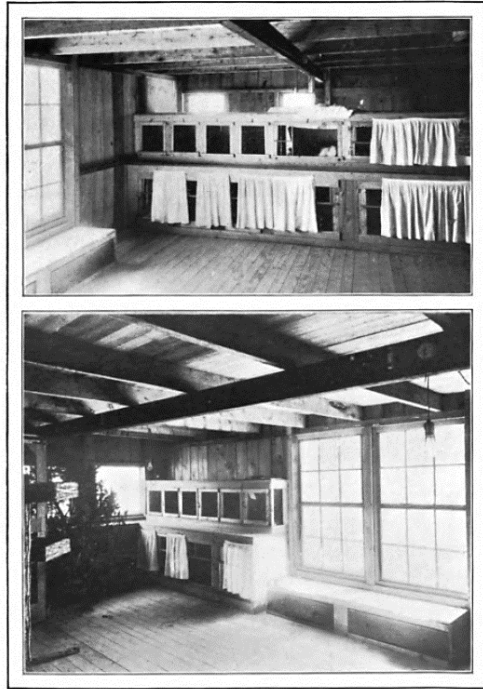


Image 25: The cat chambers of a cattery. Winslow, *Concerning Cats*, 264-265 (1903).

She likewise suggested to acquire a milk cow, chickens, bees and a vegetable garden, ‘for the woman who is out for the dollar, will be keen to avail herself of.’ Catteries could be impressive constructions, designed in a specific architectural style. One lady even paid \$15,000 dollars to design and construct new buildings for her humble 28 felines – see image 26. Although she interpreted it as a regular investment necessary for any commercial enterprise.⁶⁰ The establishments of some women grew so much that they hired managers and employees for the cattery.⁶¹ These examples show that these women clearly no longer worked just out of love for their families or cats – although this was probably still an important element when caring for a dependent creature – and that a business mentality had set in.⁶² Moreover, many cats were no longer born and raised within the actual home of the cat fancier. At this point it seems more difficult to place the practice, or business, of breeding cats within the ideal of domesticity.

One woman seemed to top them all when it came down to doing business. She could board at least 50 cats each summer, next to the 60 living-inn residents and 20 stray cats who were sheltered until they would find a new home. ‘Miss Cathcart has

⁶⁰ ‘Women’s Realm: Occupations for Women’, 5; Other examples: ‘An Usual Cattery: Mrs. Norton Has Elaborate Buildings Erected for Her Pets’, *The New York Tribune* (August 4, 1907) 4; ‘Priceless Cats Housed in a \$15,000 Palace’, *The Sun* (August 31, 1913) 7; James, *The Angora Cat*, 83-84; Saint-Maur, *A Self-Supporting Home*, 245-247; Willard, *Occupations for Women*, 117, 118; ‘Caring for Cats’, 163; Winslow, ‘Cats of High Degree’, 1111; ‘Woman’s Realm: Money in Cats’, 2; ‘Persian Kittens Bring Large Income’, 30-31; ‘The Finest House in the World – for Cats’, 22-23.

⁶¹ Adams, ‘A Cat Farm with a Mission’, 260; ‘Woman’s Realm: Cats of High Degree’, 4; ‘Women’s Realm: Occupations for Women’, 5; ‘Priceless Cats Housed in a \$15,000 Palace’, 7.

⁶² Sklar, *Catharine Beecher*, 163; Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, 150.



Image 26: Newspaper headline of the \$15,000 cattery. 'Priceless Cats Housed in a \$15,000 Palace, *The Sun*, 7 (1913).

her attendants call for and personally travel with the cats (...). For this service the travelling expenses and one dollar per week are charged for short haired cats, and two dollars (...) for the long haired variety (...)', showing the big business schemes she had established. Furthermore, owners could insure their cat for if something were to hap-

pen during the cat's stay. Luckily, she had a secretary to keep track of the cats and their administration. She even explicitly stated that her business was no philanthropy as no cat she raised was given away: '(...) it would simply tend to degrade them if it were conducted on any other than business principle.' In addition, she, the manager and other employees accompanied Miss Cathcart's own cats and other people's cats, who paid her to care for and travel with the felines, to shows. Here the insurance scheme was optionable as well. She even had an automobile specifically constructed in order to transport the show cats *to and fro* the venue.⁶³ Miss Cathcart clearly meant business when it came down to her cats and money-making possibilities – of which she had created plenty. Perhaps she could even be considered the epiphany of the woman who used the feline species in order claim her space in the public world.

Cats and women made a great team together when it came to entering the public world. Women used female avenues in order to influence society while remaining in the framework of domesticity. This was not necessarily something new. New was the fact that the cat, the so-called ideal companion for women, could assist in this in multiple ways. According to the ideal of domesticity women were supposed to be morally superior, an influence which they spread across their homes and the inhabitants. Yet this same idea was used to have a more direct influence on the public sphere.

One example is how women advocated for the better treatment of animals, or in this case particularly cats. As is stressed on multiple occasions, being sympathetic to the needs of animals was a sign of being civilized and having a good morality.

⁶³ Adams, 'A Cat Farm with a Mission', 258-261; 'Cats Are Rising Socially', 7; Another example: 'Cat and Dog Life Belies Its Name at Oradell', *The New York Tribune* (May 10, 1914) 8; 'The Short Haired Cat No Longer Slighted', 4.

Therefore, by advocating more sympathy and kindness to animals women tried to morally uplift society, while remaining within their proper sphere. Participating in SPCA campaigns, sheltering or boarding cats, showing and the breeding of fine cats were all considered expressions of a civilized and refined way of treating animals. Moreover, a woman who occupied herself with any of these activities adhered to her proper role within domesticity as caretaker.

Nevertheless, while this all sounds honorable it seems that for some women it was not all about uplifting civilization; it could also be a way to just earn money. This could be for the survival for herself and her family, to just have some extra pocket money, or just to make a profit and run a business. For example, several of the women who were encountered during this research did not appear to live in poor conditions before they started to breed cats and it would be wrong to thrust it aside as merely a hobby. It shows that women were not always the self-sacrificing beings they were supposed to be according to the notion of domesticity. Perhaps these women just tried to shape their own lives in a time when they still faced many obstacles. Women's best companion, the homely housecat, turned out to be a great assistant in helping women enter the public world.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has provided an innovative insight into the history of domesticity, women and cats by focusing on these topics in the period from 1870 to 1920 in the cities of New York, Boston and Chicago. The following research question was used to conduct this research: how were cats influenced by, and had an impact on domesticity in the United States? The first chapter outlined more generally how the cat was seen and treated at this point in time. The second chapter showed more of the status of felines in the environment of the home and the family. The final chapter demonstrated how both cats and domesticity could be used by women to gain access to the public world. This research has shown how cats had an impact on the notion of domesticity. It also showed that the way cats were seen and treated was influenced by domesticity. Consequently, it rather was an interplay between cats and domesticity. These creatures provided women chances to transcend the strict notion of domesticity while employing domestic rhetoric in order to increase their chances – thereby showing their impact. At the same time this interplay was equally capable of degrading or uplifting the status of women and cats – demonstrating how this could also influence felines and their treatment.

The creatures known and often hated for their independence could assist women in gaining greater (financial) independence. By having women teaming up with cats they could embrace the public world without really challenging gender norms. Raising or caring for cats in multiple ways could be justified as an extension of their caring and moralizing roles as was expected of them in the home within the ideal of domesticity. By showing that the reality of domesticity differed from the exemplary standard provided it is yet another example of how women could use this framework to their advantage. It shows how cats had an impact on domesticity, as they could provide women the opportunity to problematize or even transcend this, at face-value, strict notion. Nonetheless, the moment the cat-enterprises of women became more business-like, and more removed from the home environment, it became more difficult to justify it within the framework of domesticity. It seemed to focus more on creating profits and running a professional business. Even though it was perhaps no longer *within* the home, they continued to care for and work with animals that had domestic qualities of their own, who more or less relied on human care, who were considered baby-like and who were seen as central in the imagery of the home. The independence nature of the cat and the aspiration of women to become more independent could be counterbalanced by this specific notion of domesticity, into which both creatures fitted.

Nevertheless, both were suppressed in their independence and considered as the inferior pet and sex in the eyes of mankind. It has to remain speculative whether cats actually helped women to get inspired to stand up in order to elevate their (political) position in the outside world. Still, with time, both were taken more seriously as, for example, women received the right to vote and cats became a mainstay of petkeeping culture. Evident was the effort of many women as they embraced cats into their lives as family members, civilizing tools, exemplary mothers, fashion objects and even as a job opportunity. They showed society that one can be appreciative of the feline species, while also using the domesticity framework to their advantage. This precluded the long-awaited redemption of the cat, a process which continues today. Moreover, all these examples of how women utilized cats demonstrates how the lives or experiences of cats were influenced by domesticity, how they were seen but mostly in their treatment. In the context of domesticity they were mostly welcomed as family members, worthy of human care and love.

Historical research has long concerned itself with American domesticity. Nowadays historians still use this concept, albeit in a more critical manner, to analyze the past. Scholarship has also shown that gender as lens of analysis alone – as was long the case regarding domesticity – is not enough to understand the past. In recent years class, ethnicity, religion and other categories of experiences have been added to understand women's history and the notion of domesticity.¹ This research has shown that the experience of interspecies interaction, in this case specifically regarding the *Felis catus*, combined with mostly gender can open up a whole new story of the past, regarding women's history, domesticity and the long-ignored history of the cat. Consequently, this research equally contributes to the growing field of animal-human history by providing new insights into the practice of petkeeping regarding cats and how this specific animal was perceived, treated and (mis)used by humankind. Furthermore, this research has occasionally tried to understand the experience of the cats involved and the behavior they displayed.

Many experiences and developments were mentioned in this research, demonstrating that analyzing interspecies interaction can provide us with a wealth of information, some of which are perhaps unexpected when thinking of a topic as 'cats' or 'animals' in general. When looking into the history of cats within the context of domesticity around 1900 many topics and developments were encountered such as: class, ethnicity, gender expectations, consumer culture, war rhetoric, transnationalism, humans (controlling) interaction with nature or specifically animals, notions of

¹ Warren, 'Separate Spheres', 270.

civilization, childrearing, everyday life and the financial possibilities of women. This diversity in topics demonstrates yet again how omnipresent and important animals were for many people in the past either in a positive or negative way. In trying to study the experience of the past and to write history as comprehensively as possible, it is evident that animals and their role in society needs to be considered.

While using this approach much information could be abstracted, but this research had as its main focus cats and domesticity. It is vital to remain critical of both topics. It has already been shown that it is important to not take the ideal of domesticity at face value; women lived more rich lives than was proscribed. Regarding cats, the moment they stood at the dawn of petkeeping culture, a cultural identity was created for them. All kinds of characteristics and attributes were projected onto this animal. This happened not for their sake, but in order for that specific person to make his or her point – explaining the extremely ambivalent status cats had. These human projections could influence the (mis)treatment this animal befell, both by placing this animal within the domesticity framework, or rather on the opposite end, outside of human civilization: from the bird-destroying threat to the intellectual, delicate fireside companion – most of which the cat could probably care less about. It does not mean that this was an one-sided process; the way cats actually behaved influenced this as well. Many cats probably liked and responded the attention they received as treasured companions and family members. At the same time, most cats kept a form of independence, a behavior people continued to use to either make a case for the cat or to depreciate this animal all together.

Humans should remain critical of all the relationships they had and have with all animals, but perhaps especially of our relationship with pets. In this specific case the love, fun and affection are often uppermost, obviating the domination that comes with their pet status. This research does not argue that we should no longer let animals into our homes. However, it does want to remind people of this other side of petkeeping, to appreciate and perhaps even better understand the animals that live in our homes. They have enriched the human families to which they belonged in the past in numerous ways and will continue to do so. It is only fair if we value cats not just in their (lacking) role of human servant, but more as the animal, companion and team player they were and continue to be.

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