

PRAIRIE UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY

Sunday, February 26, 1989

CAN A SECULAR HUMANIST LOVE CATS?      Led by Warren Hagstrom

Chalice lighting: for the first cats who joined up with humans

What have been the names of cats in your households?

T. S. Eliot, "The Naming of Cats," read by Rick Ruecking

Something about an Angora --- sung by Tally's Trio

(Children leave for religious education)

Can a Secular Humanist Love Cats? The Case for the Negative

Anthropomorphism is a cognitive error and a moral error.

Or, if today you think your cat has a human personality like  
Garfield, tomorrow you may be kneeling before some god or other.

The Case for the Affirmative

"Some Felines I've Know (But Never Owned)" ---Patricia Watkins reads  
her verses

Rossini, "Duet for Two Cats" --- sung by Metje Butler and Dodie Chapru,  
accompanied by Michael Briggs

Comments inspired by Vickie Hearne, Adam's Task: Naming the Animals

Discussion

Samuel Barber, "A Scholar and His Cat," from Hermit Songs, recorded  
by Leontyne Price accompanied by Samuel Barber (1953)

Pangur, white Pangur, How happy we are  
Alone together, Scholar and cat.  
Each has his own work to do daily;  
For you it is hunting, for me study.  
Your shining eye watches the wall;  
my feeble eye is fixed on a book.  
You rejoice when your claws Entrap a mouse;  
I rejoice when my mind Fathoms a problem.  
Please with his own art,  
Neither hinders the other;  
Thus we live ever Without tedium and envy.

---written by anonymous Irish monks between the 8th and  
13th centuries, often on the margins of manuscripts  
they were copying. Translated by W. H. Auden

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Some Felines I've Known (But Never Really Owned)

(1)

Kin to the King of the Jungle,  
He stalks his prey  
Through the brambled backyard forest  
In the heat of day--

Frustrated past endurance  
By intrepid birds at play.

(2)

Tightrope walker of the garden circus,  
Three-ring star of the neighborhood's talents;  
Queen of grace and mistress of balance--  
Performances daily (when it suits her purpose).

(3)

With mud-caked boots upon his feet,  
And traces of soot under his chin,  
Columbus--his journey now complete--  
Meows to come in.

(4)

Cauliflower ears and concave nose,  
And looking a shabby-coated fright,  
He stalks out in his black fur boxing gloves,  
Pugnaciously into the night.

(5)

Like a beloved sensuous woman,  
She moans her delight,  
Purring forth her contentment  
And setting my world a-right.