The Mystic Journey of the Cat: A Mythological Criticism of the Cat in Contemporary Literature

By Jason Sharier

Assignment Requirements: Choose a short-story author or a theme that connects three or more short stories around a predominant topic/approach.

Whether it be mythology, legend, folklore, fairytale or history, felis catus, the cat, has long inspired us, and continues to inspire us by conjuring up within our imaginations a strange fascination that may very well be instinctive on our part. And as we start looking back at the mythological portrayal of the cat, from thousands of years ago up to some of the most contemporary portrayals of the cat within the short-story genre, let us first begin with some examples from antiquity that demonstrate the variety of mythic cat-archetypes that we’ll be analyzing as we peruse through the symbolic depths of the cat’s presence in contemporary literature.

As early as 4,000 years ago, the cat began its assimilation into the culture and religion of the ancient Egyptians. Its domestication created an unnatural (or supernatural) bond with the inhabitants of Egypt. And Bastet, the cat-goddess of protection, fertility, and motherhood became a goddess not only worshipped in temples but whose presence was to become an essential part of the household as well. Etymologically, the Egyptian word for cat is mau (also thought to be derived from the onomatopoeic “meow”); it is also believed to stem from the verb miw which means “to see” (“Origin of the Word Meow” para. 1). And embedded in the light of its divine-like eyes, the cat is speculated to have been, if not semi-divine, a being deserving of reverent worship nonetheless.1

Continuing the traditional religious view of the sacred identity of the cat, in the latter Islamic culture it was rumored that when the “Prophet Muhammed went to put on one of his robes, he found his cat [Muezza] sleeping on one of the sleeves. Rather than disturbing the cat, he cut off the sleeve and let him sleep.....It is also believed that when the Prophet Muhammed gave sermons within his household he would often hold Muezza in his lap” (Nizamoglu, para. 17).

As well, it is stated elsewhere that, “all good Hindus were expected to take care of at least one cat during their lives” (“Cats in other religions” & Choron 19).

In the ancient religious traditions of Burma Aand Siam the cat is considered to be an integral part of the soul’s journey, the “crossing over” into the Afterlife. In the legend of Sinh— who becomes the first Birman cat— it states, “that each Sacred Cat carries the soul of a priest on its final journey to paradise” (Boroff, para. 4). Likewise in Siam, when a prestigious person died, the soul was thought to be received by a cat; that cat then became a guardian of the royal temple, and “[o]nce they became temple cats, they...could intercede for the soul of the dead” (“Histories and Legends of the Siamese Cat” para. 4).

On the other hand, “[i]n 1233 Pope Gregory IX...actually denounced black cats as satanic,” and with the cat population diminished because of extermination, so ensued the tragic plagues of the Middle Ages which were caused by an overpopulation of vermin; the most ironic and the most terrible being the “Black Death”—a type of symbolic Karma (“Cat Mythology: Cats as Familiars” para. 3).

And from this handful of examples we can begin to see how the cat has been looked at with a certain duality. Therefore, the symbolism of the cat from the archetype of the sacred cat to the archetype of the unholy cat can even be conceptualized as a type of yin and yang.
Some other notable cats appearing throughout different myths and tales are the Norse goddess Freyja’s cats Bygul and Trygul, the Roman cat-shape-shifting goddess Diana, the Cait Sith of Scotland (having inspired Poe’s “The Black Cat”), Shakespeare’s Graymalkin from Macbeth, Wordsworth’s “The Kitten and the Falling Leaves,” Lewis Carroll’s beloved Cheshire Cat, and T.S. Elliot’s Jellicle Cats. In addition, within J.R.R. Tolkien’s mythological legendarium there exists a myth that tells of the origin of enmity between cats and dogs; it appears in the early manuscripts of The Tale of Túrin where the cat Tevildo, “Prince of Cats,” (an early manifestation of the Dark Lord Sauron) and the hound Huan of Valinor (Land of the Gods) battle, where afterwards their struggle ends with: “Little to Huan’s liking was it that Tevildo lived still, but now no longer did he fear the cats, and that tribe has fled before the dogs ever since” (29). Admittedly, and without doubt, the cat embodies a certain mythos which continues to baffle and entertain the human imagination.

Furthermore, in relation to the Chinese Zodiac, there’s a clever tale about how there came to be enmity between the Cat and the Rat: Once upon a time the Jade Emperor gave an invitation to the animals to become representatives of the twelve calendar years. The Cat and Rat had been best friends but the Rat realized that surely the Cat would be chosen over him, so he devised a plan. The Rat, instead of waking the Cat from his nap, let him be, and the Cat slept through the election; therefore, “this is the reason why cats are not one of the twelve animals[in the Zodiac] and they love to chase after rats” (“Chinese Zodiac Stories” para. 4).

However, the Cat did make it to the Vietnamese Zodiac!

From symbols in the stars to symbols within, the famous Swiss psychologist Carl Jung in considering the cat as an archetype gives it the title devious cat (a symbol of the self-serving nature) (“Jung’s Archetypes”). Though, in a more general sense, the cat has lived up to the “curious cat” image more poignantly. Cats further permeate the nature of the psyche in that “[p]eople often describe themselves as being a cat person,” which has become a sort of personality type in and of itself (Ireland, para. 2). In addition, cats also appear as important dream symbols: “As mysterious, aloof creatures, cats symbolize the intuition, and when they appear in dreams they may be asking us to use our intuition more, to rely on our gut feelings and instinct” (para. 3). Also a distinction can be made between the feminine and masculine nature of cats in dreams: “In a woman’s dream, a cat may indicate feelings of sexual prowess,” and in a male’s dream “[t]hey may symbolize the anima, or the feminine side of man’s psyche” (paras. 4 & 5).

And because of the meditative qualities of the cat, in Japan there’s a Buddhist proverb that says, “Neko mo Busshō arī / In even a cat the Buddha-nature exists” (Hearn 185).

The cat also makes an appearance in the Tarot on the Queen of Wands card where the cat in conjunction with the Queen symbolizes:

“magic, restorative power, renewal/rebirth, singular focus, feminine power/Goddess energy, discernment, regal/nobility, curiosity/exploration, nurturing/protecting, cool/collection, watchful, and independent” (Veneifica, “Queen of Wands Tarot Card Meanings” para. 2).

Moreover, the cat symbolizes for the querent “that there are energies at work that they may not be aware of, but they can certainly tap into” (Veneifica, “Cat Symbolism in Tarot” para. 14).

As well as being a symbol of the mind, the cat is also a symbol of the mind-body relationship. In the exercise practices of Yoga, imitating the cat through the Cat Pose (Bidalasana) “teaches you to initiate movement from your center and to coordinate your movement and breath” (“Yoga Exercise – Cat Pose (Bidalasana)”).

As a collective myth, we (at least some of us more than others) are bound to the mystic journey of the cat in some way or the other. From ancient times to the present day we continue to follow them through our psychological and spiritual peregrinations which are projected into our literature through the symbolism of the cat and reabsorbed back into our daily lives by the very presence of the cat itself.
We may or may not be just as curious about the cat as much as the cat is inherently curious in general.

Furthermore, short-stories about cats all tend to draw upon the symbolic treasure trove of the cat as portrayed throughout mythology. Therefore our preconceived ideas about the cat should have some sense of depth and substance to them before we begin to explore the mythological paradigm, and mystical tangents, of the cat as a literary symbol within contemporary literature. Thus, this is why the introduction to this specific quandary must be exhaustive as we endeavor to unveil, and recreate the monomyth of the cat.

The short stories “Dominion” by Christine Lucas, “The Poet and the Inkmaker’s Daughter” by Elizabeth Hand, and “Healing Benjamin” by Dennis Danvers all exhibit the use of magical realism in their portrayal of the cat, and throughout all of these works the cat appears as the embodiment of this phenomena; it is a being from the Secondary World of fantasy, but somehow it exists within the Primary World—for this reason the cat has become an important symbol of the imagination. Therefore, meeting a cat is like meeting a being of the Fairy race, or at least maybe the pet of such an ancient race as the Elves for it doesn’t take much to see that cats do in fact exhibit certain high-elfish qualities: poise, grace, and mysticism. The cat bridges two worlds for us; therefore, the cat is “master of two worlds.”

In “Dominion,” Lucas recreates the origin of the cat through a satirical reworking of the plot in Genesis 1-3, while drawing on a wealth of meaning from the Hebrew Myth. However, she cunningly devises a new twist to the tale, which is where the cat comes in.

Lucas herself said that she had gotten the inspiration for her short-story from Hebrew folklore, which according to one tale: On Noah’s Ark there arose a vermin infestation and Noah prayed to the LORD, and in response to Noah’s prayer, the Lion sneezed and thus the feline was born. Lucas’ conclusion was this: “when God gave Man dominion over animals, cats were not included in the deal” (415).

Starting off, one of the unique qualities that her narrative exhibits is the use of artistic device in reworking the characterization of the Serpent. Where one would normally expect the usual devil-archetype to be associated with the Serpent as Satan, the Serpent is actually not Satan/Lucifer but merely stands in as the “trickster.” In addition, the Serpent is rewritten as a feminine character—the anima of Prometheus² or Loki.³

In the beginning of the story, the Serpent is anxiously bored and quite perturbed by the bland utopian atmosphere and decides to try entertaining herself by tempting the animals with thoughts of mischief and murder. After failing to tempt the lions to feast upon the lambs, she arrives at an epiphany, “[c]urled around the Tree of Life, the Serpent decided that Creation needed fun-mischief-creatures. She had watched Him do it from clay with the humans. How hard could it be, especially with the aid of the forbidden fruit” (Lucas 416)?

The Serpent then begins her first act of sub-creation, summoning forth golems⁴ of her own design:

She gathered a pile of soft soil from around the roots of the Tree of Life and curled around it, kneading it and shaping it to the best of her ability...
She had made the male bigger and thick-headed, with fast claws and toxic urine to leave his mark all over Creation. The female was more delicate, but faster and fierce when defending her litter......
She grabbed a fruit squeezing it over the creatures, anointing them.
‘I give you the knowledge of Good and Evil...go forth and multiply...until your offspring overruns Creation’ (Lucas 416)

So the Serpent created the cat, male and female, she created them.

And as we can see there is more to this particular section than just plot because part of it is also comprised of an interweaving of social-commentary regarding actual population problems which, presently, various adoption shelters and programs such as TNR are attempting at best to provide an answer for.

Furthermore, Lucas reveals her literary intent in this scene as she offers this commentary:
close observation of any cat will make it clear that cats possess Knowledge of
Good and Evil. Just watch them as they shred the toilet paper or knock over your potted plant. They know they’re not supposed to do that. They just don’t care (Lucas 415).

Shortly after the kittens come to life, “[t]hey curled by the Serpent’s coiled body and fell fast asleep, their whiskers and tails twitching in dreams of hunt and mischief” (Lucas 417). In this scene particularly, Lucas makes use of an interesting allusion or parallel, because the cat in actuality does bear a certain resemblance to the serpent: it coils up to sleep, its eyes are serpentine, it lusses, and it slinks in movement. Lucas sums this up a little bit more when she says, “Their creator could only be a trickster, shaping them after its own image” (Lucas 415). The dichotomy of the serpent and the cat is also portrayed in Egyptian mythology as the sun-god Ra was said to take “the form of a cat as he went off on his nightly battle against the serpent Apopis” (Choron 12). This, however, is a portrayal of enmity (where Lucas does the reversal of this); though despite this effect it shows how their images (or the animals themselves as symbols) are recurrent as a type of mythic motif. In Norse myth, there is also an account where the World Serpent, Jörmungandr, is changed into a cat by Utgard-Loki, whereby Utgard-Loki then challenges Thor to lift the cat (“Jörmungandr: Lifting the Cat”). And according to a Japanese Buddhist legend “the cat and the mamushi (a poisonous viper) failed to weep for the death of the Buddha” (Hearn 185).

However, after the cats appear in the Garden of Eden we come to find out that it wasn’t the Forbidden Fruit that was Eve’s first temptation, for “the kittens had warmed up to Eve. She brought them milk and they rubbed their backs against her legs, played with her hair and curled on her lap, purring” (Lucas 417). And as readers we might even begin to sympathize with Lucas’ Serpent in her motherly endeavor to find a caretaker and guardian for the kittens.

Next, God, accompanied by Lucifer and a host of angels, unexpectedly interrupts the conversation being held between Eve and the Serpent. God quickly rebukes the Serpent for her act of creation, and questions Eve, “Have you not a mate, woman?;” then He commands the Serpent to call the cats forth, whose reply is, “Even if I do, they won’t obey. I forgot to include obedience when I made them,” to which God nonchalantly replies (in parody), “Of course you did” (Lucas 418). God’s final decree is that the kittens be removed from the Garden of Eden because they had been exposed to the Forbidden Fruit becoming like God or “like gods” knowing both Good and Evil. So the cats become strays, which is somewhat symbolic of the couple in Genesis 3 who choose to become like “strays.”

In the last episode the Serpent is tormented by her loss so much so that she devises her most cunning plan yet—the kittens must have a guardian: “Eve! I have something for you,” and the rest is history (Lucas 419). We also learn at this point in the story that the “crazy cat lady” isn’t just a modern invention, but one that has ancient roots that go all the way back to the first woman!

Thus, “Man has no dominion over [cats] and they come with the forbidden knowledge” (Lucas 415).

The cat can also be representative of a type of test created to humble Man. This is alluded to in Lucas’ story, and is found elsewhere as part of another Hebrew tale (rumored to be found among the Dead Sea Scrolls):

After a while it came to pass that Adam’s guardian angel came to the Lord and said, ‘Lord, Adam has become filled with pride[....the] Dog has indeed taught him that he is loved, but no one has taught him humility.’

‘No problem!’ said the Lord. ‘I will create for him a companion who will be with him forever and who will see him as he is, who will remind him of his limitations, so he will know that he is not always worthy of adoration.’

And God created the Cat to be a companion to Adam. And Cat would not obey Adam (Choron 28)

Lucas’ reworking of Hebrew myth and lore surrounding the cat may be summed up best by the words of Ellen Perry Berkeley, “As every cat owner knows, nobody owns a cat” (“Cat Quotes”).

In the next short story, “The Poet and Inmaker’s Daughter,” Elizabeth Hand draws from Japanese folklore in her depiction and characterization of a Japanese bobtail-cat named
Kury-ri. The Japanese bobtail also plays an important role in Oriental culture through the image of the *maneki-neko* (the “beckoning” cat) popularized as a symbol of luck and good fortune, appearing in storefronts and on shop countertops.

In the beginning of Hand’s story, we’re introduced to Ga-sho, who is a poet living in medieval Heian, (Japan) in “a tiny room in the very darkest quarter of the city” (280). Ga-sho spends his time writing poetry about a maid,—Fair-Flower— which is the name he gives her, having no knowledge of her real name—who is in the service of the Dark Willow Empress. Though having seen her only once, she is portrayed by Ga-sho as the fantastical element in his poetry; however, contrary to his delusion, she is not the beauty on the inside that she seems to be on the outside.

Though, “[p]oor as he was, Ga-sho kept a cat. She was a fastidious creature, bobtailed as cats of that time and place were, with pale grey eyes and black front paws.... The most remarkable thing about her was her color: a strange deep reddish brown, the color of new bronze tinged with blood;” just from this description alone we can begin to see that this particular cat is enchanting in more ways than one juxtaposed to Fair-Flower, because there’s more to Kury-ri than meets the beholder’s eye (Hand 280).

Kury-ri is also his only companion, but she proves to be more than just a simple pet; “the red cat slept beside Ga-sho and kept him warm at night. In the morning, she gently woke him up by nudging his cheek,” and when they ate, they ate together; for example, Ga-sho always saved an appropriate amount for her, and likewise when Kury-ri brought home fish from the docks she shared it with Ga-sho (Hand 280).

Kury-ri’s role, furthermore, reveals that she is playing the part of the guardian-angel archetype, because realistically it is she that watches over Ga-sho, instead of vice versa. She also symbolizes the distance that stands between Ga-sho and the feminine element because she is a present feminine symbol but she does not satisfy the role of human female companion; she represents the lack thereof of the role of the woman or, more so, she is a foreshadowing of the redemptive quality of the anima (or Mother archetype).

Furthermore, the portrait of human and animal draws upon the underlying human necessity to be in communion with Nature, which is a vital part of what we might presently label “pet-therapy.” This communal relationship is essential to the powers that shape the world of mythology—the attempt at regaining our connection with the life of the earth, and all that lies beyond. And in relation to this point, as far as the cat is concerned it seems to anthropomorphize itself (or at least we could possibly perceive it as such); Kury-ri for example.

However, the conflict of the story is that the inkmaker, from whom Ga-sho purchases his ink, a drunkard who severely abuses his step-daughter, Ukon. This is also a reversal of the typical fairytale format, because the evil stepfather fills the character role of the usual evil-stepmother. And because Ukon’s mother passed away, she was left to slave away under her stepfather’s cruelty making sumi ink day in and day out. Moreover, the unknown element of the story is that Ukon has befriended Kury-ri, thinking her a stray, and has been feeding her; and when Ga-sho meets her to purchase more ink he finds out about Kury-ri’s secret errands.

After his first impression of Ukon, Ga-sho returns home and instead of writing about Fair-Flower he begins to compose poetry about the inkmaker’s daughter, comparing her to Kury-ri; and soon enough, “his thoughts began to move from feline virtues to more feminine ones” (Hand 283).

Later that evening, Ga-sho notices that Kury-ri isn’t around, but doesn’t think anything of it. Simultaneously, back at the shop the inkmaker was returning in one of his drunken stupors, and he began to strike Ukon out of sheer spite and malcontent. However, the eucatastrophe (the sudden turn from tragedy) of the narrative emerges, and the plight of both the hopeless romantic and the damsel in distress is changed forever by the hidden powers that govern the lives of humankind. The next thing Ukon realizes, upon regaining consciousness after her beating, is that the shop is on fire, and there’s a woman, somewhat resembling her mother, standing in front of her calling to her. “You must come with me.... This way!” she hissed; grabbing Ukon’s wrist, she dragged her out into the street....Her breath...smelled of rotting fish. ‘Your life there is
over...Don’t look back again” (Hand 284-285). Lastly, the strange woman leads Ukon to Ga-sho’s, and Ga-sho takes her in. “Here,’ the woman said, bowing as she gestured at the door. ‘Here you will find safety,’ and suddenly the woman disappeared” (Hand 285).

Eventually, after some time, Ga-sho and Ukon are wed; they have a baby due; and live happily ever after with Kury-ri and her new litter of kittens.

In analyzing “The Poet and the Inmaker’s Daughter”, both Ga-sho and Ukon are characters who are anti-heroic in their endeavors, whereas, it is Kury-ri who is the heroine or goddess like figure of protection like the Hindu goddess Shashthi, who rides upon a cat, or the Egyptian goddess Bastet, both of which are goddesses of motherhood and protection. The cat’s attribute of being associated with the primordial archetype of fire also enhances Kury-ri’s mysticism as the fairy-cat, with the fire symbolizing purification and a new beginning.

Hand, at the end of her story, reveals the source of her inspiration for the characterization of Kury-ri: “In medieval Japan, red bobtailed cats were known as Kinkwa-neko, ‘Golden Flower.’ They were thought to assume the forms of beautiful young women, and to help young girls in distress” (286). She also alludes to “an original tale about a cat whose tail caught on fire: the panicked cat ran through the streets, setting houses aflame in its wake. It’s descendents to this day have no tail” (Hand 279).

In addition, through the influence of animé, presently, the Neko has even developed into a fantasy race of half-human–half-cat beings who exhibit shape-shifting powers and other magical attributes—literally becoming an integration of the symbolic nature of the cat with the human nature, giving new meaning to the phrase “cat people.”

Lastly, in the short-story “Healing Benjamin” by Dennis Danvers the roles of companionship and “magical realism” are explored in and through the mythological quandary of Death—the enigma of our existence. Danvers himself said that his story is a byproduct of dealing with the pain of becoming attached to animals whose life expectancies are but a small shadow of our own. He quotes, “[w]riting ‘Healing Benjamin’ helped me put that pain [of his own animals deaths] out there and deal with it in both laughter and tears;” therefore, reminiscing over a lost love through resurrecting it in writing can become a type of mythological psychotherapy that enables one to come to terms with the mysteries of life in hopes that some of them might be unlocked (Danvers 430).

The story begins with this opening scene:
I got the healing touch when I was 16 years old kneeling over my dying cat Benjamin in my bedroom. He was trying to crawl under the bed to die, but I wouldn’t let him, hauling him out and wrapping my body around him, my forehead pressed against his...He’d stopped breathing, his heart stopped, and I prayed for him... picturing him raised from the dead,... Benjamin stirred under my hands, his heart beating hard and steady against my palm (Danvers 430-431).

After this miracle takes place, the cat has even reversed in age, gaining his youthful vigor back. Here Benjamin’s miracle somewhat reflects the cat and its nine lives, (which is a belief that may have been influenced by the concept of the Egyptian Ennead where the nine gods are embodied in a unity of one). Most importantly, in the beginning of the story, the miracle reveals this one epiphany which continues to gather power as the story progresses: “[Ben] pointed out, however, that death was a necessary precondition to resurrection” (Danvers 432). Thus, the mythical quandary of Death is that it’s just another part of the overall journey.

Regarding the structure of the story, the opening plot operates like a flashback that brings one suddenly into the present with only snippets and fragments of the past. The narrator’s first marriage doesn’t work out, and now at the age of 46 (making Ben 47 in human years) he meets his new love interest, Shannon, who seems to exhibit a special bond with Benjamin. However, one of the minor conflicts of the plot is that the narrator (Jeffrey) is attempting to keep Benjamin’s secret from Shannon despite the different vet notices appearing in the mail. After avoiding it as long as possible, they end up making appointments, and each vet is baffled by Benjamin’s health. And because of Shannon wanting further evidence she makes Jeffrey arrange a visit with his parents to
secure more proof. Jeffrey, thinking that Shannon might even think he was crazy, finally became convinced that she wasn't going to up and leave, because she herself had finally come to believe that he had some kind of healing power. And if the idea of an immortal cat wasn't enough, Jeffrey also had another secret: Ben talks. The characterization of Benjamin in the story is unique not only in the symbolic sense but also in the development of personality. Like most pet lovers, Jeffrey talked with Benjamin; unlike most beloved pets Benjamin talked back to Jeffrey. Also, another unique quality of Benjamin's is the fact that he is a cat who relishes in humor: "He played dead and sprang back to life, a favorite trick of his, flicking his smartass tail" (Danvers 432). Elsewhere in "literal" conversation with Jeffrey Ben further reveals his comedic nature: "'Oh please. Does [Shannon] sense you're a manipulative little eunuch?" For a cat, I'm not so little.' He laughed at his own joke. Cat humor, very sly" (Danvers 434). With a witty personality, and a smile "like the Buddha" Ben seems to anthropomorphize himself quite uniquely through his mannerisms (Danvers 435). Jeffrey and Ben's relationship is also reminiscent of Darby Conley's "Get Fuzzy" characters Rob and Bucky in relating the anthropomorphic characteristics of pets. The miraculous nature of a 47 year old cat also produces a religious conundrum for the narrator, which serves as the sub-text, "What possible use could God have for a cat who had so little use for Him? I've always wanted to believe but never quite pulled it off except for transitory spasms of awe—what most people call agnosticism" (Danvers 436). Likewise, he later faces his earlier religious conundrum with the idea that "God might have a plan, in which case [he] was sure [he] couldn't do anything to screw it up, lacking any clear instructions otherwise, but if God had no plan, [he] did not feel obliged to come up with one other than the status quo: Everyone dies. That's the way things are. Except for Ben" (Danvers 441).

Nearing the close of the story, Jeffrey's relationship goes away with Shannon because of his failure to willingly try using his powers to heal her brother who had been in a coma from a car accident; his parents pass away, and he and Ben spend the rest of their years traveling the world together. Lastly, because of old age they come to reside in Catemaco, Mexico—a lake town which is teeming "with cats and brujas [witches]" (Danvers 445). While taking up residence in Catemaco, Benjamin befriended a mystical woman, Hermalinda. And in the last scene of the story, as she brews a special cup of tea for the both of them, Jeffrey confesses to Benjamin, "I'm afraid,'.... 'I know,' he says. 'Everything will be alright. I'll be joining you. Walk like an Egyptian.' He laughs at his cat humor, very sly, but I don't get it" (Danvers 445). As they both drink the magical tea, Jeffrey with his cup in his hand, and Benjamin sipping from his saucer:

Ben stops purring, and a moment later, his heart stops, and he's gone just like that. He's tricked me—knowing where he leads, I'll follow—fleeing the unbearable emptiness of this world without him—he's shown me the way. Some day has finally come. Everyone dies. Even Ben. For me (Danvers 446).

The story leaves us in the final moment to reflect on the heartwarming fact that the cat chose to die for him. And the phrase to walk like an Egyptian is finally realized as they go on into the Afterlife together.

As we end these three stories, what else might there be to say about the cat, and how many more references can be made through literary analysis? Lucas brings out the cat’s untamable and independent nature, Hand reveals its inner magic, and Danvers brings out the spiritual bond between human and cat. However, it is the actual act of living beside a cat which speaks more than a volume's worth surrounding the mythos of the cat itself. And lastly, I shall leave the reader with a few thought-provoking quotes: Andrew Lang considered, "Of all animals, [the cat] alone attains to the Contemplative Life;" as well, Sir Walter Scott remarked that, "cats are a mysterious kind of folk. There is more passing in their minds than we are aware of;" and reflecting on the clairvoyant nature of the cat, Eleanor Farjeon comments, “It always gives me a shiver when I see a cat seeing what I can’t see” ("Cat Quotes").

Cats reflect the spirit-nature as our guardians and companions; they reawaken the world of wonder and magic.
Notes

Marie-Louise von Franz recounts an interesting interpretation of the spiritual implications of mummification through citing an old Egyptian papyrus text: “The text states that after a certain point in the ritualistic process the body is thereafter referred to as ‘this God’ when the corpse is meant. [The text] says: ‘Now put [such and such an ointment] onto this God,’ etc.” (77). She also goes onto reveal that “mummification is designed to give the deceased the quality of eternity and divinity; it is deification and immortalization of the personality, but every step is carried out absolutely concretely” (77). And within recent years, National Geographic has discovered that “the mummification techniques ancient Egyptians used on animals were often as elaborate as those they employed on the best-preserved human corpses” (Owen, para. 2). The point that I want to further here regarding the Egyptian tradition is that the spiritual implications involved in animal mummification and human mummification can be looked at as equally symbolic. And with over 300,000 cat mummies unearthed in Bubastis alone, it would seem that the Egyptian Afterlife is most likely an ideal heaven for cat-lovers.

Greek Mythology: one of the Titans. He stole fire from heaven and taught men its use. Zeus punished him by chaining him to a rock” (World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary, 1554).

[T]he Norse god of destruction and mischief, the brother of Odin. He was imprisoned until earth’s last battle” (World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary, 1147).

According to Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah): “The sages regarded knowledge of ‘the letters according to which Heaven and earth were created’ as an instrument lending mortals the power to engage in acts of creation” (Steinsaltz 250). The legend of the golem (creating man or animal from clay) is directly related to this belief.

Attributing human form or qualities to gods or things,” or otherwise in this particular portrayal the cat can be considered as theriomorphic (which means “gods in animal form”) (World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary, 86).

Works Cited


