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rences with pampered pets, thoroughly integrated into a human household, by recalling the poignant paradox that underlies all human relationships with cats and dogs. As much as their similarity to us may be acknowledged by the intimacy with which they share family life, the consideration accorded their wishes and demands, and the time and money devoted to their maintenance, their difference is constantly made clear. Although particular animals may be valued, even extravagantly, cat and dog life is cheap. Even the strongest bonds between human and pet can be violated with ease, and for reasons that would, in an exclusively human setting, be considered trivial or even criminal.

Lessing displays this paradox in her own sensibility and experience. Capable as a teen-ager of shooting cats without flinching and as an adult of killing excess kittens (she does not say how), she participates in the lives of her pets with deep empathy, shares vicariously in their triumphs and disappointments, tries to cure their illnesses, and mourns their aging and death. She exercises her controlling influence gingerly, trying to balance their needs and desires with her own. She is, for example, particularly uneasy about depriving her cats of their sexuality, because she feels that with it they lose some of their looks and their personality. Thus she describes the transformation in a favorite cat that had been spayed. "Her confidence had been struck. The tyrannical beauty of the household had vanished... A strident note entered her character.... In short, she had turned into a spinster cat. It is a dreadful thing we do to these beasts. But I suppose we have to do it." And she continues to do it when she feels she has to.

Although *Particularly Cats* is hedged around by the tragedies of feline existence, it is memorable as an account of

than with their minds. It may seem at first glance a picture book, since it has so many beautiful, amusing, and shrewdly selected illustrations, but it is, in fact, an intelligent and informative distillation of Clutton-Brock's unrivaled knowledge as a zoologist specializing in the history and prehistory of domestic animals. She explains the relation of *Felis catus*, the domestic cat, to *Felis silvestris*, the wild cat of Europe and northern Africa, from which it is descended and with which it will still interbreed. She explains why domestic cats interact differently with one another and with their human caretakers than do domestic dogs, a divergence that results from the predatory methods of their wild ancestors. Wolves are social animals, and hunt as a pack or community, while *Felis silvestris*, like almost all other members of the cat family, lives and stalks alone.

Clutton-Brock also traces the history of cat domestication, a briefer history than for most other domesticated animals, and explores the persistent association of cats with the supernatural. Cats were thought to be witches' companions in the Middle Ages and afterward, and were often burned and tortured during attempts to exorcise the devil. But they could also have a benign spiritual influence: black cats were considered to bring good luck, and the corpse of any cat, built into the wall of a new house, was thought to keep away rats. Finally, she describes the state of domestic cats at the present time, paying special—and appropriately skeptical—attention to the proliferation of fancy breeds, like the drop-eared scottish fold and the hairless sphynx. Clutton-Brock offers no opinion on the possibility of communication and mutual understanding between cats and their human owners. But behind her objective and authoritative scientific manner, she makes it clear that she likes them very much. □

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