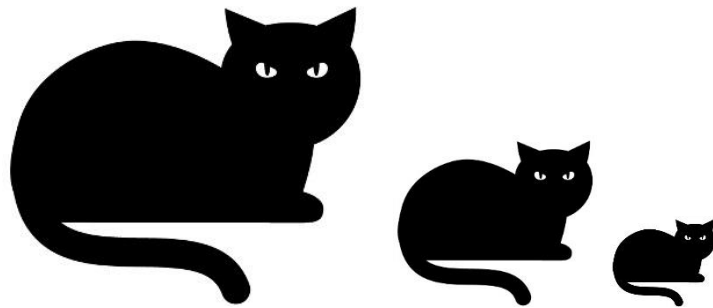




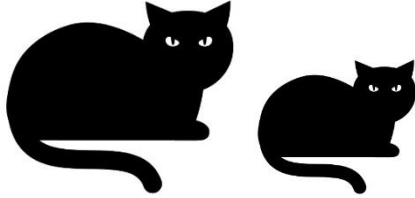
CATS
and **POEMS**
by English Poets

English Poets

Cats and Poems

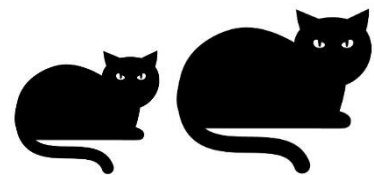


Fundacja Festina Lente



Cats and Poems

- William Blake: *The Tyger*
Edward Lear: *The Owl and the Pussy Cat*
[Traditional]: *Kilkenny Cats*
Christopher Smart: *For I Will Consider My Cat Jeoffry* (Excerpt, *Jubilate Agno*)
John Keats: *To Mrs. Reynolds' Cat*
Walter De La Mare: *Puss*
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John Gay: *The Rat-Catcher and Cats*
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William Wordsworth: *The Kitten and the Falling Leaves*
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Guy Wetmore Carryl: *How a Cat Was Annoyed and a Poet Was Booted*
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Thomas Gray: *Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes*
[Anonym.]: *A Pets Prayer*
[Anonym.]: *First Day in Heaven*





William Blake

The Tyger

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare sieze the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?



Edward Lear

The Owl and the Pussy Cat

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money.
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
'O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!'

Pussy said to the Owl, 'You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?'
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-tree grows
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

'Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?' Said the Piggy, 'I will.'
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;

And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.



[Traditional]

Kilkenny Cats

There once were two cats of Kilkenny,
Each thought there was one cat too many;
So they fought and they fit,
And they scratched and they bit,
Till, excepting their nails
And the tips of their tails,
Instead of two cats there weren't any.



Christopher Smart

For I Will Consider My Cat Jeoffry

(Excerpt, *Jubilate Agno*)

For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry.

For he is the servant of the Living God duly and daily serving him.

For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way.

For this is done by wreathing his body seven times round with elegant quickness.

For then he leaps up to catch the musk, which is the blessing of God upon his prayer.

For he rolls upon flank to work it in.

For having done duty and received blessing he begins to consider himself.

For this he performs in ten degrees.

For first he looks upon his forepaws to see if they are clean.

For secondly he kicks up behind to clear away there.

For thirdly he works it upon stretch with the forepaws extended.

For fourthly he sharpens his paws by wood.

For fifthly he washes himself.

For sixthly he rolls upon wash.

For seventhly he fleas himself, that he may not be interrupted upon the beat.

For eighthly he rubs himself against a post.

For ninthly he looks up for his instructions.

For tenthly he goes in quest of food.

For having consider'd God and himself he will consider his neighbour.

For if he meets another cat he will kiss her in kindness.

For when he takes his prey he plays with it to give it a chance.

For one mouse in seven escapes by his dallying.

For when his day's work is done his business more properly begins.

For he keeps the Lord's watch in the night against the adversary.

For he counteracts the powers of darkness by his electrical skin and glaring eyes.

For he counteracts the Devil, who is death, by brisking about the life.

For in his morning orisons he loves the sun and the sun loves him.

For he is of the tribe of Tiger.

For the Cherub Cat is a term of the Angel Tiger.

For he has the subtlety and hissing of a serpent, which in goodness he suppresses.
For he will not do destruction, if he is well-fed, neither will he spit without provocation.
For he purrs in thankfulness, when God tells him he's a good Cat.
For he is an instrument for the children to learn benevolence upon.
For every house is incomplete without him and a blessing is lacking in the spirit.
For the Lord commanded Moses concerning the cats at the departure of the Children of Israel from Egypt.
For every family had one cat at least in the bag.
For the English Cats are the best in Europe.
For he is the cleanest in the use of his forepaws of any quadruped.
For the dexterity of his defence is an instance of the love of God to him exceedingly.
For he is the quickest to his mark of any creature.
For he is tenacious of his point.
For he is a mixture of gravity and waggery.
For he knows that God is his Saviour.
For there is nothing sweeter than his peace when at rest.
For there is nothing brisker than his life when in motion.
For he is of the Lord's poor and so indeed is he called by benevolence perpetually--Poor Jeoffry! poor Jeoffry! the rat has bit thy throat.
For I bless the name of the Lord Jesus that Jeoffry is better.
For the divine spirit comes about his body to sustain it in complete cat.
For his tongue is exceeding pure so that it has in purity what it wants in music.
For he is docile and can learn certain things.
For he can set up with gravity which is patience upon approbation.
For he can fetch and carry, which is patience in employment.
For he can jump over a stick which is patience upon proof positive.
For he can spraggle upon waggles at the word of command.
For he can jump from an eminence into his master's bosom.
For he can catch the cork and toss it again.
For he is hated by the hypocrite and miser.
For the former is afraid of detection.
For the latter refuses the charge.
For he camels his back to bear the first notion of business.
For he is good to think on, if a man would express himself neatly.
For he made a great figure in Egypt for his signal services.
For he killed the Ichneumon-rat very pernicious by land.
For his ears are so acute that they sting again.
For from this proceeds the passing quickness of his attention.
For by stroking of him I have found out electricity.
For I perceived God's light about him both wax and fire.

For the Electrical fire is the spiritual substance, which God sends from heaven to sustain the bodies both of man and beast.
For God has blessed him in the variety of his movements.
For, tho he cannot fly, he is an excellent clamberer.
For his motions upon the face of the earth are more than any other quadruped.
For he can tread to all the measures upon the music.
For he can swim for life.
For he can creep.



John Keats

To Mrs. Reynolds' Cat

Cat! who hast pass'd thy grand climacteric,
How many mice and rats hast in thy days
Destroy'd? — How many tit bits stolen? Gaze
With those bright languid segments green, and prick
Those velvet ears — but pr'ythee do not stick
Thy latent talons in me — and upraise
Thy gentle mew — and tell me all thy frays
Of fish and mice, and rats and tender chick.

Nay, look not down, nor lick thy dainty wrists —
For all the wheezy asthma, — and for all
Thy tail's tip is nick'd off — and though the fists
Of many a maid have given thee many a maul,
Still is that fur as soft as when the lists
In youth thou enter'dst on glass-bottled wall.



Walter De La Mare

Puss

Puss loves man's winter fire
Now that the sun so soon
Leaves the hours cold it warmed
In burning June.

She purrs full length before
The heaped-up hissing blaze,
Drowsy in slumber down
Her head she lays.

While he with whom she dwells
Sits snug in his inglenook,
Stretches his legs to the flame
And reads his book.



William Butler Yeats

The Cat and the Moon

The cat went here and there
and the moon spun round like a top,
and the nearest kin of the moon,
the creeping cat, looked up.
Black Minnaloushe stared at the moon,
for, wander and wail as he would,
the pure cold light in the sky
troubled his animal blood.

Minnaloushe runs in the grass
lifting his delicate feet.
Do you dance, Minnaloushe, do you dance?
When two close kindred meet,
what better than call a dance?
Maybe the moon may learn,
tired of that courtly fashion,
a new dance turn.

Minnaloushe creeps through the grass
from moonlit place to place,
the sacred moon overhead
has taken a new phase.
Does Minnaloushe know that his pupils
will pass from change to change,
and that from round to crescent,
from crescent to round they range?

Minnaloushe creeps through the grass
alone, important and wise,
and lifts to the changing moon
his changing eyes.



William Wordsworth

See the kitten on the wall

See the kitten on the wall,
Sporting with the leaves that fall.
Withered leaves - one - two - three
From the lofty elder tree.
Though the calm and frosty air,
Of this morning bright and fair.
Eddying round and round they sink,
Softly, slowly; one might think.
From the motions that are made,
Every little leaf conveyed
Sylph or Faery hither tending,
To this lower world descending.
Each invisible and mute,
In his wavering parachute.

But the Kitten, how she starts,
Crouches, stretches, paws, and darts!
First at one, and then its fellow,
Just as light and just as yellow.
There are many now - now one,
Now they stop and there are none.
What intenseness of desire,
In her upward eye of fire!
With a tiger-leap half-way,

Now she meets the coming prey.
Lets it go as fast, and then;
Has it in her power again.
Now she works with three or four,
Like an Indian conjurer;
Quick as he in feats of art,
Far beyond in joy of heart.
Where her antics played in the eye,
Of a thousand standers by,
Clapping hands with shout and stare,
What would little Tabby care
For the plaudits of the crowd?



Rudyard Kipling

Pussy Can Sit by the Fire and Sing

Pussy can sit by the fire and sing,
Pussy can climb a tree
Or play with a silly old cork and string
To 'muse herself, not me.
But I like Binkie my dog, because
He knows how to behave;
So, Binkie's the same as the First Friend was,
And I am the Man in the Cave!

Pussy will play Man Friday till
It's time to wet her paw
and make her walk on the window-sill
(For the footprint Crusoe saw);
Then she fluffles her tail and mews,
And scratches and won't attend
But Binkie will play whatever I choose,
And he is my true First Friend!

Pussy will rub my knees with her head
Pretending she loves me hard;
But the very minute I go to my bed
Pussy runs out in the yard,
And there she stays till the morning-light;
So I know it is only pretend
And he is my Firstest Friend.



Harold Monro

Milk for the Cat

When the tea is brought at five o'clock,
And all the neat curtains are drawn with care,
The little black cat with bright green eyes
Is suddenly purring there.

At first she pretends, having nothing to do,
She has come in merely to blink by the grate,
But, though tea may be late or the milk may be sour,
She is never late.

And presently her agate eyes
Take a soft large milky haze,
And her independent casual glance
Becomes a stiff, hard gaze.

Then she stamps her claws or lifts her ears,
Or twists her tail and begins to stir,
Till suddenly all her lithe body becomes
One breathing, trembling purr.

The children eat and wriggle and laugh;
The two old ladies stroke their silk:
But the cat is grown small and thin with desire,
Transformed to a creeping lust for milk.

The white saucer like some full moon descends
At last from the clouds of the table above;
She sighs and dreams and thrills and glows,
Transfigured with love.

She nestles over the shining rim,
Buries her chin in the creamy sea;
Her tail hangs loose; each drowsy paw
Is doubled under each bending knee.

A long, dim ecstasy holds her life;
Her world is an infinite shapeless white,
Till her tongue has curled the last holy drop,
Then she sinks back into the night,

Draws and dips her body to heap
Her sleepy nerves in the great arm-chair,
Lies defeated and buried deep
Three or four hours unconscious there.



Ford Madox Ford

The Cat of the House

Over the hearth with my 'minishing eyes I muse; until after
the last coal dies.

Every tunnel of the mouse,
every channel of the cricket,
I have smelt,

I have felt
the secret shifting of the mouldered rafter,
and heard
every bird in the thicket.

I see

you

Nightingale up in the tree!

I, born of a race of strange things,
of deserts, great temples, great kings,
in the hot sands where the nightingale never sings!



John Gay

The Rat-Catcher and Cats

The rats by night such mischief did,
Betty was every morning chid:
They undermined whole sides of bacon,
Her cheese was sapped, her tarts were taken;
Her pasties, fenced with thickest paste,
Were all demolished and laid waste:
She cursed the Cat, for want of duty.
Who left her foes a constant booty.
An engineer, of noted skill,
Engaged to stop the growing ill.
From room to room he now surveys
Their haunts, their works, their secret ways;
Finds where they 'scape an ambushade,
And whence the nightly sally's made.
An envious Cat from place to place,
Unseen, attends his silent pace:
She saw that, if his trade went on,
The purring race must be undone;
So secretly removes his baits,
And every strategem defeats.
Again he sets the poisoned toils;
And Puss again the labour foils.
"What foe (to frustrate my designs)
My schemes thus nightly countermines?"
Incensed, he cries, "This very hour
The wretch shall bleed beneath my power."
So said a ponderous trap he brought,
And in the fact poor Puss was caught.
"Smuggler", says he, "thou shalt be made
A victim to our loss of trade".

The captive Cat, with piteous mews,
For pardon, life, and freedom sues.
"A sister of the science spare;
One interest is our common care".
"What insolence!" the man replied;
"Shall cats with us the game divide?
Were all your interloping band
Extinguished, or expelled the land,
We rat-catchers might raise our fees,
Sole guardians of a nation's cheese!"
A Cat, who saw the lifted knife,
Thus spoke, and saved her sister's life.
"In every age and clime we see,
Two of a trade can ne'er agree.
Each hates his neighbor for encroaching:
Squire stigmatizes squire for poaching;
Beauties with beauties are in arms,
And scandal pelts each others' charms;
Kings, too, their neighbor kings dethrone,
In hope to make the world their own;
But let us limit our desires,
Not war like beauties, kings, and squires;
For though we both one prey pursue,
There's game enough for us and you."



William Wordsworth

Loving and Liking

Long may you love your pensioner mouse,
Though one of a tribe that torment the house:
Nor dislike for her cruel sport the cat,
Deadly foe both of mouse and rat;
Remember she follows the law of her kind,
And Instinct is neither wayward nor blind.
Then think of her beautiful gliding form,
Her tread that would scarcely crush a worm,
And her soothing song by the winter fire,
Soft as the dying throb of the lyre.



William Wordsworth

The Kitten and the Falling Leaves

That way look, my infant, lo!
What a pretty baby-show!
See the kitten on the wall,
sporting with the leaves that fall.
Withered leaves — one — two and three

from the lofty elder tree.
Though the calm and frosty air,
of this morning bright and fair.
Eddying round and round they sink,
softly, slowly; one might think.
From the motions that are made,
every little leaf conveyed
Sylph or Faery hither tending,
to this lower world descending.
Each invisible and mute,
in his wavering parachute.

But the Kitten, how she starts,
crouches, stretches, paws, and darts!
First at one, and then its fellow,
just as light and just as yellow.
There are many now — now one,
now they stop and there are none:
What intensesness of desire,
in her upward eye of fire!
With a tiger-leap half-way,
now she meets the coming prey.
lets it go as fast, and then;
Has it in her power again.
Now she works with three or four,
like an Indian conjuror;
quick as he in feats of art,
far beyond in joy of heart.
Where her antics played in the eye,
of a thousand standers-by,
clapping hands with shout and stare,
what would little Tabby care!
For the plaudits of the crowd?
Over happy to be proud,
over wealthy in the treasure
of her exceeding pleasure!



Sarah Chauncey Woolsey

Hodge the Cat

Burly and big, his books among,
Good Samuel Johnson sat,
With frowning brows and wig askew,
His snuff-strewn waistcoat far from new;
So stern and menacing his air,
That neither Black Sam,
nor the maid
To knock or interrupt him dare;
Yet close beside him, unafraid,
Sat Hodge, the cat.

"This participle," the Doctor wrote,
"The modern scholar cavils at,
But," — even as he penned the word,
A soft, protesting note was heard;
The Doctor fumbled with his pen,
The dawning thought took wings and flew,
The sound repeated, come again,
It was a faint, reminding "Mew!"
From Hodge, the cat...

The Dictionary was laid down,
The Doctor tied his vast cravat,
And down the buzzing street he strode,
Taking an often-trodden road,
And halted at a well-known stall:
"Fishmonger," spoke the Doctor gruff,
"Give me six oysters, that is all;
Hodge knows when he has had enough,
Hodge is my cat."

Then home; puss dined and while in sleep
he chased a visionary rat,
His master sat him down again,
Rewrote his page, renibbed his pen;
Each "i" was dotted, each "t" was crossed,
He labored on for all to read,
Nor deemed that time was waste or lost
Spent in supplying the small need
Of Hodge, the cat.

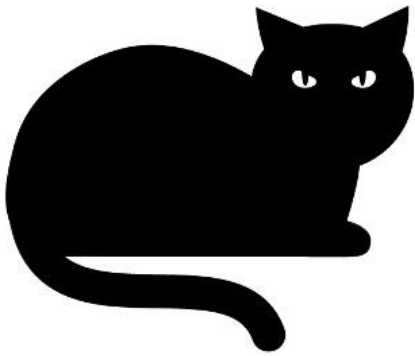
The dear old Doctor! Fierce of mien,
Untidy, arbitrary, fat,
What gentle thought his name enfold!
So generous of his scanty gold.
So quick to love, so hot to scorn,
Kind to all sufferers under heaven,
A tend'rer despot ne'er was born;
His big heart held a corner, even
For Hodge, the cat.



William Cowper

Let Sleeping Cats Lie

A poet's cat, sedate and grave,
as poet would wish to have,
was much addicted to enquire,
for nooks to which she might retire,
and where, secure as mouse in chink,
she might repose, or sit and think.
I know not where she caught her trick,
nature perhaps herself had cast her,
in such a mold philosophique,
or else she learn'd it of her master.
Sometimes ascending, debonair,
an apple tree or lofty pear,
lodg'd with convenience in the fork,
she watched the gard'ner at his work;
sometimes her ease and solace sought,
in an old empty wat'ring pot,
there wanting nothing, save a fan,
to seem some nymph in her sedan,
apparell'd in exactest sort,
and ready to be borne in court.



Guy Wetmore Carryl

How a Cat Was Annoyed and a Poet Was Booted

A poet had a cat.
There is nothing odd in that —
(I *might* make a little pun about the *Mews*!)
But what is really more
Remarkable, she wore
A pair of pointed patent-leather shoes.
And I doubt me greatly whether
E'er you heard the like of that:
Pointed shoes of patent-leather
On a cat!

His time he used to pass
Writing sonnets, on the grass —
(I *might* say something good on *pen* and *sword*!)
While the cat sat near at hand,
Trying hard to understand
The poems he occasionally roared.
(I myself possess a feline,
But when poetry I roar
He is sure to make a bee-line
For the door.)

The poet, cent by cent,
All his patrimony spent —
(I *might* tell how he went from *verse* to *werse*!)
Till the cat was sure she could,
By advising, do him good.
So addressed him in a manner that was terse:
"We are bound toward the scuppers,
And the time has come to act,
Or we'll both be on our uppers
For a fact!"

On her boot she fixed her eye,
But the boot made no reply —
(I *might* say: "Couldn't speak to save its *sole*!")
And the foolish bard, instead
Of responding, only read
A verse that wasn't bad upon the whole.
And it pleased the cat so greatly,
Though she knew not what it meant,
That I'll quote approximately
How it went:-

"If I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree" —
(I *might* put in: "I think I'd just as *leaf*!")
"Let them smile, as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough" —
Well, he'd plagiarized it bodily, in brief!
But that cat of simple breeding
Couldn't read the lines between,
So she took it to a leading
Magazine.

She was jarred and very sore
When they showed her to the door.
(I *might* hit off the door that was a *jar*!)
To the spot she swift returned
Where the poet sighed and yearned,
And she told him that he'd gone a little far.
"Your performance with this rhyme has
Made me absolutely sick,"
She remarked. "I think the time has
Come to kick!"

I could fill up half the page
With descriptions of her rage —
(I might say that she went a bit too fur!)
When he smiled and murmured: "Shoo!"
"There is one thing I can do!"
She answered with a wrathful kind of purr.
"You may shoo me, and it suit you,
But I feel my conscience bid
Me, as tit for tat, to boot you!"
(Which she did.)

The Moral of the plot
(Though I say it, as should not!)
Is: An editor is difficult to suit.
But again there're other times
When the man who fashions rhymes
Is a rascal, and a bully one to boot!



Alexander Gray

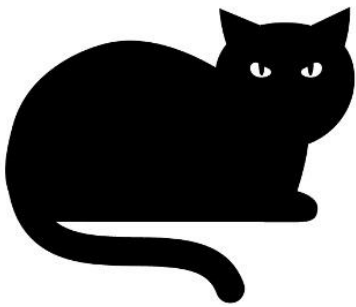
On a Cat Ageing

He blinks upon the hearth-rug,
and yawns in deep content,
accepting all the comforts
that Providence has sent.

Louder he purrs, and louder,
in one glad hymn of praise
for all the night's adventures,
for quiet, restful days.

Life will go on for ever,
with all that cat can wish:
warmth and the glad procession
of fish and milk and fish.

Only-the thought disturbs him-
he's noticed once or twice,
the times are somehow breeding
a nimbler race of mice.



Thomas Gray

Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes

'Twas on a lofty vase's side,
Where China's gayest art had dy'd
The azure flowers, that blow;
Demurest of the tabby kind,
The pensive Selima reclin'd,
Gazed on the lake below...

Her conscious tail her joy declared;
The fair round face, the snowy beard,
The velvet of her paws,
Her coat, that with the tortoise vies,
Her ears of jet, and emerald eyes,
She saw; and purred applause.

Still had she gaz'd; but 'midst the tide
Two angel forms were seen to glide,
The Genii of the stream:
Their scaly armour's Tyrian hue
Thro' richest purple to the view
Betray'd a golden gleam.

The hapless Nymph with wonder saw:
A whisker first and then a claw,
With many an ardent wish,
She stretch'd in vain to reach the prize.
What female heart can gold despise?
What cat's averse to fish?

Presumptuous Maid! with looks intent
Again she stretch'd, again she bent,
Nor knew the gulf between.
(Malignant Fate sat by, and smil'd)
The slipp'ry verge her feet beguil'd,
She tumbled headlong in...



[Anonym.]

A Pets Prayer

If it should be, that I grow frail and weak,
And pain should keep me from my sleep,
Then, you must do what must be done
For this, the last battle, can't be won.
Don't let your grief stay your hand,

For this day more than the rest,
Your love and friendship stand the test.
We've had so many years,
What is to come can hold no fear.
You'd not want me to suffer, so
When the time comes, please let me go.

Take me where my needs they'll tend,
Only, stay with me to the end
And hold me firm and speak to me
Until my eyes no longer see.
I know in time you'll see it is a kindness you do for me
Although my tail its last has waved,
From pain and suffering I've been saved.

Don't grieve it should be you who this thing decides to do.
We've been so close, we two, these years,
Don't let your heart hold tears.
smile, for we walked together for awhile.



[Anonym.]

First Day in Heaven

Is Heaven all you asked of it,
O little cat? Did Peter fit
A halo for your graceless head?
Is there a quilt for your special bed,
And a bowl of cream just out of reach
Of your thieving paw? Or do They teach
You not to steal in Paradise?
Does the flapping of Their wings entice?
Do you scamper and swing on a golden fence,
Or are They teaching you reverence?
And are there really golden thrones
Up there? Or do the Mighty Ones
Have nice fat chairs that you can claw
And tear and snag with an impious paw?
And do the angels understand
That a little cat in a lonely land
Still longs for a kiss and a friendly cuff?

Celestial joys are not enough.
Please, some small saint in shining white,
Hold him close in your arms tonight.

Poeci angielscy – English Poets
Cats and Poems
Wybór wierszy o kotach

Redakcja: *Hanna Milewska*
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