

T. S. Eliot's Playful Catharsis: *Cats* as the Rejuvenated Human

Noriko Takeda

1. *Cats* for rescue: the poem and the musical configuration

T. S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* embodies a dramatizing collection of rhymed fables. The *Book's* 15 narrative poems are enjoyable and educational. Different from the author's major intellectual poems such as *The Waste Land* (1922) and *Four Quartets* (1943), the *Book Cats* focuses on delineating the personified felines with their vivacious and humorous pictures in "tabby," "ginger," "black," and "white." Following the genre's convention, the task of the fables' protagonists is to push the reader to an effortful life; the hustling protagonists include the governess named "Jennyanydots" and the rascal "Growltiger."¹ The four-beat based, clear-cut rhythm foregrounds both the text's readability and generative imagery, nuanced by various puns. In the pleasant movement produced by that formal arrangement, each poetic text gives an impression that the words directly bring forth real cats, or rather, metamorphose into animated objects. The *Book Cats* may be qualified as one of Eliot's most attractive and endearing creations.

In the first 1939 version, the *Book* consists of 14 poems, instead of the final 15 poems. The setting of 15 pieces with the last additional "Cat Morgan Introduces Himself" was established with the 1953 second book

edition.² The placement of the additional poem on the commissionaire cat Morgan is nonetheless unstable, though all the versions were published from the same publisher, Faber.³ This is as if to represent a wandering feline; in the audiotape which features the reading by the author himself, Eliot places the Morgan piece as the second-to-last, the 14th poem.⁴ In the 1909-1962 *Collected Poems*, i.e., the last collection of Eliot's poems edited by the author himself during his lifetime,⁵ the *Book Cats* has only 14 poems without the Morgan piece. The 1983 tape recording by the professional performers John Gielgud and Irene Worth likewise uses the 14-poem format. In the 1969 posthumous collection entitled *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*, the *Book* nevertheless consists of 15 poems. To the best of my knowledge, the succeeding versions by Faber adopt the 15-poem format with the final Morgan piece.

Whether it be 14 or 15, the *Book Cats* undeniably aims at a solid synthesis of the collected pieces under the comprehensive name "Book." The number 14 corresponds to that of the lines making up a sonnet, this European traditional form for crystallizing poetry, whereas the 15 embodies a Trinitarian combination of quintets; the quintet is significant in Eliot's poetry, as is represented by *The Waste Land* in five sections and each quintuple poem of *Four Quartets*.

Furthermore, in the *Book Cats* each poem may be viewed as a commentarial expansion of the protagonist-Cat's mysterious name, such as Skimbleshanks, Mr. Mistoffelees, and Old Deuteronomy.⁶ The name corresponds to a main portion of each poem's short title; all the names are proper nouns for designating individuals (e.g., "Gus," "Macavity") and families (e.g., "Gumbie," "Jellicles"), with the only exception of the generic name "Cat." The word "Cat" with the titling

capital letter “C” may however be viewed as a sort of proper noun, used for personification. Moreover, the simplest label is no less evocative with a mixing vowel [æ] blocked up by the strong stops [k] and [t]. As a juxtaposition of the 15 flowering titles, the *Book Cats* paradoxically foregrounds the modernist concision, as with the author's grand works *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*. The poem length equally shows a regulation, kept around two pages in the 1969 Faber version.

The interesting *Book Cats* has nonetheless been almost neglected by literary critics. Since the *Book* makes a considerable volume for T. S. Eliot's publications, characterized by selectivity and relative scarcity, many critics refer to it. But in most cases it is referred to only as a kind of light nonsense verse, though, in fact, “charmingly produced” (Spender 408); generally speaking, only a few lines are consecrated in each overview of Eliot's poetic works. Take, for example, George Williamson who classifies the *Book Cats* into Eliot's “Minor Poems” in *A Reader's Guide to T. S. Eliot* (1953, reprinted in 1998). In one of the MLA manuals, *Approaches to Teaching Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (1988), the *Book Cats* has only a three-line mentioning in the introduction by the editor. J. C. C. Mays takes it “only as a joke” (118) in *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot* (1994). The *Book's* unexpected readability and “liveliness” (Crawford 4) has survived the academic scorn, taking the form of the exceptionally-popularized musical adaptation, named *Cats*. More than 50 million people are said to have seen it (Grimes B6). As is pointed out by Bernard Sharratt in a similar context, “Eliot's main cultural presence might then be only as the librettist of *Cats*” (230).

The overwhelming success of the musical play produced by Andrew L. Webber and Trevor Nunn may well raise a question regarding authorship: could the original maker, Eliot, have prefigured “England's

first dance musical" (Lynne) when he was writing his allegoric odes to the Cats? If Eliot could witness the musical, how would he react to it? The musical play, first staged in London on 11 May 1981, may be qualified as typically postmodern, with the subversive interaction between the stage and floor, as well as the nudist and naturalistic costumes for the unisexual actors/actresses playing the Cats. In the New London Theatre on 17 March 2001, the actor who was playing a rock'n'roller Cat, "Rum Tum Tugger," went down to the audience to kiss an old man's bold head, leaving a trace of lipstick on the skin. In the Broadway theater on 6 September 2000, "Rum Tum Tugger" danced with a young mother sitting close to me. In Nagoya, Japan on 26 August 2000, Rum Tum Tugger coaxed a teen-ager from her seat onto the stage so they could step together.

Since 1981 Webber's musical play has been featured in more than 58 cities including London, New York, Paris, Madrid, Moscow, Singapore, Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya ("Cats Production History," April 2000). Enjoying unprecedented popularity, the performing configuration may be compared to a collective litany for global rejuvenation at the end of the 20th century (a subversive century, indeed); the costumed Cats represent an atavism of both the actors/actresses and audience. The two millennia in shift have thrown out the preapocalyptic, tragi-comic pell-mell with technological eccentricity causing environmental devastation. Moreover, the capitalistic dilemma represents the damage of cultural reception by autocratic mass media in audio-visual violence that has ironically occurred with a competitive and democratic background. In contrast, the localized zoologic musical *Cats* is metaphorical, thus puzzlingly philosophical. Although the Winter Garden Theatre in New York put an end to the "longest running show in

Broadway History” on 10 September 2000,⁷ the “government-subsidised” (Nunn 11) London *Cats* is still, somehow, surviving the economic and mental recession, despite cultural arbitrariness. The old city’s quietude may paradoxically support the incessant self-renewal of the mysterious play’s generative significance drawn by the audience.

The word “cats” connects itself with “catharsis,” used in the everyday phrase “it rains cats and dogs.” The reader’s word play is all the more induced because Eliot’s original text itself is flooded with puns. The dogs as the counterparts of cats appear in the eighth poem “Of the Awefull Battle of the Pokes and the Pollicles.” The dominant image of the poem is that of water. The easily absorbed, softened image is for children, the text’s target readers who must be first protected in war. The author Eliot wrote the *Book* “for his young cousins and godchildren” (Dale 136).⁸ Just before the publication of the *Book Cats* in October 1939, the Nazis invaded Poland. The *Book Cats* pertains to the real spirit of “Poetry of the Thirties,” delivered in the nihilist aggression of World War II.⁹ Embodying an incarnated drama, the musical play foregrounds the original poem’s cathartic effect. By considering the author’s ambition for writing plays that actualized the five original pieces, it may be concluded that he presupposed a staging of his *Book*, though his poetic imagination leaves a fertile blank for creative concretizations by performing artists. In the *Book*, a theater cat appears. The theatricality of the verbal but pictorial work is intentional and remarkable.

2. The elemental *Cats*

More smoothly than the first setting of 14 poems, the 15 poems of the 1953 *Book Cats* lead the reader to suspect that the *Book* is structured by

the shifting five “objective correlatives,” i.e., the elements of the Chinese origin, “tree,” “fire,” “earth,” “metal (–gold),” “water,” in circulation and succession. The elements represent the source for the dominant image of each poem. The five elements thus give off the potential to be actualized as the poetic *Book*, which is subsequently transformed into the plump bodies of Cats, as is outlined below:

- (1) “The Naming of Cats”: “water”
- (2) “The Old Gumbie Cat”: “tree”
- (3) “Growltiger’s Last Stand”: “fire”
- (4) “The Rum Tum Tugger”: “earth”
- (5) “The Song of the Jellicles”: “metal (–gold)”
- (6) “Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer”: “water”
- (7) “Old Deuteronomy”: “tree”
- (8) “Of the Awefull Battle of the Pekes and the Pollicles”: “fire”
- (9) “Mr. Mistoffelees”: “earth”
- (10) “Macavity: the Mystery Cat”: “metal (–gold)”
- (11) “Gus: the Theatre Cat”: “water”
- (12) “Bustopher Jones: the Cat About Town”: “tree”
- (13) “Skimbleshanks: the Railway Cat”: “fire”
- (14) “The Ad-dressing of Cats”: “earth”
- (15) “Cat Morgan Introduces Himself”: “metal (–gold)”

According to ancient Chinese philosophy, the five elements make the whole world in cooperative shifting. Suggesting the author Eliot’s interest in Chinese thought, the expression “Heathern Chinese” is used twice in the ninth poem of the *Book Cats*. The structuring by the five elements is presumably adopted also in Eliot’s grand works, *The Waste*

Land in five sections and *Four Quartets* in four poems in five sections each (Takeda 99-100, 137-38). The *Book Cats* may be counted as part of T. S. Eliot's major creation, especially because almost all of Eliot's numbered long poems, including "The Hollow Men," *Ash-Wednesday*, and *Choruses from "The Rock,"* can be thought to spring from the five elements, as is discussed in another paper of mine.¹⁰

It is now left to discuss how the five elements are featured in each poem. In the generalizing first poem, "The Naming of Cats," the image of water is dominant with the appearance of many named Cats, for cats are closely related to water, as is indicated by the phrase "it rains cats and dogs." The invisible but covering imagery of the element "water" is crystallized into the last foregrounded expression, "deep and inscrutable Name." According to the previous lines, the big significant "Name" corresponds to each cat's third appellation which only the cat him/herself knows. The "Name" is thus unseen and undiscovered ("deep and inscrutable") by any human effort ("research"); it is also "ineffable" by any writing with visible letters. Though unseized, any name and the previous act of calling represent the original element that generates the poetic world, just like the ancestral water as source of life. In the last expression, "Name" is qualified as "singular," i.e., single and fundamental, with the dignifying capital "N." Among the Greek four elements (earth, air, fire, water), as well as the Chinese five elements (tree, fire, earth, metal(-gold), water), only the summarizing element "water" can be qualified as "Deep and inscrutable," being also invisible. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989 ed.), there is an object called "deep-sea lead" which is "used for soundings in deep water"; the appearance of the expression "deep-sea lead" dates back to 1698. The "Name" thus represents the concentrated image of water.

Furthermore, the holistic poem refers to the tripartite division, by saying “a cat have THREE DIFFERENT NAMES.” The number three leads to the holy Trinity in the image of purifying water. Mentioned in a literary text, the division is connected to that of traditional European literature: lyric, epic, and dramatic. Eliot’s *Book* aims at the totalization of the three genres, and merges into the symbolic embodiments of the Cats as the foregrounded characterization of human figures. The first poem represents, in fact, the covering water.

The next poem, entitled “The Old Gumbie Cat,” features the image of “tree” by showing a cat with the lengthened and branched name: “Jenny(-)any(-)dots.” Just like the old rooted tree, the Cat is deep-seated in the daytime; she “sits and sits and sits and sits.” The puzzling word “Gumbie,” which suggests an obscure kind of cat, leads to the names of tree, “gum,” and “gumbo.” The word “Gumbie,” which sounds to designate a species of cats, has no entry in the *OED*. The same goes for “Growltiger,” “Rum Tum Tugger,” and “Jellicles.” Manju Jaidka makes one think of the echo from “the popular minstrel song about a ‘Possum up a Gum Tree’” in the *Book Cats* (37). The echo would strengthen the tie between the name “Gumbie” and the element “tree.” Indicating the vegetal origin, the Cat is a brownish color, since “her coat is of the tabby kind, with tiger stripes and leopard spots.” According to the *OED*, the word “tabby” refers to a cat “of a brownish, tawny, or grey colour, marked with darker parallel stripes or streaks”; under the heading “Brown Tabby,” the dictionary presents a statement that “They are the true English cats.” Jennyanydots’ genealogical “coat” represents an old bark. In the first sentence, the expression “I have . . . in mind” is used, recalling the first section of the author’s contemporary poem “Burnt Norton” in *Four Quartets* that foregrounds the element

“tree.”¹¹ Just as with Jennyanydots' retrospective poem, the tree section of the *Quartets* stirs nostalgia by using the meaningful words “mind” and “memory.”

The third poem “Growltiger's Last Stand” explodes in “fire” with the hero-cat named “Growltiger.” The poem's intertextual connection with William Blake's popular poem “The Tyger” reinforces the combination of “fire” and the hero-cat compared to a tiger: in the Blake poem, the “tyger” is “burning bright.” Moreover, the word “Growl(-tiger)” punningly leads to “glow.” The poem's main raid scene is featured as “a . . . burst of fireworks.”

The fourth poem for a cat with the expansive name “The Rum Tum Tugger” is the earth poem. The text represents the juxtaposition of paradoxes, which resembles one of Eliot's source books *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*. The book of paradoxical preachings is quoted in *Four Quartets*, the third earth section of “East Coker,” which was first made in 1940, thus being contemporary with the *Book Cats* published in 1939 (Gardner, “*Four Quartets: A Commentary*” 66). Mountainous layers of puzzles also make “The Rum Tum Tugger.” Furthermore, the “Curious,” i.e., worldly/earthly hero-cat loves “a horrible mud(-)dle” before everything. Both the words “Tum” and “Tug” relate to earth, since “tum” is a part of “tumulus” meaning mound and to “tug” presupposes terrestrial gravitation. Hiroyuki Furukawa relates the word “tug” to “tugger,” i.e., “one who pulls vigorously” (62).

In the next poem of “metal(-gold),” a splendid host of dancing cats named “Jellicles” is presented. According to M. Jayabai, the Jellicle Cats are of “the decorative type” (178). As one of Eliot's neologisms, “Jellicles” presumably represents a combination of “jewelry” and “miracles.” The coinage is perhaps hinted at by Edward Lear's fantastic

place name “Jellybolee” in his poem entitled “The Scroobious Pip”; Lear is the acknowledged source of influence for the Eliot *Book*.¹² To Lear’s “Jellybolee,” which punningly leads to Eliot’s “Jellicle Ball,” all kinds of animals are attracted. Lear’s poem “The Owl and the Pussy-cat” reinforces the connection between the Jellicle Cats and the element “metal (-gold)”; in Lear’s poem, a marriage ring for the owl and the pussy-cat consummates the animals’ ill-matched coupling and, moreover, the poem is climaxed by the ending description of their wedding dance that evokes the ball scene of the Jellicle Cats in the moonlight: “They danced by the light of the moon, / The moon, / The moon, / They danced by the light of the moon.”

Eliot’s Jellicle Cats are, in fact, precious and divine, conceiving the “terpsichorean powers.” “Terpsichore” designates a Muse for dance. The golden metallic Jellicles endow the moon with the power of mirroring the sun, as is suggested by the reflexive expressions “The Jellicle Moon is shining bright” and “the sun is shining bright.” The former notable sentence is emphasized at the head of the text.

The sixth poem features a pair of cats with “extensive reputation” and lengthened names, Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer. Eulogizing their art of stealing, the poem foregrounds the protagonists’ waterlike invisibleness and quietness. Just as with the transforming water, they change into various figures, though always keeping invisibility without revealing their identity: they are qualified as “knockabout clowns, quick-change comedians, tight-rope walkers and acrobats.” The two cats thus become multiplied, invoking rain. Their long names contain, in fact, three watery sources: the name “Mungojerrie” punningly suggests a juicy fruit “mango” and “jerrie” leads to “jelly”; while the tongue-twisting name “Rumpelteazer” includes “tea.”

With a long biblical name, the seventh poem's protagonist "Old Deuteronomy" represents tree. The dignifying adjective "Old" relates the hero to the second tree poem's heroine "The Old Gumbie Cat." Just like the old heroine, Deuteronomy is sedentary; the verb "sit" repeatedly appears in this seventh poem, as with the second poem for the Old Gumbie Cat named Jennyanydots. Attesting to the vegetal nature, Old Deuteronomy is a disturbance to traffic, "sit (ting) in the street." The word "Deuteronomy" is used for a chapter of the Old Testament, this Book of Books. The word "Bible" has an etymon which is, in fact, "papyrus," the name of a plant.

The next poem, "Of the Awefull Battle of the Pokes and the Pollicies," features fire, making the reader evoke a fiery battle of dogs. The fighters are rendered as "passionate foes." Nevertheless, the battle that would have required "the Fire Brigade" did not occur, because of the intervention of a cat, the Great Rumpuscat. His overwhelming power comes mainly from "his eyes...like fireballs fearfully blazing."

In the ninth poem, a personified cat "Mr. Mistoffelees" is presented. No other cat is so respected as this mysterious conjure cat, entitled "Mr." According to Genesis, the first man was made from earth by God's hand; suggesting a close connection with the origin of the earthly man, the Cat named Mr. Mistoffelees is qualified as "original" and "conjuring." Just like the previous earth cat, the Rum Tum Tugger, Mr. Mistoffelees is characterized by mystifying and paradoxical performances; he cannot be found where he should be. This "clever" and "magical" cat is appreciated as "phenomenal." The ironical word "phenomenal" closely connects Mr. Mistoffelees to the perceptible world of changes on earth.

The next tenth golden poem presents a wanted cat named Macavity.

Though being a criminal, he is a transcendental crowned “fiend” “who can defy the Law.” He is legendary and invisible, as the text repeatedly declares: “Macavity’s not there!” In the last line, he is applauded as “the Napoleon of Crime.” Suitable for wearing a golden jeweled crown, Macavity’s “head is highly domed.” The far-fetched word “ginger,” which qualifies Macavity, reinforces the connection between the hero and gold. “Ginger” leads to “gingerbread”; according to the *OED*, “gingerbread,” or “a kind of plain cake,” was “formerly made into shapes of men, animals, letters of the alphabet, etc., which were often gilded.” The dictionary presents an expression from 1833, “the shining gilt gingerbread.”

The next poem, “Gus: the Theatre Cat,” is a cathartic watery piece featuring an old actor named Gus who once “played...every possible part” for the anticipating audience. As the transforming water, he became many other cats, invoking cleansing rainy water. The expression that puzzles at first reading, “he’s acted with Tree,” suggests that the watery cat is a neighbor of the element “tree.” In the theatrical context, “Tree” designates a distinguished actor and producer’s name, Herbert Berhohm Tree (Furukawa 66). The poem describes a pathetic scene of the old actor-cat who tells his story in tears. His nickname, “Gus,” stands for his vaporizing teardrops, leading to the word “gas.” His story is an honorable river-like “history,” or a glorious memory. Gus’s most successful part, “Firefrefiddle, the Fiend of the Fell,” conveys the image of flowing water with the lengthened name. The name features the “f,” the first sound in “fluid.” The long word “Firefrefiddle,” which evokes a violin with an explosive flow of sound, relates the poem to the fifth watery section of “Burnt Norton” in *Four Quartets*; the contemporary section incorporates streaming melodies of a violin. In

the dominant image of watery expansion, the generalizing long name, "Firefrowiddle, the Fiend of the Fell," appropriates all the elements besides "water": "tree" from a wooden violin ("fiddle"), "fire," "earth" from "Fell" which means moor, "metal(-gold)" from the crown of "the Fiend."

The next twelfth poem's hero, "Bustopher Jones," may be viewed as a close relative of Old Deuteronomy, as being the "stoutest of Cats." He is promised a long life ("I shall last out my time"). Bustopher is also related to Jennyanydots, the first tree poem's grand heroine; they both wear gorgeous coats.¹³ In contrast, the coats of three other cats (Growltiger, Gus, and Morgan) are not beautified. This tree poem features a hero who is both erect ("*not* skin and bones") and "remarkably fat," haunting "eight or nine clubs." The hero is, in fact, a "well-cut" dandy. It should be noted that Bustopher "has eight or nine clubs," i.e., many leaflike signs. According to the *OED*, "club" means "the cards forming one of the four suits, distinguished by the conventional representation of a trefoil leaf in black"; the oldest appearance of the word in that meaning dates back to 1611. Representing tree, Bustopher is in the "clubs," or leaves, all day long. Furthermore, Bustopher is a symbol of "Spring," the season characterized by vegetation. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, "spring" is the "season of the year in which vegetation begins." The last foregrounded expression tells that Bustopher's "white spats" on his legs, these bodily sticks, announce the spring, just like the refreshed shining colors of standing trees.

The following fire poem introduces a watch cat, Skimbleshanks. He is a conductor of trains which cannot depart without his direction. The Cat's power of moving the trains concentrates in his eyes sparkling with

“flash(es).” The firing sunny eyes “supervise” everywhere in the train, emitting the piercing rays of perception: “He will watch you...and he sees what you are thinking.” The eye is related to the observing sunny eye of God featured in Victor Hugo’s poem “La Conscience.” Just like the indefatigable burning sun, the Cat is “always fresh and bright” even “in the watches of the night.” Another characteristic of his — being “nimble” — leads to “nimbus,” the word meaning a circle of divine light. The name “Skimbleshanks” may be viewed as an anagrammatic transformation of three combined Trinitarian words, “nimbus”-“sun”-“shark.” The last word “shark” represents a kind of fish, or “poisson” in French, the pseudonym of Christ.

In the next poem, “The Ad-dressing of Cats,” the protagonist is a cat without a given name. The speaker gives the reader some basics of how to approach cats, presenting an exemplary scene with an anonymous cat. This fundamental, thus earthly poem, features one of the simplest theses emphasized in capital letters: “A CAT’S A CAT.” The beginning word of the title, “Ad-dress” (ing), pinpoints a place on earth.

The last golden poem introduces “Cat Morgan,” a dubious doorkeeper of the publisher Faber. Though with the cockney accent, he is working at a glorious corner “in a Bloomsbury Square.” In the last three lines that insinuate a favor to be offered by a key person, Morgan indirectly asks the reader for money, or a “tip,” seeing that s/he is interested in getting into the prestigious publisher Faber’s office. “Faber” punningly leads to “favor,” the word seen in the second line of the second stanza of this poem. The key cat declares that he was once “a Pirate” supposedly with plenty of stolen gold. In the fourth wreckage section of *The Waste Land*, the image of “metal(-gold)” is foregrounded with the drowned pirate.

The above 15 poems as a unified *Book* successively emerge from the shifting five elements, the condensed image of which is conveyed by the allegorical cats, the protagonists of Eliot's fairy tales. Each poem is, however, permeated by the overall image of "water," according to which the shadowy cats move in unpredictable ways. Take, for example, the second sedentary cat, Jennyanydots, who mysteriously starts to hustle in the night. Also, there is the manlike earthly cat, Mr. Mistoffelees, who is an elusive magician. Masayuki Ikeda indicates the vaporizing expansion from the name "Mistoffelees"'s first four letters (74). The fiery battle of the Pekes and the Pollicle dogs did not occur owing to the overwhelming power of the quenching Rumpuscat. The phantomlike symbolic cats represent the revived victims of war.

The covering image of water evokes a picture of falling rain from the heavenly height on to the earthly battlefield. It should be noted that the 1939 *Book Cats*, consisting of 14 poems, begins with the watery poem "The Naming of Cats" and ends with the earth poem "The Ad-dressing of Cats," which corresponds to the vertical movement of water directed to the ground. The set of 14 poems thus leads the reader to completely elucidate why the *Book* begins with the last fifth element, "water." One of the tentative reasons is that the superimposition of antagonisms is part of Eliot's poetics continued from his early youth, as is indicated by Robert Crawford (1). According to "Little Gidding" (1942), "What we call the beginning is often the end."

The final element, "water," presupposes the antecedent elements, particularly the fourth remarkable "metal (-gold)" that comes just before. The shining element "metal (-gold)" can be thought to represent the creative author of the whole *Book*, because the author neighbors his *Book* beginning with water. Ironically, however, the

antecedent golden element is not textualized and thus invisible, just as the Morgan piece does not exist in the 14-poem *Book*. Hence, the 14-poem version virtually begins with the anticipated but invisible element “metal(-gold),” represented by the outside creator-writer; and it ends with the same “metal(-gold)” which simulates a gold vein hidden under the earth as well as the prestigious author. In that way, the *Book* describes a circular picture of five shifting elements. The 15-poem version also offers an image of circulation, beginning with the virtual element “metal(-gold)” and ending with the same element; the invisible “metal(-gold)” evoked before the first appearing “water” is actualized at the end, outshining any following element. Propitiously, the element to come after the ending golden poem is the invisible “water.” The element “metal(-gold)” is, in fact, cutting and conclusive; the reader’s vision stops at the golden element, saturated by the element’s shiny imagery. Whether it be 14 or 15, the *Book Cats* thus begins with the element “metal(-gold)” and ends with the same element. The setting evokes a cat’s paired golden eyes that blur up in the darkness, the well-known insignia of the musical. It should be noted that the insignia’s black pupils represent dancing human figures.¹⁴ This also means that the wonderful animal world is only within the creativity of the godlike golden author whose pseudonym is, subversively, “Possum,” a kind of rat, the enemy of cats.

The ironical subversion is represented by the ambiguity of the element “metal(-gold),” foregrounded by the *Book*. The last metallic commissioner cat, Morgan, is highly personified; he speaks with a cockney accent and signs as “Morgan” at the end of the text. He thus represents both “earth” and “metal(-gold),” as is suggested by the obscure but authoritative profession “commissionaire.” Another

finalizing poem, "The Ad-dressing of Cats," also pertains to both earth and gold, because the poem represents the golden rules of how to approach cats. The ending two poems are interchangeable, as is attested by the author himself's audiotape recording; the poems are both characterized by earth and gold. It should be noted that the *Book's* other golden cats, the Jellicle Cats and Macavity, are shadowed by blackness; the Jellicles appear only in the night, and the crowned king of crime, Macavity, is darkened by invisibility. The *Book's* golden protagonists are, in fact, earthly and thus "practical," as is indicated by the *Book's* meaningful general title, "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats." On the other hand, the first earth cat, "The Rum Tum Tugger," is "Curious," or rare, thus precious, just like the second earthly one, Mr. Mistoffelees, with the exceptional title, "Mr." In the subversive animal *Book*, the elements "metal(-gold)" and "earth" are significantly overlapped.

3. A human figure as the object of the *Book Cats*

Following the symbolist Mallarmé's desire to make a complete book, the *Book Cats* represents a cosmos as a circulative unity of the transforming five elements. The textual image of circulation is reinforced by the narration that begins with naming. By naming, the summoned objects — cats such as "Alonzo," "Electra," and "Coricopat" — appear in the first poem, entitled "The Naming of Cats." Nevertheless, the basis for naming is supposed to be the subsequent narration that describes a suite of named cats, because naming represents the result of identification and evaluation. As the *Book Cats'* first sentence confesses: "The Naming of Cats is a difficult matter." The title of each following poem, which corresponds to the naming of each protagonist, incorporates both the beginning and ending of the text in the same way

as the first generalizing poem. The elaborate unity is overdetermined by the *Book's* author-speaker "Old Possum"'s warm human voice, the source of the nursery fables *Cats*.¹⁵ "Possum" is T. S. Eliot's well-known nickname which was given by Ezra Pound.¹⁶ The Old Possum's voice is continuous throughout the *Book*, teaching the readers how to deal with the "proud" felines: the teaching begins with the naming in the first poem and ends with the addressing in the finalizing 14th poem. Transmitting the overall unity, the speaker's voice is received as the almighty vehicle of the poem. Furthermore, in the first poem, the naming by the human linguistic agent makes appear a poetic world including the named objects *Cats*. The prestigious speaker-author is, however, modestly presented with the animal name "Possum" in the *Book's* general title.

The *Book Cats* is an apparatus which enhances human value as hidden gold, through foregrounding its intermediateness; the humanity is appreciated by the *Book* just as it is, containing its potential. The protagonists, *Cats*, represent a camouflaged shadow of the focused human figure, which exemplifies an ironical modernist twisting: the shadow is frustrating, and pushes the reader to seek for real bodies of men/women. The temporal but satisfyingly-final image that the text evokes through the ostentatious twisting is that of the human figure as the deific generator of the poem. The recognition of a respectable humanity should be the most appealing, and is supposed to win the readership. Moreover, the fact that the heightened human status is immediately returned to a lower position by the personified felines makes the reader appreciate the gained human value all the more; the lower position simultaneously raises the reader's modesty, warning him or her not to be degraded to a simple animal in everyday life.

Encouragingly, the *Book's* subversive cats are full of potential, just like the human readers; the cats seem transformable into men/women. Furthermore, by balancing divinity and animality throughout its monistic wholeness, the *Book* imposes and thus privileges intermediate humanness; as a god, the human speaker opens the poetic world, but the blessed, extolled world is dominated by the smell of animals, including cats, dogs, and tigers. In addition, the original but obscure world-maker seems to be both outside and inside the circulative poetic cosmos, because the cosmos delivered by the voicing speaker is structured by the shifting five elements, the metamorphoses of which are supposed to involve the humanity and speaker himself. The unidentified position impresses, however, the human potential as endlessly growing. The poetic *Book Cats* is evocative, simulating a mirror of mimetic distortions; the halting climax of the *Book's* evoking process falls upon the moment when the reader reaches the image of the omnipotently-enhanced human speaker as the finalizing interpretant. At that moment, the aesthetic — thus merrymaking — *Book's* responsibility can be fulfilled. That euphoric moment dominated by the acquired, persuasive interpretant embodies the object of the poetic *Book*. The *Book* is essentially an educative work; the purpose of education is to teach how to behave as a human being. Finally from the *Book Cats*, a voluminous human figure comes forth, facing a world in war; the giant represents the amalgam of the author, personified cats, and the readers. The atavistic amalgam is merged into the prototypical pre-mother, Alice, the ancestral Wonderland's heroine; as an observer-actant in the Wonderland, Alice is an overall figure. The finally-evoked human image is feminine, reflecting the feline's inward nature, compared to the socialized canine. The male author's

preference is also camouflaged. Claude Pichois refers to the confusion of the cat and the woman often seen in literary works by, for example, Baudelaire and La Fontaine; according to Pichois, the archetypal confusion has a deep root in the unconsciousness (896). The female god is expected to save a world devastated by men. The god's salvation must be sweeping, as she is disguised as a cat; the unnoticed small animal is allowed to be present in every nook and corner, as a nursery rhyme's "pussy cat" reaching under the Queen's throne. It should be noted that in the *Book*, Queen Victoria is mentioned twice.

The successive poems of the *Book Cats* may be viewed as a suite of odes to various kinds of cats, though twisted and modernized. They are not traditional romantic odes. From another angle, odes are written for exhibiting a poet's skill, not simply for heightening the described objects. The ode enhances the author, this gifted human agent as the source of words. Generally, modernist poetry as a word, whose fundamental message is "Live a life" (Takeda 147-48), seeks to incorporate the ambiguous but idealized concept expressed by the word "human." The embodiment of the modern, shadowy concept "human" is through featuring the transgressive figures such as Mallarmé's Princess Hérodiade as an assassin and Eliot's cats under personification.

Using the animal names "possum" and "cats" in the general title, the subversive *Book Cats* is ironically conscious of classification. The author perhaps aimed at the reclassification of artistic genres, replacing the black-and-white, inconspicuous poetry genre at the center, following the ancient Greek tradition that poetry must symbolize all the creative activities.¹⁷ The *Book Cats* is, in fact, elementary in the sense that it is based on the Chinese five elements and that it is intended for

young readers. The primary *Book* may be aimed as a poetic totalization of art for liquidating the conventional division of artistic genres. The goal has yet to be achieved by the later monumental poem, *Four Quartets*, published in 1943. Rooted in primitive orality, poetry represents the most humanized form of art.

Moreover, with vulgar animals, the Eliot *Book's* ambitious totalization also transcends aesthetic transcendency. The author uses familiar language for the comprehension of all the readers, especially children. The *Book Cats* can be qualified as a readable, easy text, because, almost without any blocking jargons, complex sentence structures, or puzzling information, the syntagmatic continuity is peacefully guaranteed.¹⁸ What is presented in the *Book* is only the reader's familiar everyday world, which is scrambled a little by the mischievous cats. The *Book's* originality resides in the unexpected connection of the dust (Cats via the five elements) and the divinity (author), thus making a fusion for the intermediate humanness (reader), while the human-centered everyday world's logic is kept up. There is "enough whimsy and fantasy to charm children" (Grimes B6) in the miraculous cats that are personified, dressed, flying, or manipulative. Eliot's art of reversal makes the reader expect the successful reorganization of the real world in war, through the activating of the human potential, as is suggested by the exaggerated expression that foregrounds the human possibility: "he [Macavity, the Mystery Cat] breaks the law of gravity." The unexpectedness culminates with the discovery of the textual structure based on the Chinese five elements; the discovery is all the more surprising because, on the surface, the text is hostile to China, using the words "Chinks" and "huffery-snuffery Heathen Chinese."

Reflecting the author Eliot's philosophy, i.e., art must be for all in

everyday life,¹⁹ the *Book Cats* promotes the democratization of art and society. The modernist *Cats* aimed at the catharsis of the world under the crisis of World War II. For cleansing the earth in a disordered human system, the poetic *Book* has been dedicated to Muses, the artful deities, asking for heavenly water. The transcendental Muses are, however, transformable into the earthly felines, based on the shifting five elements.

4. The *Cats* as a promoter of reading

T. S. Eliot's overall reorganization using *Cats* can be traced back to a suite of Baudelairean poems on cats: two pieces equally entitled "Le Chat," and the third one "Les Chats." The Baudelaire poems, which feature the heavy symbols in life, are subversive even in his transgressive collection, *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857, 1861). Baudelaire's cat poems are excessively allegoric and fetishistic with the echoes from Edgar Poe's "The Black Cat"; they are too cumbersome to be a part of the collected poems.²⁰ Under Baudelaire's poetization, the fictional felines are outrageously and unreasonably mystified as "chat mystérieux, / Chat séraphique, / chat étrange" ("Le Chat," LI), without being consciously personified, given proper names; they remain the nonsensical other to the human readers. The cat poems threaten the poetry genre itself by the flooding visual imagery and the prosaic disproportion. The mimetic animal signs tend to expand into the anonymous outside of the poetic text. In "Les Chats," the cats are enlarged to become sphinxes, charged with the magic sparks of light ("étincelles magiques"). In "Le Chat (XXXIV)," the cat's eyes grow to be an ocean in which the speaker drowns himself. The mysterious cats evoke the aggressing profiles of a group of Baudelaire's anti-heroines

such as “La Muse malade” and “La Muse vénale”; they are modeled after the poet’s mistress, Jeanne Duval. As a woman of mixed blood, Jeanne is the symbol of exoticism.

Foregrounding a single word “chat (cat)” with self-sufficiently dense and thus distancing imagery, the Baudelairean poem series on cats emphasizes the evocative power of words, rather than the human agents as language users. Nevertheless, using the symbols in life, the cat poems aim at humanity as the object of criticism; the absurd poems make a satire for humanity in the tradition of European fables. In the same vein, Eliot’s symbolic *Book* foregrounds verbal expressiveness by the cats’ evocative names, repetitive puns, and accumulated intertexts including *Les Fleurs du mal* and *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. On the other hand, the Eliot text simultaneously molds the speaker’s figure in the expansion of his warm and accessible voice for children: the expansion as verbal expressiveness itself, which is nonetheless entirely human. The speaker’s extensive voice corresponds to the human linguistic agent’s intentional movement, which is seeking for addressees in life. The speaker makes efforts to draw their attention, by, for example, timely using the expressions “You may think” (the beginning of the first poem), “as I said” (the fifth, elementarily-ending golden poem), and “Please listen to me and don’t scoff” (the ninth poem, under the humanized title “Mr. Mistoffelees.”) Propitiously, the readable voice’s outer expressiveness gives the motivated reader the impression that s/he succeeds in catching at once its inner meaning “intermediately, i.e., warmly human”; for the reader, the expressiveness seems to be attached, or just equal to the favorable meaning, which naturally leads the reader to cherish the text – which is minutely humanized – in its entirety, i.e., to love the wholeness of the creation.

The result of reading equals love, which is a fundamentally human act. Basically, with joy, the reader is pushed to assimilate all the opaque expressions with their corresponding content, so that the source of enigma (i.e., the nontransparent expressions) will be zero. When the content is persuasively clarified, his or her successfully processed reading incites the reader to completely dissolve – and thus efface – the expression, as with the sufficiently-clarified, or dissolved content. This is, first, because the readers' joy culminates with the acquired sense of complete understanding; any difficult expression must become a transparent conveyor of meaning by thorough understanding. Second, because the expression and content are separable but easily confused; in that condition, the assimilation will be promoted by a growing sense of understanding. Third, because the signifier's aesthetic materiality can be neglected for the clarification of the signified – a clarification which is minimally required for recognizing the text's syntagmatic sequence; the syntagmatic recognition gives enough sense of success in reading, as reading represents a linear progression. Once the nontransparent expression is effaced by being entirely transferred to the content, the sense of thorough understanding will be born in the mind of the reader who seeks for the completion of reading. Understanding represents a joy, because it is the appropriation of the text, i.e., a form of love: Love as the absolute acceptance. Then, for the reader who thinks he or she understands the *Book* completely, the familiar and conscientious *Book Cats'* meaning multilaterally – or rather, simply – represents the laudable human; humanity is the most significant object of love, while love is the result of the *Book's* reading. The meaning is not divine, because the readable easy *Book* gives love and is simultaneously loved, i.e., possessed by the understanding and thus appropriating human

reader. The unstableness of the poems' number, 14 or 15, symbolizes human imperfection. The unstable number also represents a man/woman who resists God, as well as the sole destiny of domination by the understanding reader. At least, the strategic *Book* gives each reader an instance of euphoric illusion of victorious reading.

The *Book Cats* thus approaches and attracts the readers, while retaining the hidden, inveterate tendency to reject them by the art-centered escape from human language users. Much more than the content, the poetized form is mysteriously nuanced, especially in sonority. Take, for example, the Cats' complex names, occasional technical terms such as "legerdemain," and a phrase in "Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer" which declares "they were incurably given to rove." In the above phrase, which sounds aloof, the tongue-twisting consonantal suite of two fricatives and a liquid ([v], [ð], and [r]) convinces the readers of the author's sophisticated poetic skill, the analysis of which would not so much interest the targeted young readers. The young readers may take the sonority as the velvet feeling of the cats' hairy skin, but they would not trouble themselves in ascertaining in what resides the sonorous beauty. The text's formal, extra beauty can only be ignored; the beauty should be enjoyed, but does not need to be understood. The aesthetic enigma does not affect the reader's practical, syntagmatic understanding; the mysterious attractiveness just increases the reader's love of the text. It does not increase his or her anxiety of incomprehension. By the strategic *Book*, the reader is led to confuse the love of the human and that of art. Then, the *Book* reader's sense of complete understanding proves to be illusory. The *Book's* synchronical duality represented by the golden earth, i.e., art and human, produces an explosive force which drives the

subconsciously-frustrated reader to save the imaged human agent who is constantly made light of; the human agent who presents a realistic self-portrait of the average reader in his or her struggling of life. Basically, the feline odor that permeates the whole text causes the readers' subconscious dissatisfaction and nostalgia, pushing them to search for the human author, this original maker of the text as the source of driving voice.

As children's verse, the *Book Cats* is readable but fathomless; it incessantly invites the reader to catch hidden basic layers of branched information. On the surface level, the syntagmatic unity of the text is easy to grasp, which gives the reader a sense of understanding and love. The *Book Cats'* dissimulated, paradigmatic information is symbolized by various intertexts and allusive sonority; the *Book*, which is based on the Chinese elements, conceives in its upper layers an accumulation of ancestral works by the preceding European writers. The Chinese five elements may be viewed as a concretizing advancement of the Greek four elements. With the word "Old" in the general title, the *Book* embodies an intertextual node of precursory poetic texts, including Edward Lear's nonsensical prototypes, "The Tyger" and "London" by William Blake, Baudelaire's cat poems, the English traditional nursery rhymes, and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The *Book Cats'* first poem, "The Naming of Cats," quotes in the third line a popular phrase from the *Wonderland*, "as mad as a hatter." From the nursery rhymes, the expressions "Some for the gentlemen, some for the dames," "roly-poly," and "Blue Bonnets" are seen. The heaped intertexts evoke a picture of "Old Possum," who assiduously collects food for his offspring. The combination of the comprehensible textual surface and the hidden informative varieties

symbolizes the human mentality divided into the domain of consciousness and that of unconsciousness. The textual doubleness also represents the combination of love and its source of ambivalent mental energy transformable into hatred. The readable and endearing *Book* blinds the uninitiated reader to its text's ambivalent depth which is vastly exposed to a bottomless world; the reader can stay in love with the pet *Book*, dazzled by Eliot's art. For the sophisticated reader, however, the *Book* gives a clue to understand what love is and what ambivalent energy is; moreover, the questions lead the reader to consider the history and future of humanity.

In the Eliot *Book*, the apex of the dissimulated information is represented by the protagonist-Cats, expressed by the mystifying names. In general, the proper nouns are both relational and individually substantial; they simultaneously continue and cut the syntagmatic flow. The Cats represent the flowers of evil, a blooming of urban degeneration; the earth-colored animal, cat, embodies a breathing garbage or a pounding excrement. The devastated modern city, this "Waste Land," must be resurrected and humanized. The *Book Cats* is under the influence of the French symbolist poems beginning with Baudelaire through Laforgue. The symbolist poems are aesthetically attractive, while making the readers think, as is indicated by the Baudelairean oxymoronic title, "Les Fleurs du mal." In the form of liberated animals, the Eliot Cats embody a human potential that is under oppression, but should eventually be successful in purging its frustrated energy by using wisdom.

Furthermore, the animals represent the nodal point of modernist poetry and one of its subforms, Anglo-American Imagist Poetry inaugurated by Ezra Pound, the mentor of T. S. Eliot. As meaningful

symbols-words, the Cats represent animated intersections of time and space. From another angle, the ethos, besides supposedly the author's intention to revive the earth in the suffocated interwar session, delivers the Cats that symbolize the fullest human potential kept intact in the prenatal, Edenic state. The *Book Cats* represents a dramatic Genesis. The ancestral writers of the intertexts deepen the imagery of original water prevailing in the whole *Book*. In an ambitious but subtle way, the Eliot *Book* seeks to return to the origin of the lyric, the humanist incantation for love and salvation.

The *Book Cats*' system for salvation resembles that of Händel's *Messiah* (1742). In both works, a decodable message with positive meanings is conveyed by the softened and beautiful music; they are apparently easy works. The familiarizing works are required for the addressees in need without any time, competence, or courage to decipher the esoteric palimpsest. Once motivated, however, the reader of the easy but fathomless texts is invited to gain the hidden significance. Both works' addressees are close to those of the Bible. In the case of the *Book Cats*, the familiar animals snuggle close to the readers and console them; simulating the endeared pets, the small fictional cats charge the reader's burden, just like the victimized Savior, Christ. For readers who suffer from human conflicts, especially those who were distressed in the war period, the representational cure with the personified but faithful pets may be most welcome and effective; the victims are obsessed with the memory of the warm humanness that is shamefully supplied by their afflicting enemies. In that situation, a savior who will charge the companion's burden, while simultaneously evoking the human figure of the enemy must be the most endearing and controllable, thus an embraceable small agent. An agent for

salvation needs to present a miserable self-portrait of the victim; furthermore, an agent should also simulate an enemy to be positively overcome, if not to be pitied or loved, while at the same time remaining the savior. An agent must incorporate a multilateral love. The *Book Cats*, as well as the *Messiah* and Christianity, represent the most successful creations actualized in a Western cultural tradition that regards humanness with the tendency for artistic personification. Take, for example, the Parisian bridges on the Seine, of which the girders are formed as female gods erotically soaked in the water. In the *Book Cats*, Christ is represented by the Old Possum; "Old Possum" is a pseudonym of the author Eliot, symbolizing earthly gold. It is undeniable that the cathartic *Book Cats* simulates the Bible, because they are both "Book" and have "Deuteronomy." It should nonetheless be noted that the Eliot *Book* is based on an overall equality decided by the shifting five elements; following the egalitarian Chinese concept, the author as Christ is not privileged but is placed on the same level as the saving, thus really "practical," pets-cats. The *Book Cats* is more democratic and modernized than the old model, with the challenging subversion of the World War.

As if to deploy a battlefield on the white pages, the *Book's* rivaling cats compete in exhibiting their merits and potentials. The readers are invited to choose one of the cats for virtual domestication. The adoption needs estimation, which promotes differential reading. The whole *Book* represents a competitive show, simulating modernist commercialism. With the background of war, the cats lead to starving orphans on the alienating urban road. Moreover, the cats embody the fusion of Eliot's preceding poems' mysterious protagonists, such as Gerontion, Cousin Nancy, and Mr. Apollinax. Paradoxically, the Eliot

poems in high modernist mode have plenty of human figures. First and foremost, the positive/negative cats offer a mirror image of the reader beside the author Eliot, Baudelaire's successor, the second dandy born in America.²¹ The mirroring *Book* drives reading, stimulating the reader's narcissism. This is an enjoyable form of self-protection.

5. The musical adaptation

The symbolic *Book Cats* stirs the reader's imagination that will be charged with interpretants, through promoting reading in contextual width and depth. The "interpretants," conceived by the American semiotician-philosopher C. S. Peirce, correspond to the reader's mental images produced in his or her brain in the process of interpretation.²² The interpretants shaped by the *Book Cats* are all the more vivified and multiplied, because the translated images concern the felines in life that make a symbol of fecundity. On the other hand, the selection of a virtual pet from the described Cats animates the discussion and negotiation among the readers.

The textual potential for numerous contextual probings offers the basis for various adaptations. The musical *Cats* is an example of "intersemiotic translation" of the Eliot *Book*, following Roman Jakobson's classification in his 1958 article entitled "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation." Based on C. S. Peirce's semiotic theory, Jakobson divided linguistic translation into the following three categories: (1) intralingual translation, (2) interlingual translation, and (3) intersemiotic translation. According to Jakobson's definition, "intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems" (261). As an intersemiotic, thus spatially expansive translation which involves

various sign systems, the musical *Cats* reaches its climax by a scene of salvation with the heroine Cat Grizabella in a rising forklift (the New York production) or on an ascending tire to reach heavenly stairs (the London production). For the redaction of the *Book*, the author Eliot discarded a poem on Grizabella, the Glamour Cat (Webber). This elevated anti-heroine of the musical would disturb the horizontal equality among the protagonists kept in the written *Book* that simply juxtaposes the 14 or 15 poems; the texts are based on the circulation of the five peer-elements. It should be noted that Grizabella's salvation has a negative side in that the salvation represents her death expressed by an elevation to heaven; the musical should be classified as a tragicomedy. Nevertheless, the salvation scene by a rising apparatus visually marks a privilege given to an elite. For the audience, the first visual impression perhaps continually overweighs the inner meaning of the tragicomical musical. Moreover, the dualistic battle scene between good and evil, i.e., the Jellicle Cats and Macavity, is intended to add spatial theatricality to the musical; the battle for a Hegelian synthesis is unseen in Eliot's egalitarian text rendered in the black alphabet. In the Eliot *Book*, any battle is mentioned only once; furthermore, that battle between the Peke and Pollicle dogs is even avoided by the intervention of the Rumpuscat.

Representing a familiar animal, the sign "Cat" is a word transgressed by the signified real animal; the short word is evocative but self-effacing. Just like the productive real cat, the *Book Cats* is self-reproductive with puns, rhymes, and intertextual echoes. The verbal text blurs the distinction between the signifier and signified, or the sign and referent. This confusion of the fictional and real makes the *Book's* incantation for peace and catharsis appear all the more realizable.

The *Book's* tendency to annihilate limitations is followed by the musical that intends to overcome the distinction between the stage and floor; the actors/actresses playing the cats deploy their actions down on the floor between the rows of seats, communicating with the audience by using eye-contact, shaking hands, and dancing together. Some of the actors/actresses enter and exit through the floor. By their dynamic movements supported by wires, a forklift, or a rising tire, the playful hall is transformed into a miraculous, cathartic hallucination; the engaging theater reveals religious potential for salvation.

Achieving great popularity since 1981, the musical *Cats* may be qualified as one of the most successful postmodern entertainments, despite the previous misgivings by the professionals.²³ The play is, in fact, not catchy on the visual surface. The costumes are rough and colorless. No elegant dresses with flown skirts are worn, unlike the rival play, *The Phantom of the Opera*. There are only anti-heroes and anti-heroines that are not human, belying the audience's self-conscious expectations; the play represents a mirror reflecting the audience's real life, but the mirror is sadly distorted. The backdrop, consisting mainly of everyday garbage, is deplorable. Making a "concept musical,"²⁴ the major part of the script represents a juxtaposition of Eliot's poems which seems artless; the scenes are barely connected by the actor/actress's signaling pantomimes, nuanced voice, and the lighting variations involving electrical flashes. The overall storyline is, in fact, prepared and announced by a cat named Munkustrap; from among the self-advertizing candidates, Old Deuteronomy will choose one to be endowed with new life in heaven. Nevertheless, the self-introduction of the cats in candidacy, which is based on the Eliot *Book* and occupies almost the whole of the play, is far-fetched and does little to contribute

to victory in the contest. The spaciouly-deployed, energetic animal dance is sometimes too strong for the watchful audience sitting patiently in each chair. Typified by the unbalance of the unattractive costume color and actors/actresses' generative bodily movement, the frustrating play gives the impression that it is on the verge of breaking up and "falling apart" in the Yeatsian terminology.

Nevertheless, the melodies are touching and beautiful, the culmination of which is represented by "Memory," the "instant worldwide hit."²⁵ The interlude in the familiarizing C major draws the audience's attention to the nostalgic core of the animalistic wild play. The audience is thus provided with a clue to imaginatively reorganize, or fulfill the play that appears to be almost destructed; the concept musical promotes the audience's creative participation to save itself by foregrounding its incomplete aspect and blanks. The model of the reorganization is given by the Skimbleshanks part; for featuring the Railway Cat-conductor named Skimbleshanks, all the cats on the stage cooperate to put up a train, using pieces of garbage. This train-construction for the third-to-last cat in self-advertisement leads the audience to foresee the climax by the anti-heroine Grizabella's elevation. Foregrounding the aural (i.e., syntagm), not the visual (paradigm), the play based on Eliot's sequential poem gives an image of green mold; the play's outer actualization is minimal, but the potential of development is boundless. In other words, the strategic musical provides the audience with the fullest of illusion that seems to be just before actualization; the audience may be incited to the seemingly easy actualization through their imaginary construction. The maked-up cats have the glimpses of becoming emperors or queens in a spacious hall. That is perhaps why the musical has a large revisiting audience.

The audience's imaginary reorganization of the play begins with the sending back of the straying cats onto the stage; from the apparently unbalanced play, the cats as the heroes or heroines flood onto the audience's floor. Through an original reconstruction of the play in an aleatory, mosaic structure – this Shakespearean “moving grove” with poisonous attractiveness – the audience becomes a god. As a relaxing work of process which appeals to the natural, the musical features a creative human figure, i.e., the participating audience, rather than the protagonist-Cats. This reflects Eliot's concept of the modern author as a combination of creator and critic.²⁶

The play's popularity resides also in the tantalized sexuality that is typified by the rock'n'roller Cat “Rum Tum Tugger”'s harassing dance. The actresses' extending bodies that simulate the felines' natural movement may be qualified as a striptease. Nevertheless, the masquerading musical with the cats' comical make-up on the nudist players appeases the audience's repressed frustration. The fantastic play is essentially for children and, thus, the tantalized audience does not need to take it seriously. Through the animal masks, however, the musical attracts and stimulates the audience; spectators are restricted to enjoying the fictional orgy that will not subvert their everyday life in order, but gives hints of the reshaping of it. As with Eliot's original poem, the masked musical is fundamentally conservative; it is in the humanist tradition, awaking the audience's natural life force and directing it to a communicative and constructive actualization. By recreating the mirroring play, audience members regain self-assurance and vitality for new life; the effect of the musical is productively cathartic. The popular musical may be viewed as a postmodern symbol of “re(-)creation.”

6. From *Cats* to *Four Quartets*

The textual making by the egalitarian five elements becomes most complicated and sophisticated in *Four Quartets*, which is divided into 20 sections. What the *Book Cats* prepared for the monumental *Quartets* is no less than the regarding of ordinary everyday elements, which are symbolized by the degraded felines, as the essential material for establishing an ideal world. The *Quartets'* theme is to inculcate the idea of cosmic monism for realizing world peace with the background of World War II. The realization is, however, to be achieved only through everyone's conscientious efforts after the inculcation; the work's fundamental message for encouragement is thus to "live your own given life" (Takeda 129-40).

What also relates the *Book Cats* to the *Quartets* is the foregrounding of the four-beat measure. Each with four stresses, the *Book's* beginning phrases represent an incantation which evokes a picture of ritualistic implantation of seeds for their fullest development: "The Námíng of Cáts is a díffícult máttér, / It isn't just óne of your hólídáy gámes." The preponderance of the four-beat measure in the *Book* is determined by the succeeding verses that juxtapose four names in each: "Such as Peter, Augustus, Alonzo or James," "Such as Victor or Jonathan, George or Bill Bailey," and "Such as Plato, Admetus, Electra, Demeter." As for *Four Quartets*, the poem begins with the four-beat metaphysics: "Time présent and tíme pást / Are bóth perhaps présent in tíme fúture." The four-beat, which is the effective cadence for English traditional nursery rhymes, symbolizes the seasonal circulation, a familiar sign of the cosmic unity.

The *Book Cats* may be qualified as the completion of Anglo-American Imagist Poetry which began with Ezra Pound. An impressive

image for the centrality of a poem was advocated by Pound and definitively concretized by his “disciple,” Eliot; the latter poet gave the predecessor’s concept a sophisticated form, i.e., the personified but elemental animals, cats. In the tradition of Imagism, American modernism brought notable achievements of contemporary fables, including Eliot’s *Book Cats* and Marianne Moore’s animal series which was typified by “The Fish.” The innovated “eerie” form of fables assert themselves with a view to the world’s peaceful unison involving the animate and inanimate;²⁷ it is only through human language and creativity that the conscientious unison may be actualized. The elemental *Book Cats* foregrounds the primary task of poetic works; the *Book* makes the reader recognize the words’ power for effusing the human. Though being an ordinary tool of communication, the words can produce a pleasurable and encouraging world by means of the hand of the creative maker. The transformation of the cathartic *Book Cats* into the successful musical attests to this: creation for betterment is communication, and vice versa.

Notes

- 1 Manju Jaidka divides the *Old Possum* poems into four categories, following the protagonists’ characteristics: the rogues, the seniors, the squeamish, and the special breeds. According to that division, Jennyanydots is a senior, or, in Jaidka’s terms, one of the “cats who are well past their prime of life”; Growltiger is one of the “cats who are either rogues, ruffians or criminals” (37).
- 2 For the dates of publication and impression of all the versions till the 13th impression of the second edition in 1960, see page 6 of the 1953 edition *Book* by the 13th impression.

- 3 According to Caroline Behr (91), the *Book Cats* was published also by Harcourt, Brace and Company in the USA as the 1939 edition and the 1968 one with additions.
- 4 The tape was originally published by Faber & Faber, presumably in 1957, according to the indication ©1957.
- 5 I owe the bibliographical information to Behr 84.
- 6 The eighth poem's hero, Rumpuscat's name appears at the ending of the subtitle attached to the title that features the dogs' names, "Pekes" and "Pollicles." The two animal names would however be mistaken as cats' names by the reader who has reached this eighth poem of the *Book Cats*.
- 7 The qualification "longest running show in Broadway History" was seen on the board put up at the Winter Garden Theatre's entrance on 6 September 2000.
- 8 According to Dale (25), Eliot sent his then young cousin, Teddy Welch, an autographed copy of the *Book Cats*.
- 9 The anthology entitled *Poetry of the Thirties* only includes, however, the poems written by the "Thirties generation" poets who were born between 1904 and 1916. According to the editor Robin Skelton, "it does seem reasonable to regard the poets born between 1904 and 1916 as forming some kind of coherent 'poetic generation,'" because "The men of the 1904-16 generation were not only deprived of the easy Georgian days, but also pitch-forked into a period of intense social tension in which to do their growing up" (14, 15). T. S. Eliot's *Book Cats* is, in fact, a war poem. Eliot was, however, born in 1888 and he greatly influenced "the thirties men," as is pointed out by Skelton (27).
- 10 See my paper entitled "T. S. Eliot's Textual Drive: The Five Chinese

- Elements” to be published in *Studies in Language and Culture, Bulletin of the Faculty of Integrated Arts and Sciences, Hiroshima University*, 2001.
- 11 According to A. D. Moody (*Thomas Stearns Eliot 182*), “Burnt Norton” was composed in 1935, while the *Book Cats* was mostly written in 1934-36 and published in 1939.
- 12 See Jaidka 35-37 and Ackroyd 252.
- 13 On the London stage on 17 March 2001, Bustopher Jones handed his pin flower to Jennynyandots. That theatrical interpretation backs up my hypothesis relating the two cats as representing the element “tree.”
- 14 See the below copy, reproduced from the program distributed in the New London Theatre on 17 March 2001 (44).
- 15 The publisher classifies its *Book Cats* into “children’s verse.” See page 4 of *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*.
- 16 See Levy and Scherle 29 and Scofield 22.
- 17 According to Cuddon, the Greek word “poiesis,” meaning “poesie,” is from “poieîn” ‘to make’; “Thus poiesis denotes ‘making’ in general” (721). (S. V. “poesie”)
- 18 Burton Raffel states that Eliot’s cat poems “need no commentary” (146). According to Trevor Nunn, the poems are “immediately understandable” (Quoted in Grimes B6).
- 19 In his essay “The ‘Pensées’ of Pascal,” Eliot states that “even the most exalted mystic must return to the world, and use his reason to employ the results of his experience in daily life” (405). It is natural that Eliot’s “most exalted mystic” should include the divinely-inspired



artists.

- 20 According to Pichois (896), Baudelaire's cat poems were picked up and reproduced in the book entitled *Les Chats, extraits de pièces rares et curieuses* in 1866 during Baudelaire's lifetime.
- 21 T. S. Pearce admits that "there was a touch of the dandy" in Eliot, mentioning his impressive appearance with perfect dressing (18-19). Eliot's image shown by his photos is, in fact, appealing and attractive.
- 22 C. S. Peirce defines his "interpretant" as follows: "A sign . . . is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign . . ." (Quoted in Savan 15).
- 23 William Grimes states that "In the beginning, the smart money was not betting on 'Cats.' . . . No one could see the future for a musical based on cat poems by Eliot" (B6). According to Peter Marks, "many of whom [critics] had unkind words when the show opened at the Winter Garden on Oct 7, 1982. 'As it happens, 'Cats' does attempt a story,' Frank Rich wrote in The New York Times, 'and it also aspires to be the first British dance musical in the Broadway tradition. In neither effort does it succeed.'"
- 24 Yasushi Abe states that "the concept musical" means a musical without a comprehensive storyline, i.e., a mosaic musical (71).
- 25 The expression is seen on the package of the videotape by PolyGram Video reproducing the musical *Cats*.
- 26 In his article entitled "The Perfect Critic," Eliot states that "it is to be expected that the critic and the creative artist should frequently be the same person" (13).

- 27 The adjective “eerie” is applied to the narrative of the musical *Cats*, as well as to that of *A Chorus Line*, by Peter Marks.

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