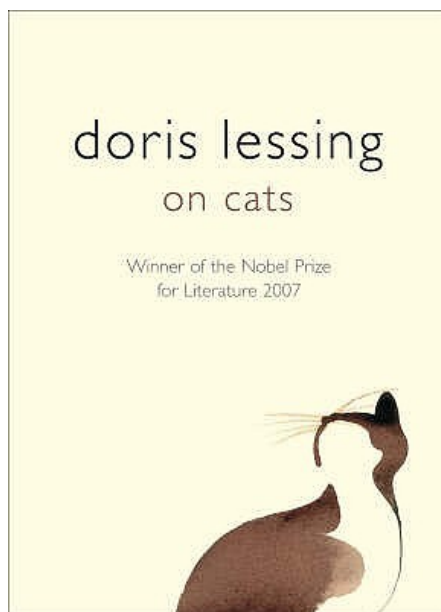




On Cats

Doris Lessing

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On Cats Doris Lessing

Doris Lessing's love affair with cats began at a young age, when she became intrigued with the semiferal creatures on the African farm where she grew up. Her fascination with the handsome, domesticated creatures that have shared her flats and her life in London remained undiminished, and grew into real love with the awkwardly lovable El Magnifico, the last cat to share her home.

On Cats is a celebrated classic, a memoir in which we meet the cats that have slunk and bullied and charmed their way into Doris Lessing's life. She tells their stories—their exploits, rivalries, terrors, affections, ancient gestures, and learned behaviors—with vivid simplicity. And she tells the story of herself in relation to cats: the way animals affect her and she them, and the communication that grows possible between them—a language of gesture and mood and desire as eloquent as the spoken word. No other writer conveys so truthfully the real interdependence of humans and cats or convinces us with such stunning recognition of the reasons why cats *really* matter.

Bringing together the celebrated stories, *Particularly Cats* and *Rufus the Survivor*, and the memoir *The Old Age of El Magnifico*, this book brilliantly evokes the subtleties of feline existence and convinces us of the reasons why cats really matter.

On Cats Details

Date : Published October 1st 2008 by Harper Perennial (first published 1967)

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From Reader Review On Cats for online ebook

Emine Akkūlah Do?an says

Prepare yourself for reading disturbing things like murdering kittens and cats. not what I expected!

Teresa Proença says

Em Abril de 2005, entrou na minha vida uma pequenina bola de pelo. Tinha dois meses e, em poucos dias, curou-me daquela doença a que os médicos chamam depressão e que, tal como noutros casos, não passava de desalento, tristeza, ou mero cansaço. Em Dezembro de 2013 partiu, curando-me pela segunda vez (não de uma "doença", como a anterior, mas de um grande desgosto), apesar de ficar com o coração partido pela sua perda (uma dor amortece outra). Durante o tempo que me dedicou ensinou-me a amar esses seres extraordinários que são os gatos. Tantas horas, de puro deleite, já vivi a brincar, a mimar, a observar gatos, gatas e gatinhos. Quanto carinho recebi dessas criaturas mágicas! (e também arranhadelas). Muitos desapareceram, morreram. Mas nunca os esquecerei.

A Pandora. Encontrada no meio do mato e tão meiga! Não a consegui salvar, apenas os seus dois filhos;

A Sissi. Uma gata de rua, bela como uma princesa;

A Maggie. Que morreu a lutar com cães para salvar os seus bebés;

E tantos mais...

Entretanto, fui contagiando alguns amigos e familiares com esta doença saudável que é amar gatos. Hoje tenho uma grande família felina: afilhados, sobrinhos, neto, irmão. E filhos, um "legal", outros adoptados. Há quase dois meses que alimento um que "caiu" na minha garagem. Só o vi três vezes. A minha filha diz que o gato já deve ter ido embora e que ando a alimentar uma ratazana. Eu tremo (é o bicho de que tenho mais asco) mas, na dúvida, não desisto.

[Nino (irmão); Gil (afilhado); Iury (neto); Tobias (filho); Hapi (o meu anjo querido)]

Esta é um bocadinho da minha vida gateira. Que tem alguma tristeza e muita muita alegria. Tal como a da Doris Lessing e dos seus **Gatos e mais gatos**.

(view spoiler)

dead letter office says

Doris ranks 4th from the bottom on my personal list of people I'd like to grab a beer with. But I guess that's

not the point. She may be as finicky and uptight as her writing makes her seem, but this book is strangely readable, and anyone who has written a book of cat biographies that ends up being pretty interesting has accomplished something.

Doris writes, "Knowing cats, a lifetime of cats, what is left is a sediment of sorrow quite different from that due to humans: compounded of pain for their helplessness, of guilt on behalf of us all."

That seems true to me, but I'm not sure what precisely it has to do with cats. The fact that cats live out their lives in fastforward, so that we have seen many cat lifetimes lived from kittenhood to old age and disappearance or death by the time we mature ourselves has, I think, a real impact on our psychology. People so attached to cats (or dogs, or whatever) will have experienced a lifetime worth of small loves and losses lost to those who never interacted with animals as individual living beings. But Doris's sediment of sorrow may not be unique to cats, it may just be the residue that accumulates from a life's worth of love. The fact that cats tend to come and go just means this sorrow piles up faster and deeper.

trina says

there exists within me, i am not ashamed to admit, a crazy cat lady who lives to talk about her cats in excessive and colorful detail, pretty much until my unsuspecting listener is fed up enough to stop me. this book is the vindication of my cat lady ways beyond any reasonable doubt.

i picked it up on a whim, in the mood for some light reading, and as we all know, nothing makes for good light reading like cute animal stories. little did i notice that this dinky little book was written by doris lessing, who is a nobel prize winner and therefore not likely to be competing with anna quindlen "good dog. stay"-style.

she uses the simplest language to describe the various personalities and shenanigans of the many cats she shared her life with: not the most intriguing premise. and yet. this has to be one of the most beautiful books i've ever read in my life. it's poignant and vivid and it wraps you up in kitty-love arms and before you know it you're tearing up and planning to take in every stray that comes your way. not everyone's a cat person, this much is true, but this little book is so much more than cats. it's the story of this remarkable woman's life told through the briefer life of her companions. it's a story about the ways we humans, who are part of nature of course but not so much involved with it anymore, commune with the wild, unknowable things of the world. and what's more wild and unknowable than a cat? for those of us fortunate enough to be cat-people, it's the squirmiest, guiltiest indulgence, because the only thing better than cuddling your own little furball or observing it at play is listening to someone else rhapsodize about the same.

Anna says

Last week, my family accidentally acquired a fifth cat. It happened like this: As my father prepared to back out of the garage on Wednesday, he was suddenly stopped by the appearance of a small, black-and-white creature—"There's a cat in here!" he cried. My mother moved forward to look: "It's a KITTEN!" Said kitten was amenable to being picked up and held, out of the way of the vehicle; when we offered her food (as ailurophiles do) she gobbled and gobbled, and then looked around for more. By that evening, we'd moved a spare cat bed onto the garage step, leaving the door open a few inches so she could slip in and out if she desired. She didn't, preferring to stay curled up in the dark green bed, out of the draft, convenient to the ever-

replenished food. When you opened the door from the house, she'd get out, stretch companionably, and sit purring on your lap for a few minutes before she decided it was time for another snack. Saturday night we abandoned all pretense that we weren't going to adopt her (though my mother dutifully called around to the neighbors, one of whom said a feral cat had a litter of kittens under their deck this summer, and that two of them were black and white), and she moved in. The vet says she's older than we thought—about eight months—and healthy but for ear mites. She is quite calm for a young cat, sleepy and snuggly, adapting quickly to the comforts of available nourishment, central heating, and plush furniture. We're thinking of naming her Cosette, after the tiny waif of "Les Miserables."

I tell this story because, all through her quick progression from stray to pampered pet, I kept thinking of "On Cats." "Doris Lessing talks about X," I'd say, or "This reminds me of when Doris Lessing's cat did Y." It's that kind of book, full of anecdotes every cat lover has experienced but can't express as precisely or beautifully as last year's Nobel Prize winner. Writing cats as characters, as individuals, is difficult to do without lapsing into sap or sentimentality. Colette did it, famously, in "La Chatte"; Lillian Jackson Braun does a pretty good job in her "Cat Who" mystery series. Lessing trumps them easily. In these pages we meet show-offy, elegant Grey Cat; maternal Black Cat; gadget-obsessed Charlie; Rufus the survivor; the beloved tom referred to in different moods as General Pinknose the Third, Bishop Butchkin, and El Magnifico. For a pet owner there are, of course, no happy endings—you will always outlive your furry companion—and Lessing treats the sadness seriously and tenderly. She returns, always, to the mystery of connection between species, how, without a common language, Human and Cat can still understand so much about each other, while leaving depths untouched.

"On Cats" is a little book, with a lovely cover illustrated by Aurore de la Morinerie. It would make a great gift for anyone whose love of cats rivals their love of literature. (But Sue Wettstaed already has a copy.) Also, name suggestions for the new kitten are welcome.

Deborah Pickstone says

A memoir of her relationship with certain cats and her observations of them. Funny how many female novelists were fond of cats! As you would expect, well written and interesting.

Bilgi says

Ad? üstünde, Doris Lessing'in kedilerine dair bir kitap. Güney Afrika'dan ba?lay?p Londra'ya, ?ngiltere'nin k?rsal?na uzanan hayat yolculu?unda Lessing'in dostu olmu? onlarca kediden baz?lar?n?n hikayeleri. Kitap kendi dönemi içinde (1940'lardan itibaren, 60'lara kadar olan dönem) de?erlendirildi?inde, kedilerin insanlarla olan ortak ya?am?na güzel bir pencere aç?yor. O dönemde Güney Afrika'da bir beyaz çiftli?inde, Londra'da, ?ngiltere k?rsal?nda kedilerle insanlarla nas?l ya?ard? görebiliyor okuyan. Doris Lessing'in baz? anlat?mlar? çok gaddarca bulunabilir. Örne?in babas?n?n yavru kedileri öldürmesi, daha sonra benzer bir?eyi kendisinin yeni yavrulara yapmak zorunda kalmas?n? anlatmas? çok iç ac?t?yor. Kedileri hem ölesiye sevip, hem nas?l böyle bir ?ey yapabildiklerine insan ?a??yor. Ancak san?r?m o çevrede, o dönem bu i?ler böyleydi. Bu kitab? bir "kedi bak?m el kitab?" olarak okumamak gerek. Bir yazar?n kedileri anlama, onlarla ya?ama deneyimleri olarak okumay? öneririm. Bu ?ekilde ben Lessing'den çok ?ey ö?rendim. Mesela, eve yeni gelen bir kedinin di?erlerine kat?lmas?ndaki süreçler, kediler aras? hiyerar?? kavgalar? çok güzel betimlenmi?. Kedileri anlamak isteyen tüm edebiyat severlere tavsiye ederim.

Dawn says

I had no idea what I was getting myself into here. Checked this short book out of the library digitally on a whim and the next thing I knew, I was hooked. And the next thing I knew after that I was lying on the floor crying for all the cats I've ever known, loved, or had eye contact with. And Lyra was concerned, but annoyed because I kept trying to pick her up and squeeze her (she hates that).

Yes - I tend to be sentimental about my cats - all cats. And also about dogs, pigs, giraffes - pretty much the entire animal kingdom. But this book touched my heart beyond the usual. It wasn't like internet cutesy cats. Or even cat behavior or cat science. Ms. Lessing explored not only her relationship with her cats, but their relationships with each other and the world.

And now I want to go adopt three more cats. But what I'll do instead is go read more Doris Lessing.

Adriana Scarpin says

Tremendo livro para os amantes de gatos, Lessing não procura subterfúgios para mostrar o âmago da convivência com gatos, na morte, na doença, nos pequenos atos desses felinos com que dividiu anos ou horas, ela desbrava um universo quente de que também me orgulho de fazer parte.

Serra Uysal says

“..Burnumuzun dibinde nas?l yorumlayaca??m?z? bilmedi?imiz bir sürü karma??k dil.

..Kedileri tan?y?p, hayat boyu kedilerle birlikte olunca geriye insanlara kar?? duyulandan çok farklı bir hüznün tortusu kal?yor: Onlar?n çaresizli?i kar??s?nda çekilen ac?, hepimiz ad?na duyulan suçluluktan olu?an bir tortu.”

Ezgi says

www.kitapezgisi.com

Kedilere dair bir kaç kitap okudum, ço?u sadece kedi severlerin ilgisini çekmek için yaz?lm?? lay lay lom kitaplardand?. Sadece Sevgi Ba?? isimli kitab? bay?larak okumu?tum.

Bu kadar çok hayal k?r?kl??? ya?am?? olsam da yine de dayanamad?m kedili bir kitab? daha kitapl???ma dahil ettim, korkarak okumaya ba?lad?m. Fakat ne güzeldir ki hayal k?r?kl???na u?ramad?m bu sefer.

Doris Lessing çocuklu?unda Afrika'da ya?am??, burada vah?i, evcil birçok kedi ile kar??la?m?? birisi. Sonras?nda ta??nm?? oldu?u Londra'da da ayn? ?ekilde mahallesinde çokça kedi var olmu?, hepsi ile ilgilenmi?, gerçek bir kedi sever. Onun hayat?na giren dostlar?na dair an?lar?n? okumak güzeldi. Kitap hem bir kedi sever olarak e?lenceli geçti benim için, hem de yaz?m, anlat?m olarak da sürükleyici idi. Malum kedi severlerin artm?? olmas?ndan dolayı? her kedi besleyen neredeyse art?k kitap yazmaya çal??makta, bir maddi kazanç kap?s? olarak görmekte, ya da “madem onlar an?lar?n? anlatm??, ben de dostlar?mla

an?lar?m? anlat?r?m” dü?üncesi ile kitap yazmakta. Ama kitap yazmanın kolay bir i? olmad???n? ve sadece an?lar?n?n olmas?n?n yetmedi?ini birçok hayal k?r?kl??? yaratan kitapta deneyimlemi? oldum.

??te bu kitap hem anlat?m olarak hem de kedisel sayfalar aç?s?ndan beni mutlu etti. Ama can s?k?c? k?s?mlar da yok de?ildi; ister istemez insanlar?n hayvanlar?n dünyas?na yapt?klar? müdahaleler, kedi nüfusunu kontrol alt?na almak aç?s?ndan içimizdeki canili?i ortaya ç?kartan anlar da var sayfalarda. ??te bu k?s?mlarda cinnet geçirdim, yazar? bulup “sen ne yapt???n? sand?n o anlarda?!” diye patlayas?m geldi. Fakat sonradan sayfalara yans?t?lan pi?manl?klar ve fazlas?yla yap?lan iyilikleri gördükçe biraz göz ard? edebildim yap?lanlar?.

Ne olursa olsun her ?eye ra?men bu dünyadaki en vah?i hayvanlar bizleriz. Çünkü di?erleri içgüdülerini ile vah?et sergilerken, bizler bilincimiz ve fark?ndal???m?z ile bütün vah?etimizi sergiliyoruz....

Dünyanın acilen bizden kurtulmas? laz?m...

Keyifli okumalar...

Rachel Smalter Hall says

I feel kind of weird giving one of those special five-star ratings to a book about, well, *cats* , but this was a pretty special book. Squeamish cat-lovers beware ~ Doris Lessing starts out by telling of her girlhood growing up on a farm in South Africa, shooting baby kittens with her father because they simply *couldn't* manage to keep them all. I actually love her for refusing to be sentimental. Yet somehow there is an acute tenderness in her writing about her cats, especially as she grows older, despite wry tales of guns & whiskey & too many kittens. Remarkably like her darker works on the terrors of motherhood, failures of communism, etc., Lessing really zeroes in on the personalities and nuances of her characters. It's just that, this time, they happen to be cats!

This was one of those especially good ones that I had to read really slow at the last chapter because I didn't want it to end.

I. says

Doris Lessing would be the one person on earth who would begin a book marketed to cat-lovers with a literal cat massacre. This event [and some other horrors, cats being mistaken for snakes and killed, kittens killed by eagles etc] sets the stage for Lessing's incredibly old-fashioned 'life is harsh, and to cats too' approach to pet ownership.

Stories about tom cats fighting over your cat are not charming. Spaying your cat is not a feminist issue. Don't characterize your spayed cat as a bitter, dried up, old spinster. Stop. 'Denuded of her sex.' You need to stop. [yes, I know Lessing died last year, RIP.]

Also if you're irresponsible enough to let your cat get pregnant then make sure the kittens go to owners who will keep them indoors and also spay them. You can't attribute the kittens meeting bad ends to life being harsh when you created the situation by being an irresponsible pet owner.

...I get preachy but owning an animal is serious bsns. Lessing obviously loves her cats, but she doesn't seem

to understand that eliminating risks in your cat's life is not only a good thing, but the only humane and responsible thing to do. Tbh she doesn't seem to get cats because shes busy personifying them. The personification tendency is a. weird to read, b. leads to dumb and pointless acts i.e. smacking her cat to show her disapproval of cat on cat bullying, c. results in Lessing letting one of her cats get pregnant [because she thinks spaying is 'cruel'] only to kill 4 of the 6 kittens of that litter immediately because 2 is a more manageable number

Cat says

So I'm going to bother typing a disclaimer that anyone who knows me already knows, which is: I am the target audience for this book.

That said, I absolutely adored this book. And it is not a cutesy, "awww, aren't kittens grand?" kind of book. Lessing is not a hugs and puppies kind of writer. There is an onslaught of gruesome cat death in this book, some of it carried out by Lessing herself. There is a kitty forelimb amputation; there are many scraggly and starving cats, ailing and scabbing and puss-oozing cats. Lessing is not writing (for the most part) cute pet stories.

In fact, one of the moving, melancholic dynamics of the book is the way that Lessing uses the vulnerability of cats to reflect on our own responsibilities to our fellow creatures and the inevitable fumbles and callousness of human beings. A poignant and profound line: "Knowing cats, a lifetime of cats, what is left is a sediment of sorrow quite different from that due to humans: compounded of pain of their helplessness, of guilt on behalf of us all."

Her cat descriptions of both behavior and appearance are beautifully precise, spare, and lyrical. She talks about the mysteries of cat cognition and habits, and also, like any cat owner, she parses the small gestures that she sees among her cats every day. If you have any interest in cats (and can handle the feline attrition and unsentimental detailing of cat suffering), you should read this gorgeous, touching, and brilliant book. I love Lessing's prose:

"What a luxury a cat is, the moments of shocking and startling pleasure in a day, the feel of the beast, the soft sleekness under your palm, the warmth when you wake on a cold night, the grace and charm even in a quite ordinary workaday puss. Cat walks across your room, and in that lonely stalk you see leopard or even panther, or it turns its head to acknowledge you and the yellow blaze of those eyes tells you what an exotic visitor you have here, in this household friend, the cat who purrs as you stroke, or rub his chin, or scratch his head."

Smand says

Kafam? kar??t?ran bir okuma oldu. Lessing'in hayvanseverli?i tart???lmaz belki -kedilere dair duygusal bir kitap yazacak kadar sevmi? en az?ndan- ama do?an yavrular?n bir k?sm?n? say?lar? çok diye bo?up öldürmeyi hayvanseverli?in neresine koymal? bilemiyorum. Kalan anlat?larda da kedilere dair iç ?s?tacak ?eyler de?il, bolca hüznü an? var.

"Kedileri tan?y?p hayat boyu kedilerle birlikte olunca geriye insanlara kar?? duyulandan çok farklı bir hüznün tortusu kal?yor: Onlar?n çaresizli?i kar??s?nda çekilen ac?, hepimiz ad?na duyulan suçluluktan olu?an bir tortu."

"Ah kedi; derdim, daha do?rusu tap?n?rd?m: Güzeeeeel kedi! Nefis kedi! Zarif kedi! ?pek kedi! Tüylü bayku? gibi yumu?ac?k kedi, kelebek patili kedi, süslü kedi, inan?lmaz kedi! Kedi, kedi, kedi, kedi."

Özgür says

Bu Lessing'den okudu?um ilk kitap oldu, sonuncusu olmayacak san?r?m.

Lessing ve kedilerini ?urada görebilirsiniz.

Tempo de Ler says

Comprei este livro com a ideia de que o seu alvo seriam pessoas que gostam particularmente de gatos e, no entanto, eu - que **adoro** gatos (*e nem me atreveria a dizer o contrário tendo neste preciso momento dois magníficos representantes da espécie aqui sentados em cima da secretária a olhar para mim...*) - não senti, em tempo algum, que este livro era «para mim». Acrescento até que houve partes do livro que detestei ler, como sempre acontece quando me deparo com relatos de crueldade contra animais.

Não senti que *Gatos e Mais Gatos* fizesse justiça a estas criaturas maravilhosas! Gostei da minúcia com que a escritora descreve a personalidade dos gatos que conheceu ao longo dos anos, divertindo-nos com a antropomorfização dos mesmos. A favor de Lessing está também a honestidade com que escreve e a qualidade da sua prosa, mas se quero ser igualmente honesta só posso dizer que fiquei ligeiramente desiludida com o livro.

Aidé Piña says

Los libritos de Lessing siempre nos plantean la empatía y comprensión hacia las necesidades del otro, aunque el otro camine en cuatro patas, esté peludo y sea soberbio.

Pedro Varanda says

Livro escrito com grande sensibilidade, mas sem pieguices sobre os muitos gatos e suas histórias, que povoaram a vida desta escritora desde a sua infância até à idade madura. Livro delicioso sobre a interação destes animais cheios de carácter e independência, com os humanos seus "servos". Recomendo.

Dion Yulianto says

"Menulis, penulis, tidak muncul dari rumah yang tak punya buku." (hlm. 236)

Buku 'Tentang Kucing' ini sedikit banyak mengingatkan saya pada Istanbulnya Pamuk. Jika Pamuk menggunakan kota sebagai refleksi memoarnya, maka Lessing menggunakan kucing. Lebih tepatnya, menggunakan kucing-kucingnya. Ada banyak sekali kucing di buku ini jadi mungkin kalau dibaca sekaligus bisa bikin bosan. Tapi, Lessing menghadirkan cerita tentang kucing-kucingnya dengan cara yang istimewa. Pecinta kucing bakal manggut-manggut membaca tuturannya, sementara bahkan bagi yang bukan penyuka kucing pun akan terpicat oleh teknik bercerita Lessing yang serasa akrab sekali.

"Juru kisah ada di kedalaman diri kita. Juru kisah selalu bersama kita," begitu kata Doris Lessing. Bagaimana kita mengeluarkan dan menyalurkan potensi sang juru cerita dalam diri inilah yang membedakan yang nulis dan yang nggak nulis. Lessing membuktikan, ketika si juru cerita dalam diri terbangkitkan, maka apa pun cerita yang kita tulis akan terasa istimewa. Buku ini buktinya. Siapa sangka, cerita tentang kucing peliharaan bisa diolah jadi seluar biasa ini. Di tangan seorang penulis yang piawai, yang biasa selalu bisa jadi tulisan yang istimewa.

Kucing dalam pandangan Lessing di buku ini sedikit banyak mengingatkan pada kisah-kisah manusia. Ada kucing yang anggun, pongah, dan sok istimewa seperti si Abu-abu. Ada juga kucing kelas dua yang tunduk pada kuasa kucing lain tapi tetap mempertahankan hak-hak istimewanya seperti si Hitam. Lalu, ada lagi kucing sisihan yang hanya mendapatkan apa yang tersisa dari kucing golongan pertama dan golongan kedua. Bukankah manusia juga demikian? Bukan berarti manusia itu sama kayak kucing loh, hanya saja Lessing mampu menghadirkan cerita kucing-kucingnya yang sekaligus mengingatkan kita bahwa manusia terkadang mendapatkan penggolongan yang serupa.

Ada tiga cerita tentang kucing di buku ini. Cerita pertama, Khusus Tentang Kucing, adalah yang paling panjang sekaligus paling menarik. Awalnya saya mikir bakalan bosan baca cerita beginian. Masak nyeritain kucing aja sampai 157 halaman! Di bab-bab awal kebosanan itu datang, tapi cakar-cakar si kucing dalam cerita perlahan menjerat perhatian saya lewat kisah-kisah mereka. Seperti kucing saja, kisah pertama ini seperti kucing yang menggoda kita dengan elusan ekornya, dengkurannya yang menenangkan, serta polh lincahnya yang bikin gemas. Tahu-tahu, kisah tentang si abu-abu dan si hitam berhasil menjerat saya untuk membaca sampai tuntas. Tidak disangka, cerita tentang kucing bisa begitu menarik begini. Di cerita pertama ini pula Lessing sedikit banyak berkisah tentang masa kecilnya hingga membentuknya menjadi penulis yang seperti sekarang.

Cerita kedua lebih pendek dan lebih berwarna, kucingnya juga beda. Mungkin bagian ini berasal dari masa-masa dewasa Lessing yang lebih kini. Tulisannya kembali membuat pembaca merenung tentang kucing, dan betapa kita bisa belajar lebih bijaksana dari kehidupan seekor eh dua ekor kucing. Bagaimana orang dewasa memperlakukan kucing juga berbeda-beda, ada yang baik dan penuh kasih sayang, ada juga yang merasa iba tapi 'mau-gimana-lagi-tapi-saya-tidak-bisa-menerimamu-meski-kamu-lucu'. Kisah tentang dua kucing yang bertahan hidup menjadi cerita terakhir buku ini, yang mengingatkan kita pada tulisan-tulisan dari Amerika Latin tentang manusia ketika ditulis dari sudut pandang yang unik. Kucing—seperti juga manusia—juga memiliki keinginan untuk bertahan, juga untuk menyerah.

Bonus dari buku ini adalah satu bab terakhir berisi Pidato Nobel Doris Lessing 2007. Dikisahkannya sebuah cerita dari pelosok Zimbabwe, sekelompok orang tengah menanti pembagian jatah air. Pemandangan biasa di pedalaman Afrika: wanita-wanita kurus kering menjinjing wadah air dar plastik, muka-muka berdebu dengan pandangan cekung, anak-anak kurus yang mengerumuni ibunya demi meminta seteguk air di tengah embusan debu gurun yang kering kerontang. Tetapi ada satu hal yang tidak biasa: salah satu wanita itu tengah membaca sehelai kertas yang tampaknya disobek dari sebuah buku. Perempuan itu sedang membaca Anna Karenina. Membaca sebuah cerita bahkan dari buku yang dia tidak pernah atau belum membaca keseluruhan cerita, ini membantunya bertahan melawan kerasnya kehidupan. Selebar tulisan ini juga yang membuatnya bertekad untuk menyediakan buku bagi anak-anaknya kelak, meskipun dirinya belum diberi kesempatan menikmati membaca buku. Wanita seperti inilah, dan juga mereka yang masih membicarakan buku serta pendidikan meskipun sudah tiga hari mereka belum makan, yang lebih pantas diganjar

penghargaan sekelas Nobel Sastra.

"Cerita-cerita kitalah yang akan menciptakan ulang diri kita, ketika kita compang-camping, terluka, atau bahkan hancur. Phoenix kita adalah sang juru kisah, sang pencipta mimpi, sang pencipta mitos, yang merepresentasikan diri kita yang terbaik dan yang paling kreatif." (hlm. 250)
