CHAPTER FIVE

The Dynamics of Becoming-Animal

From the woman to the animal

If Mrs. Mary Midnight, as Min Wild claims, was a ‘successful and flexible persona that proved a congenial and enjoyable companion in writing’ for Smart, and provided him with much delight in the liberation from weighty academic discourse, there was also a darker side to Smart’s abandonment of his University career—‘for there were pressures as well as pleasures that went into the assumption of this remarkable persona.’\(^{451}\) As a satirist Smart believed that the medium in which he was working was likely to spread contagion of the very ‘Dulness’ he attacked, and in the May 1751 issue of the *Student* Smart as Chimaericus was announcing: “‘I am determined to be as stupid as my contemporaries, in order to make myself POPULAR’ (2: 301).”\(^{452}\) It was around this time that Smart’s prosopopoeia began to assume the voices of dogs, first as Towzer, who objects to “the parliamentary proposal for a tax on dogs, and fears the consequence: that ‘three parts in four of our Species will be knock’d o’ the Head’,” and then as “the dog ‘Colebrook’, who from ‘lying under the Table where the Wits usually meet’, has also contracted the ‘Disorder’” of the

\(^{452}\) Min Wild, *Christopher Smart and Satire*, p. 110.
pervasive itch for scribbling and “has ‘become one of the most eminent Writers of the Age’”.\textsuperscript{453} The peroration of his essay begins thus:

MARTIAL makes \textit{fishes} sensible; and LUCRETIUS says that \textit{beasts}, both wild and tame, have different voices, to express their different passions. Why then should man so vainly appropriate every faculty of reason, and sublimer sensation solely to himself? If men understood the language of \textit{dogs}, their pride would receive a great mortification: and this I insist upon, that I am even superior to most of the insolent sons of divine similitude; because I can understand their language, while they are totally ignorant of mine. (\textit{Student}, 2: 220)\textsuperscript{454}

Adopting the vantage point of a dog was a standard \textit{topos} of Enlightenment satire, to declare the writer’s assumption of the role of Diogenes the Cynic, or dog-philosopher, as the cynics were known in antiquity. But in the lines above Smart speaks of empathizing with animals who cannot speak or understand the language of man. Smart’s obsession with the muteness of fishes has been noted by Moira Dearnley\textsuperscript{455}, and this passage also anticipates his love for the celebrated cat ‘Jeoffry’ in \textit{Jubilate Agno}. But Smart’s most important article written to protest the torture of animals – “\textit{A Letter from Mary Midnight to the ROYAL SOCIETY, containing some new and curious Improvements upon the CAT-ORGAN}” (1: 98–103) – appeared in the first issue of the \textit{Midwife}. Min Wild says:

\textsuperscript{453} Min Wild, \textit{Christopher Smart and Satire} (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Co, 2008), pp. 61, 110.
\textsuperscript{454} Christopher Smart, \textit{Student}, quoted in Min Wild, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{455} Moira Dearnley, \textit{The Poetry of Christopher Smart} (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968).
Mrs. Midnight writes to the ‘Persons of infinite Experience and Erudition’ at the Royal Society to inform them that she has perfected, after seven years study, some ‘Additions and Improvements’ to this ‘incomparably melodious’ instrument. She explains that whereas in an ordinary cat-organ, the animals are merely enclosed in boxes in a ‘plain Harpsichord’—their tails being squeezed to produce different notes as the organist strikes the keys—she has perfected some refinements. To play ‘Piano’ she uses the ‘Upper Row’ on the ordinary system, but her ‘Lower Row … on which I play Forte, or loudly, contains an harmonious Society of Grimalkins; whose Tails are severely prick’d by Brass-Pins, inserted at the End of the Key for that Purpose.’ At other times ‘Wren’s Quills’ tickle the cats’ throats to achieve ‘the most gurgling, warbling, quaking, trembling, murmuring Sound in the World’. Mechanized ‘Forceps or Pincers’ solve the problem of those cats who are ‘apt to continue their Mew after the proper Note [is] express’d’; they slam the cats’ ‘Noses and Chins’ shut to attain a crisp staccato (1: 100–101).

Ostensibly a ‘parody of projectors and their plans,’ this article has also been read by Lance Bertelsen as suggesting a ‘symbolic similarity’ of the situation of the cats and Smart’s own, referring to the poet’s sense of ‘entrapment in a system of literary production’, where ‘music’ must be produced under duress. But it is also a powerful argument for the prevention of cruelty to animals, offering close comparison to William Hogarth’s series of engravings, *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, made in 1750.

The main protagonist of this series is Tom Nero, who starts out in the care of the parish of St Giles-in-the-Fields, the same location represented in *Gin Lane*. While *Gin Lane* showed gin drinking (and its consequences) as an epidemic, here we see another, albeit related, social epidemic – that

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457 Min Wild, *Christopher Smart and Satire*, p.192
458 Lance Bertelsen cited in Min Wild, *Christopher Smart and Satire*, p.192
459 All 4 plates, with full description and explanation are available at http://www.darvillsrareprints.com/Hogarth%20Stages%20of%20Cruelty.htm
of wanton cruelty. In ‘Autobiographical Notes’ Hogarth tells us that the images ‘were done in the hopes of preventing in some degree that cruel treatment of poor Animals which makes the streets of London more disagreeable to the human mind, than any thing what ever, the very describing of which gives pain’. Indeed, the very first scene shows youths of the area already comfortable in their abuse of animals. As the series progresses, however, it becomes apparent that society as a whole is either indifferent to or encouraging violent behaviour.

The extended moral of the whole series, therefore, is that cruel children, if left unchecked by society, become cruel adults. Hogarth suggests that it is a natural progression from Nero’s abuse of animals to his life of crime, culminating in his vicious attack on another human being. Only then, belatedly, does the establishment intervene with an act of legalised violence, hanging. The final scene continues the theme to startling and ironic effect, when, after execution, Nero’s body is brutally and gratuitously dissected, watched by lawyers, surgeons, clerics and gentleman onlookers.  

Addressing the widest possible audience, composed mostly of members of the servant class, Hogarth tells a melodramatic, simplified story. Using only one main character and the single theme of cruelty, he repeats the theme both from plate to plate and several times within each engraving. Depicting progressively more cruel acts, he avoids either great complexity or subtlety. Deterministic in it movement, the confined, moralistic lesson of this literal exemplum represents an attempt to propagandize the working classes, especially in their attitude to private property.

Smart’s idea of the Cat organ may have been derived from a contemporary practice of torturing cats that Darnton mentions in his article “Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Severin”:

In Burgundy, the crowd incorporated cat torture into its rough music. While mocking a cuckold or some other victim, the youths passed around a cat, tearing its fur to make it howl. *Faire le chat*, they called it. The Germans called charivaris *Katzenmusik*, a term that may have been derived from the howls of tortured cats.15

Keith Thomas, in his book *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*, confirms that in Augustan England too many people regarded cats as fair game for any sport, even as cats were increasingly gaining status as pets among the intellectuals and educated middle classes.

During the Pope-burning processions of the reign of Charles II it was the practice to stuff the burning effigies with live cats so that their screams might add dramatic effect. At country fairs a popular sport was that of shooting at a cat suspended in a basket. As Alexander Pope remarked in 1713, “the conceit that a cat has nine lives has cost at least nine lives in ten of the whole race of them.”463

The difference in Smart’s use of the eighteenth century motif of animal torture and cruelty to animals is that the satirical thrust of his article is directed toward the scientists and prospectors of the educated classes, rather than into a common pedagogical drive for reforming the morals of the poor. Min Wild suggests that Smart’s satire goes beyond the sentimental didacticism of Hogarth’s intention464 because it draws a parallel between La Mettrie’s view of

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464 Hogarth wrote: "The four stages of cruelty were done in the hopes of preventing in some degree that cruel treatment of poor animals which makes the streets of London more disagreeable to the human mind, than anything what ever, the very describing of which gives pain. But it could not be done in too strong a manner, as the most stony hearts were meant to be affected by them ...."
man as a machine\textsuperscript{465} and Descartes’s presentation of animals as automata\textsuperscript{466}, to raise a philosophical question about ‘the ethical basis of such models: if animals are machines, to be taken apart like watches to see how they work, then what are the implications for humans, when the new philosophy tells us they are merely superior animals?’ Wild explains:

Mary Midnight has no mercy for people who think humans might be like machines, or for humans who behave as machines. It is a question of a new way of thinking, against which Smart determinedly sets his persona.

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... In the light of Mrs. M.’s overall, non-introspective concern with the mechanization of human behaviour in her society, might it not be that the enclosing organ represents the social order itself? Consider that all the cats must function through coercion, but that the ‘Lower Row’ of cats are forced through vicious means to perform their tasks. Others must be tickled and caressed into a sexualized, feminine-voiced selfregulation, and finally, those that ‘overreact their Part’ by not being willing to be silenced, must be muzzled with brutality. I think it probable that this is an allegorical representation of the midwife’s own society, with the lower classes being subject to harsher penalties in order to make them work harder, women—in this part and nowhere else the cats are referred to as ‘Puss’—being tempted to submission with sensual inducements, and lastly, dissent elements being forbidden to speak if they step beyond the required loyalty to the ‘present happy Establishment’.\textsuperscript{70}...

The stress that materialists of the La Mettrie school placed on their own benevolence—they ‘\textit{will not abuse any of their fellow-creatures}’—is again under fire here... Mrs. Midnight, taking advantage of the chance for an Addisonian sideswipe at the fashionable Italian opera, recommends

\textsuperscript{465} In the eighteenth century the “heretical onslaught on man’s supposed uniqueness was powerfully reinforced by the materialism of French thinkers like La Mettrie, who repudiated the ancient distinction between mind and matter, body and soul, on which the whole separation of man from nature had been founded.” Keith Thomas, p. 123

\textsuperscript{466} The difference between human beings and animals was magnified in the Cartesian theory which postulated that “animals were mere machines or automata, like clocks, capable of complex behavior, but wholly incapable of speech, reasoning, or, on some interpretations, even sensation. For Descartes, the human body was also an automation;...But the difference was that within the human machine there was a mind and therefore a separable soul, whereas brutes were automata without minds or souls. Only man combined both matter and intellect.” Keith Thomas, \textit{Man and the Natural World}, p. 33.
castration for the male cats in her musical torture-chamber, and thus reinforces the equation of cats and humans:

And here I cannot help informing you of an Experiment I lately made on an *Italian* Boar-Cat, and an *English* one …; and I solemnly protest that after the Operation, my Country Animal had every whit as delicate, piercing and comprehensive a Tone as the Foreigner.— And I make no sort of Doubt but some of our harmonious *Englishmen* would shine with an equal Lustre, if they had the same ADVANTAGES as the *Italians*.

Students of *Jubilate Agno* will have no difficulty in recognising the tone of—somewhat hysterical—patriotism and also the implicit affection for all animals distinguishing that poem.

Wild thinks that Smart’s use of animal characters and imagery in the *Midwife* is primarily his rhetorical stratagem for a more radical “denunciation of ‘all the mechanical and mathematical Powers’ that are characterized as the destroyers of the human in the human” than Mrs. Midnight might achieve in her own voice.

The *Midwife* and its animating female voice are creatures of rhetoric, and of traditions of learned wit which their creator adapted, with double-edged cunning and imaginative exuberance, in order to satirize a society in which he saw materialism, greed and ignorance as threatening to obliterate not only a hard-won tradition of learning and scholarship, but also the cardinal human qualities of judgement and benevolence.

But the representation of animals with their specific characteristics in *Jubilate Agno* is certainly not confined to this anthropocentric identification of humanist

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468 Min Wild, *Christopher Smart and Satire*, p. 195.
criticism\textsuperscript{469} that Min Wild discovers in Smart’s satirical writings. Alvin Kernan has suggested that it was only later, in his madness, that Smart “created for himself ‘an authorial role which was totally beyond his grasp in the actual world where he was only a hack and a joke.’\textsuperscript{71}”\textsuperscript{470} This new authorial strength, as I shall argue, comes from his experience of ‘Becoming-animal’ that Deleuze and Guattari come closest to theorizing as an anti-humanistic practice in time – minoritairian, pack-driven and anomalous – in their essay “1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible . . .”\textsuperscript{471}

Chris Mounsey observes that when Smart was moved from the state asylum to the private madhouse of Mr. Potter, he may have been better fed, but was certainly not spared the harsh ‘treatment’ meted out to ‘cure’ madness:

“For they work on me with their harping-irons, which is a barbarous instrument, because I am more unguarded than others” (B 124). … Karina Williamson notes that the “harping-iron” is a harpoon or a barbed hook and suggests that it was a tool for keeping open the mouths of recalcitrant patients so that medicine could be poured down their throats. Smart’s pathetic comment that he was more unguarded than others suggests the instrument of torture was used on patients who answered back. To a man known for his witty ripostes, the procedure must have been doubly painful.

\textsuperscript{469} Keith Thomas suggests that the polarity between the categories “man” and “animal” in humanist criticism was essentially anthropocentric, in that ‘every animal was supposed to serve some human purpose, if not practical, then moral or aesthetic’ and ‘the aim of such definitions has often been less to distinguish men from animals than to propound some ideal of human behavior” pp. 19, 31.

\textsuperscript{470} Alvin Kernan, cited in Min Wild, \textit{Christopher Smart and Satire}, p. 131.

...The most heart-rending account of Smart’s incarceration at Potter’s is an apparently unconnected pair of lines:

For the merciful man is merciful to his beast, and to the tree that gives him shelter. (B 13)
For I pray to be accepted as a dog without offence, which is best of all (B 155)

In his wish to place himself lower than other humans in the hierarchy of living creatures, Smart seems to hope that he might become as invisible as a dog under the eye of Mr. Potter, be patted on the head occasionally and fed regularly, but otherwise stay out of harm’s way. “Treatment” for his “madness” was a bestializing process and had taught him to hold his tongue and sit out his time as quietly as possible. As Hawes points out, it is as if Smart said, implicitly, “You say I’m an animal? Very well then – I’m an animal. Treat me as you would an animal.”

The animal’s subhuman status has traditionally symbolized a position of social marginality. ‘In each constructed world of nature…the contrast between man and not-man provides an analogy for the contrast between the member of the human society and the outsider.’

Keith Thomas shows that in early modern England aboriginals, children and women were regarded as closer to the state of animals than a civilized male European adult. Beggars, vagrants, inmates of the madhouse, colonized subjects and above all, the common people were repeatedly portrayed as animals. ‘The ethic of human domination removed animals from the sphere of human concern. But it also legitimized the ill treatment of those humans who were in a supposedly animal condition.’

472 Chris Mounsey, Christopher Smart: Clown of God, pp. 208-209.
474 Keith Thomas, Man and the Natural World, pp. 41-45.
475 Keith Thomas, Man and the Natural World, p. 44.
In the eighteenth century, the idea of man’s unique superiority rested on three pillars; the first was speech, the second was reason, and the third was religion. Animals lacked language, and thus could not transmit their experience to posterity; man progressed, but the powers and propensities of animals remained the same down the ages. Moreover, though man was ‘an animal endowed with a mind,’ as Bishop Cumberland put it, animals lacked the capacity for deliberation or speculative reason, and thus could not produce an intellectual culture. ‘Above all, man could choose, whereas animals were prisoners of their instinct, guided only by appetite and incapable of free will.’

This distinctive human capacity for free agency and moral responsibility led on to the third, and in the theologian’s view, most decisive difference. This was not reason, which was, after all, shared to some extent by inferior creatures, but religion. Unlike animals, man had a conscience and a religious instinct. He also had an immortal soul, whereas beasts perished and were incapable of an afterlife.476

Cartesians went further than Descartes in downgrading the animal in comparison with the human being. Whereas Descartes had denied souls to animals because they exhibited no behavior which could not be accounted for in terms of mere natural impulse, his supporters declared that animals had no sensation and did not feel pain. As Keith Thomas explains:

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...the cry of a beaten dog was no more evidence of the brute’s suffering than was the sound of an organ proof that the instrument felt pain when struck. Animal howls and writhings were merely external reflexes, unconnected with any inner sensation.477

Domestication, domination and exploitation of brute creatures were thus ratified in the eighteenth century with reference to the dumbness, insensitivity and irreligiosity of animals. But the ideal of human ascendancy also had implications for men’s relations with each other. ‘Some men were seen as useful beasts, to be curbed, domesticated and kept docile;’ those who could not be tamed, like outlaws, were branded as a pack of wolves from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century. From early modern England to the nineteenth century controversialists tried to dehumanize their opponents by comparing them with non human creatures, as when Milton compared his enemies to ‘owls and cuckoos, asses, apes and dogs,’ or when Marx called Malthus a ‘baboon.’ The status of an animal, even if momentarily acquired, was thus not a class position but the stigma of being non-human, and, as Keith Thomas observes, ‘The story of religious persecution in the early modern period makes it abundantly clear that for those who committed acts of bloody atrocity, the dehumanization of their victims by reclassifying them [and perhaps also themselves] was often a necessary mental preliminary.’ The lower classes were equally committed to the idea of human domination over beasts. Labourers owned domestic animals

477 Keith Thomas, Man and the Natural World, p. 33.
whom they could kick and curse when things went wrong\textsuperscript{478}, and cruelty to animals could still be a spectacle of mass enjoyment.

\begin{quote}
The animals and the workers
\end{quote}

Robert Darnton’s new historicist account of the great cat massacre in the context of eighteenth century working class culture is taken from the memoirs of Nicolas Contat, a former printing shop apprentice in 1730s Paris.

Contat recounts, with increasingly hilarity, a day when a group of printing apprentices took revenge on the pampered feline pets of their employer’s wife by beating her prized cat along dozens of alley cats senseless before stringing them up for execution after a mock trial. The men recounted and reenacted the episode for days, and Contat recorded it years later, still tingling with its hilarity… Darnton specifically addresses what modern day viewers would likely see as a vulgar and inhumane event—the beating, mock trial and execution of numerous alley cats—and decodes what exactly made the event memorable, and indeed hilarious, to a group of printing shop apprentices in Paris in that time period.\textsuperscript{479}

The nuances of Darnton’s essay are subtler than the central question of moral perplexity that he raises. In this article Darnton suggests that the cats were victims of a class antagonism between the bourgeois printing press owners and their young employees who felt that their rightful place in a traditional guild family was being usurped by the cats as domestic pets. Not only were they

\textsuperscript{478} Keith Thomas, \textit{Man and the Natural World}, pp. 47-50.
\textsuperscript{479} “The Great Cat Massacre (Part 1)” Blog Post on As Do the Shipwrecked, Monday, May 9, 2011 at http://asdotheshipwrecked.blogspot.in/2011/05/great-cat-massacre-part-i.html
constantly at the receiving end of insults and abuses from their master and older journeymen, but

They found the food especially galling. Instead of dining at the master's table, they had to eat scraps from his plate in the kitchen. Worse still, the cook secretly sold the leftovers and gave the boys cat food—old, rotten bits of meat that they could not stomach and so passed on to the cats, who refused it.

This last injustice brought Contat to the theme of cats. They occupied a special place in his narrative and in the household of the rue Saint-Severin. The master's wife adored them, especially la grise (the gray), her favorite. A passion for cats seemed to have swept through the printing trade, at least at the level of the masters, or bourgeois as the workers called them. One bourgeois kept twentyfive cats. He had their portraits painted and fed them on roast fowl. Meanwhile, the apprentices were trying to cope with a profusion of alley cats who also thrived in the printing district and made the boys' lives miserable. The cats howled all night on the roof over the apprentices' dingy bedroom, making it impossible to get a full night's sleep. As Jerome and Leveille had to stagger out of bed at four or five in the morning to open the gate for the earliest arrivals among the journeymen, they began the day in a state of exhaustion while the bourgeois slept late. The master did not even work with the men, just as he did not eat with them. He let the foreman run the shop and rarely appeared in it, except to vent his violent temper, usually at the expense of the apprentices.480

Darnton warns us ‘that we cannot observe the killing of the cats at firsthand’ and should not read the story ‘as a mirror image of what actually happened’ because Contat's narrative was written almost twenty years after the event. ‘It should be read as Contat's version of a happening, as his attempt to tell a

Nevertheless, the cultural and historical meanings that Darnton derives from this narrative are significant. First of all, it showed that the killing of the cats expressed a hatred for the bourgeois that had spread among all the workers: "The masters love cats; consequently [the workers] hate them." After masterminding the massacre, Leveille became the hero of the shop, because "all the workers are in league against the masters. It is enough to speak badly of them [the masters] to be esteemed by the whole assembly of typographers." 3

The symbolic import of the act was recalled in every retelling of the event and the fact that it was found hilarious by other workers and journeymen suggests that there was an unspoken solidarity among them against the “oligarchy of masters”. Secondly, the boys who killed the cats probably believed, like the narrator Contat, that a more egalitarian relationship between printers and their apprentices had existed in the past:

Contat himself believed that such a state had once existed. He began his description of Jerome's apprenticeship by invoking a golden age when printing was first invented and printers lived as free and equal members of a "republic," governed by its own laws and traditions in a spirit of fraternal "union and friendship." 12 He claimed that the republic still survived in the form of the chapelle or workers' association in each shop.

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483 Robert Darnton, “The Great Cat Massacre,” p. 82.
Thirdly, there was a coming-of-age ceremony around the killing of the cat that made the act a rite of initiation marking the passage from childhood to adulthood for Jerome, who wanted to gain respect in the eyes of the older men.

Not only did the men torment Jerome, mocking his ignorance, sending him on wild goose chases, making him the butt of practical jokes, and overwhelming him with nasty chores; they also refused to teach him anything. They did not want another journeyman in their over-flooded labor pool, so Jerome had to pick up the tricks of the trade by himself. A young man had to sweat his way through it so that he would have paid his dues—the printers demanded actual payments, called *bienvenues or quatre heures*, in addition to razzing the apprentices—when he reached full membership in a vocational group. Until he arrived at that point, he lived in a fluid or liminal state, trying out adult conventions by subjecting them to some hell-raising of his own.484

A riotous, festival atmosphere runs through the whole episode, which Contat described as a *fite*: "Leveille and his comrade Jerome preside over the *fite,*" he wrote, as if they were kings of a carnival and the cat bashing corresponded to the torturing of cats on Mardi Gras or the *fite* of Saint John the Baptist.485

Fourthly, Darnton hints that the event can be seen as a workers’ revolt that anticipated the mood of the revolution that was to erupt in 1789. Already the figure of the bourgeois was being associated with a hypocritical morality from which the workers differentiated their own ethos. ‘Hypocrisy turned out in the rest of the narrative to be the main characteristic of the bourgeois, a

484 Robert Darnton, “The Great Cat Massacre,” p. 88. Darnton associates this festivity with the feast of St. John that the printers celebrated. ‘Printers processed and feasted in honor of their patron, Saint John the Evangelist, both on his saint's day, December 27, and on the anniversary of his martyrdom, May 6, the festival of Saint Jean Porte Latine.’ Darnton, p. 85.
superstitious religious bigot. He occupied a separate world of pharasaical bourgeois morality.’ The trial of the cats, moreover, was a symbolic trial of the bourgeois in absentia, using a symbol that would let their meaning show through without being explicit enough to justify retaliation. They tried and hanged the cats. It would be going too far to hang la grise under the master's nose after being ordered to spare it; but they made the favorite pet of the house their first victim, and in doing so they knew they were attacking the house itself, in accordance with the traditions of cat lore. When the mistress accused them of killing la grise, they replied with mock deference that "nobody would be capable of such an outrage and that they have too much respect for that house." By executing the cats with such elaborate ceremony, they condemned the house and declared the bourgeois guilty—guilty of overworking and underfeeding his apprentices, guilty of living in luxury while his journeymen did all the work, guilty of withdrawing from the shop and swamping it with allowes instead of laboring and eating with the men, as masters were said to have done a generation or two earlier, or in the primitive "republic" that existed at the beginning of the printing industry. The guilt extended from the boss to the house to the whole system. Perhaps in trying, confessing, and hanging a collection of half-dead cats, the workers meant to ridicule the entire legal and social order.

Fifthly, to answer the question why cats, of all animals, should have been chosen as the objects of slaughter, Darnton points out that the cat traditionally had associations of occult power related to witchcraft and evil omens:

It should be said at the outset that there is an indefinable je ne sais quoi about cats, a mysterious something that has fascinated mankind since the time of the ancient Egyptians. One can sense a quasi-human intelligence behind a cat's eyes. One can mistake a cat's howl at night for a human scream, torn from some deep, visceral part of man's animal nature. Cats appealed to poets like Baudelaire and painters like Manet, who wanted to

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express the humanity in animals along with the animality of men—and especially of women.24

In this brilliant passage Darnton also insinuates the essential ‘humanity’ of the cat, which makes it as familiar as it is strange, as vulnerable as it is terrifying. Even though the massacre was triggered by jealousy and hatred of the changing position of cats as pampered pets, it could readily be justified in the context of a long standing cultural practice of persecuting cats. Interestingly, in this case, the massacre itself was carried out under the façade of sorcery. The occult power associated with cats was turned against their masters as a strategy of intimidation by the worker who killed their pets and derived much pleasure from pretending to be a sorcerer.

‘Finally, the power of cats was concentrated on the most intimate aspect of domestic life: sex.’ Cats were traditionally symbols of female sexuality and male cuckoldry; ‘(c)ats as symbols conjured up sex as well as violence, a combination perfectly suited for an attack on the mistress.’ Beginning with the theme of sorcery, and ending with the suggestion that the old printer was being cuckolded by his middle aged wife, Contat’s text carried all the associations with which the cat was symbolically invested. Darnton concludes:

The joke worked so well because the workers played so skillfully with a repertory of ceremonies and symbols. Cats suited their purposes perfectly. By smashing the spine of *la grise* they called the master's wife a witch and a slut, while at the same time making the master into a cuckold and a fool. It was metonymic insult, delivered by actions, not words, and it struck home because cats occupied a soft spot in the bourgeois way of life. Keeping pets was as alien to the workers as torturing animals was to the bourgeois. Trapped between incompatible sensitivities, the cats had the worst of both worlds.\(^{488}\)

The event as narrated by Contat also shows that the workers are less superstitious than their master, whom they see as a religious bigot full of superstition and hypocrisy, because he is gullible enough to believe that the constant caterwauling kept up by the boys is a sign of sorcery and orders the workers to dispose of the cats outside his home. The workers’ retaliation with the intention of making their master and his family suffer as they did was not only an act of disrespect towards the bourgeois and his wife, but also a display of irreverence toward religion. The anti-religious (and, perhaps, anti-Catholic, since ‘cat’ is a long-standing abbreviation for ‘Catholic’) irony hidden in this narrative can be traced in Contat’s adoption of the fictional name Jerome for what Darnton suggests was his own fictionalized self\(^{489}\), since St. Jerome is well known in popular culture for keeping a cat as a pet.\(^{490}\)

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\(^{488}\) Robert Darnton, “The Great Cat Massacre,” pp. 95, 98, 100.


\(^{490}\) Please see the reference St. Jerome in Chapter Two (p. 96) of this thesis.
**Smart and his cat Jeoffry**

In order to grasp the multifaceted nature of Smart’s cat symbolism in his wonderfully empirical and esoteric description of ‘my cat Jeoffry’ in *Jubilate Agno* (Fragment B) it is important to keep in mind all the associations of the cat as a symbolic animal that Darnton locates in the Great Cat Massacre. It is not impossible that Smart was aware of Contat’s narrative because he reverses the valuation of the cat in his celebrated lines on My Cat Jeoffry in *Jubilate Agno* from an Englishman’s perspective. Darnton’s reading of the event that is recorded to have happened in 1730 suggests that cats were becoming the centre of attention in ‘a dramatic "theater of violence"’\(^{491}\) (p. 100) in the eighteenth century. Indeed, the symbolic significance of the cat as an icon of revolutionary anarchism (the black cat) or of workers’ revolt (cf. the wildcat strike) may be traced back to the eighteenth century, even though all the anecdotes mention the killing of cats and not the use of cats to destroy enemies. But the most important observation that Darnton makes in his essay is that the cat derives its occult power in cultures because of its ‘ambiguous ontological position, a straddling of conceptual categories’\(^{492}\) – an idea that Smart seeks to communicate most

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forcefully in the extraordinary portrayal of the pet cat who is supposed to have been the only one to keep him company in his years of confinement.

In his attempt to vindicate the cat as a pet and heroise him, Smart shifts the central theme of the discourse on cats from caterwauling to catechism. Jeffrey is for Smart a symbol of devotion and friendship, committed to the unflagging service of God in the most mundane and trivial actions of his daily routine. As an implicit sermon on the ideals of Lutheran Protestantism as well as a respectful observation of animal behavior without any overt traces of anthropomorphism, My Cat Jeoffry remains a perennially popular poem to cat lovers and religious readers alike. Even though it provides the model for later cat poetry like T. S. Eliot’s *Old Possums Book of Cats*, Smart’s eulogy of Jeoffry is not to be read as a humorous or mildly satirical description of his antics, because the role of Jeoffry is both symbolic and philosophical in the context of *Jubilate Agno*. Moreover, it provides an unforgettable lesson in how to not humanize God’s other creatures, without subjecting them to the stigma of dehumanization. All these ideas are compressed in the image of the pet cat whom Smart immortalized as his companion in suffering.
As Arthur Sherbo notes, Jeffrey was Smart’s cat, ‘a real one, not the product of his distressed imagination.’ Nevertheless, as Meghan O’Rourke points out, the image of the domesticated cat in Jubilate Agno functions almost like a ‘tesseract’ – which means the ‘wrinkling’ of time and space, allowing two points to be connected like a fold in time ‘so singular that they seem to exist in multiple times at once, transporting us outside our own interiority, our era, our personal history. A past mind comes rising off the page with all the force of a vivid neighborhood character’s.’

In Jeoffry's unselfconscious behaviors, Smart discerns an ongoing testimony to God's power…The poem opens with the straightforward invocation, "For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry. / For he is the servant of the Living God, duly and daily serving him." But the list of examples considered are, as Smart might put it, "Exceeding strange." The result is a vision of deep spiritual gravity. There is something fascinating about a religious vision located, figuratively, in an animal mind – an animal whose interiority is utterly unavailable to us.

Thus Jeoffry is a cat who ‘exists’ at different levels. Chris Mounsey gives a detailed analysis of how the image of the cat is presented at an empirical level, and yet signifies a dimension of its existence in the divine.

We can see Smart’s begrudging adoption of Newton’s empiricism as he reintegrates it into his form of Christianity in the extended section on his cat, Jeoffry.

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494 Meghan O’Rourke, ‘On Christopher Smart’s “Jubilate Agno, Fragment B”’ at https://www.poetrysociety.org/psa/poetry/crossroads/old_school/Meghan_ORourke/
These lines derive from Smart’s empirical experience as they tell us of Jeoffry’s daily behavior. Empirically, Jeoffry wakes (B698), washes himself (B702–10), meets other cats (B714), catches mice (B715–16), and plays (B746–8). Smart also uses Jeoffry for experiments with electricity (B760), but these observations are punctuated by references to the divine. Thus Jeoffry wakes:

*For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way.*
(B697)

Jeoffry washes himself:
*For having done duty and received blessing he begins to consider himself.*
(B701)

Then Jeoffry goes out into the world:
For having consider’d God and himself he will consider his neighbour.
(B713)

The cat’s morning routine is given meaning by its complementary relationship with God:
*For he knows that God is his Saviour.*
(B737)

Simple empiricism is not enough, however, to complete the meaning of all Jeoffry’s actions. The inductions from observation need to be redeemed by spiritual deduction: the human and his cat are qualified by the divine. However, access to the divine language is not possible; thus the observations of Jeoffry are set against a series of satellite references to cats in classics and mythology from which to deduce his “catness”:

For he is of the tribe of Tiger.
*For the Cherub Cat is a term of the Angel Tiger.*
(B722–3)

*For he is hated by the hypocrite and miser.*
(B751)

*For he made a great figure in Egypt for his signal services.*
(B756)

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It has been observed that Jeoffry is a true companion because his actions mirror Smart’s own desire to live a life of ritualistic religious practice. In that sense he is ‘symbolic’ of Smart’s own self, as Bertelsen observes. But Smart also grants the cat powers of consideration in his own right: “For having consider’d God and himself he will consider his neighbor” (B 713).

Jeoffrey exists in a social milieu, among fellow cats (they enjoy his kisses), among prey species (he grants them a fighting chance), among men and women of different moral valencies (“he is hated by the hypocrite and miser” [B 751]). Moreover, Jeoffry offers himself pedagogically for other people’s edification: “he is instrument for the children to learn benevolence upon” (B 727).\textsuperscript{496}

The cat is thus a catechist and publicly exhibits his piety.

If every aspect of Jeoffry’s deportment signifies the ministry of God, then the cat is, in the root sense, a liturgist – for the Greeks, a “public servant.” Even the cat’s acts of elimination magnify God publicly, inasmuch as they are observable, amenable of public record, and without exception classifiable as perfect rites of piety.\textsuperscript{497}

Before embarking on the long eulogy to his cat Smart explains his techniques of Hebrew poetry, not only in using the alternate “Let” and “For” lines as the responsive principle of Hebrew verse, but of finding a significance and a symbolic meaning in every letter of the alphabet.

\textsuperscript{496} Eric Miller, “Taxonomy and Confession in Smart and Rousseau,” Christopher Smart and the Enlightenment, p.103. 
\textsuperscript{497} Eric Miller, “Taxonomy,” pp. 103-104.
For languages work into one another by their bearings.  
For the power of some animal is predominant in every language.  
For the power and spirit of a CAT is in the Greek.

The first line warns us about the universal proliferation and interconnection of words in different languages. The second line makes the point that every animal has a symbolic function in to perform in one language or the other, just as Jeoffry’s role is heavily related to language, or rather, Smart’s use of the language “in its creature-naming and creature-presenting function” (Hartman 438). He compares his own poetic use as having “the sound of a cat,” “the sleekness of a cat,” and “the purring of a cat” (Lines 627, 631, and 634 respectively).

While deferentially directing the reader to a universal Hebrew symbolism of language to be discovered in every unit of word, Smart also introduces a rhyzomatic proliferation of significations in his use of language, which captivates the attention of the reader and engages the reader in an endless meaning-making enterprise.

On the surface the work is an exercise of uncensored theatrical exuberance and “gratuitous splendor” (Hartman 437). Smart makes no attempt to hide this fact. He celebrates his poetic intent and zeal on such discourse in line 630, “For Clapperclaw is in the grappling of the words upon one / another in all modes of versification.” Clapperclaw is a double entendre within which Smart shows his hand. Being both “theater-slang for applause” and an archaic term “meaning to scratch and claw, to attack with tooth and nail,” he clearly lays out a mode in which to pull out an exegesis of his poetic attacks in the work (Hartman 441). Smart is the desperate aggressor in the poem. Having been taken out of society and remaining institutionalized, he has no other way of defending himself but through writing. The meditative use of language in the “Jeoffry passage is

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not just a remarkable paean to Smart’s comforting companion while confined – it is also a significant comment on the process of writing itself” (Ennis 2).  

Smart’s proceeds to found the adoration of his cat on the usefulness of the Greek proposition “Kat’ euchen,” (‘For the sound of a cat is in the most useful preposition κατ’ ευχην’ [B 627]) which Aristotle had used to imply the concept of the political ideal of a city, following the etymological meaning ‘according to prayer’ or ‘what we would pray for’ (euchesthai). The ‘most ideal’ constitution, for Aristotle, is one that would obtain ‘if there were no external obstacles.’ But Aristotle also insists that the ideal must be possible. ‘We should assume ideal conditions, but nothing that is impossible.’ Hence, Aristotle’s regulative ideal is not utopian in the literal sense (ou-topia means ‘no place’). Karina Williamson notes that another meaning of the term ‘Kat’ euchen’ is ‘according to vow.’ Smart thus sets out to represent his cat Jeoffry not only as the model of Puritan piety, but also as an embodiment of the political ideal of liberty that Protestant reformation and Revolution had upheld, with its concomitant vision of the city. Smart extols this political image of his Puritan cat in both spiritual and material terms:

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502 Karina Williamson, Jubilate Agno, n 627, p. 83.
For when his days work is done his business more properly begins. For he keeps the Lord’s watch in the night against the adversary. For he counteracts the powers of darkness by his electrical skin and glaring eyes. (B 717-719)\textsuperscript{503}

The lines above strongly suggest the sense of Greek Katascopos – an inspector, or a spy – who is able to disguise his motives and is patted for keeping his dangerous or destructive propensities in check.

For he has the subtlety and hissing of a serpent, which in goodness he suppresses. For he will not do destruction, if he is well fed, neither will he spit without provocation. For he purrs in thankfulness, when God tells him he is a good cat. (B 724-726)\textsuperscript{504}

In the lines introducing his cat Smart engages in a complex and learned word-play on the uses of the term ‘cat,’ first describing it as $\text{JACK UPON PRANCK}$, which Williamson glosses as ‘head over heels,’ as it is in performance of ‘peri’ (meaning ‘round’). The compound word ‘perikato’ is explained as ‘upside down’ by Williamson\textsuperscript{505}, which clearly has connotations of both radicalism and revolution, as suggested in the title of Christopher Hill’s book $\text{The World Turned Upside Down}$. Finally, Smart reminds us that the word $\text{CAT}$ (kat) in Greek derives from ‘kata’ meaning down or against, in the line

\textsuperscript{503} Christopher Smart, The Poetical Works Vol. I: Jubilate Agno, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{504} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{505} Karina Williamson, Jubilate Agno, n. 629-632, p. 83.
‘For the Greek is thrown from heaven and falls upon his feet’ (B 632)—suggesting a safe overthrow.

Rebecca Price Perkin, in her article “Christopher Smart’s Sacramental Cat,” urges us to look for an analogy between the cat Jeoffry and the Lamb of God, who is hailed in the title of the poem, as well as a substitution of the sacrificial symbolism of the lamb by a sacramental symbolism of the cat.

The very title of Smart’s poem makes a point in this connection: Rejoice in the Lamb. In this familiar phrase God is envisioned not as a metaphysical abstraction but as a symbolic animal, the sacrificial Lamb. Can there be a sense in which the cat Jeoffry acts in Smart’s poem as a surrogate for the “Lamb of God” – a sense in which Jeoffry is a sacramental cat?506

But it seems to me that Smart’s portrayal of the cat Jeoffry as the type of the exemplary Englishman is as admiring as it is critical:

For the English Cats are the best in Europe.
For he is the cleanest in his use of his fore-paws of any quadrupede.
For the dexterity of his defence is an instance of the love of God to him exceedingly.
For he is the quickest to his mark of any creature.
For he is tenacious of his point.
For he is a mixture of gravity and waggery.
For he knows that God is his Saviour.
(B 731-737)507

The irony of these lines becomes self-evident when one remembers that Smart was not famous for his cleanliness. Surely Smart is not longing to model himself on this type of the English gentleman? There is a curious mixture of loyalty and laughter also in the lines in which Smart’s depicts the cat’s habitual practice of measured, if not calculated benevolence:

For when he takes his prey he plays with it to give it a chance.  
For one mouse in seven escapes by his dallying. (B 715-716)

In the two following lines Smart establishes a connection between this qualified practice of charity exemplified by his cat with the now tamed spirit of Puritanism:

For the divine spirit comes about his body to sustain it in compleat cat.  
For his tongue is exceeding pure so that it has in purity what it wants in musick.  
For he is docile and can learn certain things.  (B 742-744)\(^{508}\)

The cat in its process of domestication has to undergo a necessary training in obedience, but Smart never intends it to completely replace or substitute the lamb with its ritual symbolism or any other animal for that matter. The section on the cat is interspersed with long passages on the significance of the bull and the mouse in national politics. And certainly the point at which the cat loses its occult mystery and becomes docile is when he is found to lack the spiritual

music that Smart opens his heart to. Like the age of horns, or even the rise of the little horn, the exemplary conduct of the cat falls short of the majesty of the divine melody.

While the section on ‘My Cat Jeoffry’ in fragment B does not intend to present the cat as a surrogate for the lamb, it is remarkable for its ability to retrieve a tortured animal from its subhuman status. Keith Thomas shows how the attitude of European intellectuals towards animals was undergoing a fundamental change in the eighteenth century, with naturalists beginning to look for the intrinsic qualities of a particular species of animals or plants to place it in their system of classification, instead of attributing anthropomorphic virtues and vices to them for distinguishing their moral traits comparable to the qualities of human ‘character.’ The emergence of the romantic outlook in the late eighteenth century makes it possible to show endless wonder at the ingenuity of animal instinct, immense curiosity towards animal nature in every form, a respect for all living beings and an almost complete lack of repugnance for toads, spiders and other creatures conventionally thought repulsive.

Moreover, the practice of keeping animals as domestic companions ‘encouraged the middle classes to form optimistic conclusions about animal intelligence’ and

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gave rise to numerous anecdotes about animal sagacity. The cat was certainly a beneficiary of this burgeoning atmosphere of adoration, and its traditional stigma as the witch’s familiar was on its way out. Philosophers were also drawing new conclusions about the capacity of animal intelligence.

In the mid eighteenth century David Hume conceded animals the power of ‘experimental reasoning,’ adding that if they were not guided by their reason in their ordinary actions, then ‘neither are children; neither are the generality of mankind in their ordinary actions and conclusions.’

In the seventeenth century Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, was the greatest defender of animal capacity. Rejecting all anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, she claimed that beasts ‘could experience the whole range of human passions and had their own type of reason and language, which was very probably as deep and expressive as anything available to humans.’

But the most radical idea that made its way in England in the eighteenth century was that ‘beasts had souls in the true sense’ and that any argument that disqualified animals from immortality might also be used to deny immortality to man. Even though this qualified belief in animal immortality was a novel idea in early modern Europe, the roots of the idea had long been ‘propagated by the

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513 Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 128
514 ‘In the 1770s the Calvinist divine Augustus Toplady declared that…he had never heard an argument against the immortality of animals which could not be equally urged against the immortality of man.’ Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 140.
theologians themselves, for the mortality of beasts was part of the curse with which Christ had come to do away.

In Chapter 8, verse 21, of his Epistle to the Romans St. Paul promised that ‘the creature itself also should be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God’. Medieval schoolmen had said that this meant only men, together with creatures without life, such as the heavens and the elements. Some early protestant writers, however, put forward the novel view, previously only held by a few isolated commentators, that by ‘creatures’ was meant all living animals, birds and plants; and in the century after the Reformation the text was subjected to a fascinating mixture of contradictory interpretation. Many said that the meaning of the passage was impossible to know. 515

**Being with animals and Becoming-Animal**

In *Jubilate Agno*, Smart’s apparent interest is in giving voice to every one of God’s creatures. As Clement Hawes observes:

In a very early line of the poem, Smart telescopes the Ark of the Covenant with Noah’s Ark, and implies thereby that this poem is to instate a new, all-inclusive covenant. Radically altering the covenant of coupling within species that the myth of Adam and Eve assumes and the myth of Noah validates once more, Smart instead pairs human beings with animals. It is a pairing that is based on, as Robert P. Fitzgerald points out, the “transcendental pair, God and the Lamb.” Two by two they are invoked to rejoice, and two by two they enter the all-inclusive covenant of the *Jubilate*.

What is extraordinary about this procession is that Smart does not respond to the double negation of animals and human madmen by the more obvious strategy of reasserting his humanity; rather he abandons, in effect, the core of Christian humanism: a supposed moral hierarchy – usually based on the supposedly unique possession of God-given souls –

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that insists on humanity’s unique status as lord of creation. It is thus not only that Smart includes animals within the world of moral concern, as elsewhere through his poetry. And it is not only that JA, like William Cowper’s snail poem, Robert Burns’s “To a Mouse”, and William Blake’s “Auguries of Innocence” shares a feature – “a curiously intense awareness of the animal world” – described by Northrop Frye as peculiar to Smart’s generation. It is rather, that Smart makes common cause with animals as fellow sufferers and celebrants.\(^5\)

Hawes calls this Smart’s dramatically ‘leveling’ discourse, in which Moses is paired with a lizard, ‘Cornelius with the Swine, Mary with the Carp, and Rehob with Caucaulis Bastard Parsley’. Popular hierarchical distinctions among creatures, like the preference for tame over wild, for handsome over ugly, for mammals over reptiles, amphibians and insects are not maintained. Smart randomly includes ‘low’ creatures like the Toad, the Rat, the Spider, the Beetle, the Weasel, the Moth, the Canker-Worm, and even the Gnat and extends the Pauline ‘soldier-of-faith’ topos in celebration of a militant defensiveness throughout the animal world.\(^6\)

The following verse-pair makes this link explicit, and may be considered one of the nodal centers of the poem:

Let Abiezer, the Anethothite, rejoice with Phrynos who is the scaled frog.
For I am like a frog in the brambles, but the Lord hath put his whole armour on me.

(Abiezer the Anethothite is an eminent captain in David’s army mentioned in I Chronicles 11:18; 27:12) The image of an embattled and vulnerable animal is transformed by its conflation with the militant

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Christian’s armour of faith; and, conversely, the Pauline *topos* is irrevocably altered by Smart’s extraordinary expansion of the Christian covenant.\(^{518}\)

One aspect of Smart’s attempt to imagine a new covenant embracing all creation is the sharing of a pervasive ignorance and a common silence with animals, as represented in the word ‘dumbness’. ‘Let Levi rejoice with the Pike – God be merciful to all dumb creatures in respect of pain.’ Moreover, Smart shows a marked fascination with zoological ‘defense mechanisms,’ rather than weapons of aggression.\(^{519}\)

The author of *Jubilate Agno* writes as a man acutely vulnerable to the slanderers, scorners, and accusers that constitute, as he fears, what remain of his social world. An accusing gaze and slandering voice – the Greek word *diabolos* means “the accuser” – both threaten the entire cosmos and animate its struggles. Smart praises and rejoices with a deep sense that he himself has been wounded by the stigma of “madness”. “For I am under the same accusation with my Saviour,” Smart writes – “for they said, he is besides himself.” Another verse-pair, punning on Bukki/book-y, answers accusations of folly with an implicit assertion of his own bookish cleverness:

Let Bukki rejoice with the Buzzard, who is clever, with the reputation of a silly fellow. 
For silly fellow! silly fellow! is against me and belongeth neither to me nor my family.

Extending his battle with the “Adversary” to cosmic dimensions, Smart thus views the entire creation as engaged in battle against the principle of slander.\(^{520}\)

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\(^{518}\) Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, p. 164.

\(^{519}\) Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, pp. 163, 164.

\(^{520}\) Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, pp. 164-165.
In a general sense, then, the process of ‘becoming animal’ by sharing with animals the common ground of their experience and existence that Smart enacts in *Jubilate Agno* can be seen as an ontic compulsion imposed upon him in the madhouse, following Foucault’s analysis of the eighteenth century bestial images of madness.

As Foucault demonstrates, the eighteenth century image of madness bore, and organized anew, many social and moral connotations, including unproductive idleness, libertinism and animality. Indeed the “animality” of madness in this period, according to Foucault, inherits the iconographic forms by which European culture has understood the relation of humankind to animals: the supposed animality of the insane thus joins, rather than the laws of nature, “les milles forms d’un Bestiare” [“the thousand forms of a bestiary”].

On closer reading, however, Smart’s deliberate anti-humanism seems to correspond more specifically to what Deleuze and Guattari have described as the mode of identity-deconstruction that they call ‘becoming animal,’ which is entwined with two other minoritarian modes of becoming, ‘becomings woman’ and ‘becomings child.’ As Gerald L. Bruns summarizes:

"becoming-animal" is a movement in which a subject no longer occupies a realm of stability but rather is folded into a nomadic mode of existence in which one is always an anomaly, that is, inaccessible to any form of definition. It is a movement from body to flesh, where the one is a figure of unity and strength, while the other is in an interminable state of disarticulation or disfigurement, as in many of Francis Bacon's paintings of faceless heads. It is not animal metamorphosis but an achievement of

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non-identity, which for Deleuze and Guattari is the condition of freedom (for animals as well as for the rest of us, whoever we are).\(^5\)

Without going into further details of theory, I would like to suggest some of the reasons why I think this line of correspondence worth pursuing. First because the Chapter in which Deleuze and Guattari discuss this process of becoming animal is entitled “1730 — Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible…,” which shows that they have in mind the eighteenth century, and perhaps also the narrative of the Great Cat Massacre as the take off point of their theorization. Secondly, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, the process of becoming animal is not conditioned by animal subjectivity. Becoming is always differentiated from being because it refers to a process of quasi identity formation for minoritarian groups which ‘are oppressed, prohibited, in revolt, or always on the fringe of recognized institutions.’ It is represented by two themes: ‘contagion through the animal as pack’ and ‘pact with the anomalous as exceptional being’ – the contradiction between which ‘is progressively fading.’\(^6\)

"Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes. Becoming can and should be qualified as becoming-animal even in the absence of a term that would be the animal become. The becoming-animal of the human being is real,

even if the animal the human being becomes is not; and the becoming-other of the animal is real, even if that something other it becomes is not. This is the point to clarify: that a becoming lacks a subject distinct from itself; but also that it has no term, since its term in turn exists only as taken up in another becoming of which it is the subject, and which coexists, forms a block, with the first.\textsuperscript{524}

The process of becoming-animal suggests a continuity of ideas in our perception of animals as well as a constant crossing of boundaries between the human and the non-human:

on the one hand, the relationships between animals are the object not only of science but also of dreams, symbolism, art and poetry, practice and practical use. And on the other hand, the relationships between animals are bound up with the relations between man and animal, man and woman, man and child, man and the elements, man and the physical and microphysical universe.\textsuperscript{525}

So, while the subject-in-process of ‘becoming-animal’ is neither animal nor human, it coexists or forms a block with another becoming. What is remarkable about Smart’s \textit{Jubilate Agno} is that this block is formed with neither ‘becoming woman,’ nor with ‘becoming child,’ but, if one may tentatively suggest this, with ‘becoming man’ even though such a category is absent in the system of Deleuze and Guattari.

\textsuperscript{524} Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “Chapter 10: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible…..,” p. 238.
In *Jubilate Agno* Fragment C the sprouting of a horn is represented as a process of becoming animal in a superhuman capacity that Smart unambiguously aligns with ‘becoming man’, or more specifically, with becoming ‘Englishmen’.

For I prophecy that all Englishmen will wear their beards again. For a beard is a good step to a horn. (C. 130-131)

The initiation into this process is through the cultural sign of masculinity. As discussed earlier, this is a process too complex to be described as either ‘acquisition’ or ‘abdication’ of power involved in the processes of gendering or ungendering. It appears to be expressed in a sexist language of misogyny which, however, does not exclude woman from the category of man. Moreover, there is also a gap between Smart’s previous use of the term ‘the English’ meaning a particular nation in the line ‘For I prophesy that the English will recover their horns the first (C. 128)’ and the use of the collective term ‘all Englishmen’ in line C 131, which seems to refer to a particular culture of masculinity in the context of the mediating line ‘For I prophesy that all the nations in the world will do the like in turn (C. 129).’

Another important point of correspondence between Deleuze and Guattari’s theory and Smart’s poetic practice is that they both refer to a belief of Spinozistic radicalism informing the eighteenth century concept of Nature.
What the pairing of man and animal in *Jubilate Agno* demonstrates about its adoration of God is expressed in Deleuze and Guattari’s section entitled “Memories of a Spinozist” as the idea that each individual is an infinite multiplicity, and the whole of Nature is a multiplicity of perfectly individuated multiplicities. The One is said with a single meaning of all the multiple. Being expresses in a single meaning all that differs. What we are talking about is not the unity of substance but the infinity of the modifications that are part of one another on this unique plane of life.526

Chris Mounsey demonstrates how Smart’s concept of satellite words expresses the multiplicity of individual existence for animals in *Jubilate Agno*:

In cases that refer to objects outside the body, meaning is given by a triangulation from three or more satellite words taken from other languages, for example: “For tiger is a word and his satellites are Griffin, p. 218 Storgis, Cat and others” (B403). “Tiger” is a fierce beast like a Griffin, it looks like a Cat and it expresses great love towards its kittens (storge). Smart concludes with a general statement that animals are central to the empirical basis of satellite words in the Adamic theory of naming: “For the power of some animal is predominant in every language” (B626). The play of the relationships between the appearance and behavior of animals is therefore the basis of all language, as in the Garden of Eden, though the garden has been extended to include new species. The systems of satellites are necessarily self-supporting, since each individual word in the set of satellites functions mutually with the others, to give meaning to other words without reference outside the total number of systems.527

But what Spinoza conceives of as an either/or relationship Smart describes as a pair. Also, while Deleuze and Guattari prefer wild animals to domesticated ones, Smart certainly offers a model of domestication that can also be a learning experience for man.

In “A Poetry of Absence” David B. Morris observes that:

Nature in the eighteenth century holds an inseparable connection with religion and with religious feeling, so that the desire for nature is often inseparable from a desire for God.\(^528\)

The central point of debate between eighteenth century theologians and atheists was whether or not God should be excluded from this system of Nature. Theologians gradually lost ground because they were not able to explain what appeared to be the existence of evil in the world or imperfections in nature to the satisfaction of all. Agnosticism appeared to be a safe middle ground until such knowledge was universally available. Another related question was whether the knowledge of God, or at least of divine principles, could be acquired from empirical knowledge of nature. What is important to note in this context, however, was that both questions about the nature of divine transcendence were framed within a discourse of knowledge, but as Morris’s comment suggests, the discourse of desire became more and more directed to

Nature as a metaphor for religion. Chris Mounsey thinks that Smart’s representation of nature in *Jubilate Agno* marked a complete shift away from Thomas Seaton’s view ‘that God’s creating Word may be recovered in human language, if only partially’ – an idea that Smart had attempted to incorporate in his Seatonian Prize poem “On the Eternity of the Supreme Being.”

He [Seaton] is hopeful that the truth underlying human words may be glimpsed from the empirical study of the world:

‘Tis a Mystery, we own, which for want of a more intimate knowledge of the Divine Nature than we are to be admitted to in this State, wherein we know but in part, we cannot thoroughly penetrate; yet it has nothing of the sound of Contradiction in it, according to those Notions which the Mind is at present furnished with, from the Observations it has made of Natural productions.’

Thus he rests on the idea that truth will become clearer as more and more empirical observations feed the computations of the rational mind.⁵²⁹

As Mounsey analyses Smart’s poem he shows that Smart is not quite as optimistic as Seaton about the empirical capacity of Reason for finding Divine truth:

Likewise, Smart begins with lines bemoaning the partial recovery of the meaning of human words, which fail in their attempt to reach the divine Word behind them…

Following Seaton’s suggestion, his poem names specific observations which come close, but ultimately fail, to show the Divine Truth…

Still keeping close to Seaton’s project, Smart calls on the “two prime Pillars of the Universe, Creation and Redemption” that is, God the father and God the Son, to guarantee the divine (the creating Word of God) behind the empirical world. Thus, when Smart ends his poem in terms of

⁵²⁹ Chris Mounsey, *Christopher Smart: Clown of God*, p. 89.
reason and faith, he is well within the orthodoxy of the version of Christianity professed by inheritors of the Cambridge Platonists…

In the Seatonian Prize poem Smart’s conclusion is that ‘(t)he empirical world and divine truth are connected, and the former can lead to an understanding of the latter.’\(^{530}\) In *Jubilate Agno*, however, Smart eschews the Anglican orthodoxy of Thomas Seaton altogether. ‘Smart’s view is contrary to that of Seaton, who argued that animals could not praise God since they lacked reason.’\(^{531}\)

Instead, Smart emphasizes the substitution of the breath of life for reason and language as the qualification necessary to praise God, by placing the idea at the beginning of the poem. Furthermore, the lines are followed by 109 examples of the way in which animals and insects praise God through their peculiar characteristics…

In a Christianization of the Old Testament parable, [of the bramble as a warning against the election of Abimelech as king of Shechem (Judg. 9)] Smart updates the bramble’s thorns for the hedgehog’s coat. Abimelech, who died in battle, once again showing his spiky personality, is abjured to follow the example of the hedgehog. For the hedgehog uses its thorns as a defense rather than in attack. In this way the animal thorn’s positive properties are extolled over the plant’s negative attributes. The hedgehog rolling into a ball to present only prickles to its adversary is argued to be the best way to overcome one’s enemies. Thus the hedgehog stands as a mute allegory of the value of passive resistance over active attack.

On a more personal level, we read further on in the poem “Let Mephibosheth with the Cricket praise the God of cheerfulness, hospitality and gratitude” (A 48). The line recalls Smart’s own experience of being a penniless poet. The cricket of Aesop’s fable starves in the winter after a summer of apparently useless singing. However, Smart points out that the work of the ant is not everything – people need songs, and those who provide them are also prized. Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, is “useless” as he is lame in both feet, but is nevertheless provided for by David, who

\(^{530}\) Chris Mounsey, *Christopher Smart: Clown of God*, pp. 89-90.

\(^{531}\) Chris Mounsey, *Christopher Smart: Clown of God*, p. 211.
allows him to eat at his table (2 Sam. 9). Here, the useless song and meaningless life of the cricket are brought into consciousness through its associations and shown to praise God. The creature lacks reason as humans perceive but still holds meaning.

The other lines are more or less obscure, but each holds an example as to how the non-conscious characteristics of animals praise God in a different way from sentient humans. The “tongue” of each animal is silent, but its peculiarity speaks to those who can understand it. The process of understanding is the project of the rest of the poem. In this sense, Smart is demonstrating that creation does abound in anthems, and Fragment A may be read as an extended farewell to Seatonian ideas. 532

In Jubilate Agno, unlike in “A Song to David”, Smart is also experimenting with an abandonment of meaning, in order to achieve a pure ecstasy of correspondence between expression and existence and hope for an instinctual reunion between God and Nature, Theology and Religion.

532 Chris Mounsey, Christopher Smart: Clown of God, pp. 212-213.