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What if Christopher Smart's Cat Responded? — A Human-Animal Studies Perspective on *Jubilate Agno's* "Cat Jeffry"

Men would be first and foremost those living creatures who have given themselves the word that enables them to speak of the animal with a single voice and to designate it as the single being that remains without a response, without a word with which to respond. (Derrida, "The Animal" 400)

This paper sets out to examine how an analysis of the Cat Jeffry section in the poem titled *Jubilate Agno* by the English poet Christopher Smart (1722-1771) can benefit from a Human-Animal Studies perspective. In particular, I will consider Cat Jeffry's pethood, his name, and his possibly reciprocal relationship with the poet. I will investigate traces of the cat's response to the poet's effusions, based on Jacques Derrida's reflections on the non-human gaze and human exposure thereto. I will also examine evidence of Smart the poet's "thinking hairy," as discussed by Dominique Lestel. I hope to determine whether or not Smart views his pet cat as what Coetzee has called "an embodied soul" or not.¹

Jubilate Agno was written, at the methodical pace of two lines a day, at St. Luke's Hospital for Lunatics, where Christopher Smart was incarcerated between 1757 and 1763. By the standards of his time, Smart was mentally disturbed: this diagnosis was pronounced on account of his religious mania, which consisted of bouts of public prayer, embarrassing to his Enlightened, rational contemporaries. The madhouse-composed *Jubilate*, Smart's "collection of notes for an apologia pro vita sua" (Greene 332), may have begun "as a genuine outpouring of poetical inspiration and ended as a device with little purpose beyond recording the passage of time, as mechanical as the notches on Crusoe's stick" (Bond 21). The latter may be true about many of the *Jubilate's* lines, but since its first publication in 1939 the "Cat Jeffry" section has been among the most frequently anthologized pieces of Smart's oeuvre because of its lyrical intensity and personal touch. It is striking that the mere seventy-three lines of the "Cat Jeffry" section are all that Smart ever penned to immortalize his non-human companion, given his asylum estrangement and overwhelming isolation. This scarcity stands in stark

contrast to the abundance of detail that serves to illustrate the joys and sorrows of Geoffrey's owner's own existence, as recorded both in his *Jubilate* and other lyrics.

Naturally, using the term "owner" is now problematic for HAS scholars. It connotes "ownership," i.e. possession of an object, a thing, which makes it hardly applicable to a relationship that necessarily combines "dominance ... with affection" — a prerequisite for pethood according to Tuan (2). At the turn of the twenty-first century and after, animals are no longer, on the whole, viewed as things. Their several functions include that of acting as non-human companions. Was that the case with Christopher Smart's eighteenth-century cat? Was Smart the owner, the guardian (DeMello 164; Weil 58), or perhaps the cat parent to his fur child Geoffrey?² Could we not as well ask whether Smart's cat was white, black, or orange? These questions cannot be answered with any certainty now, given that no written records survive 250 years after Smart's composition of his madhouse poem. Even Geoffrey's gender is somewhat vague. The cat may be a straightforward "he," but its idleness resonates with a feminine ideal of leisure, thus unsexing the animal to a certain extent. It was "ladies [who] were often viewed as leisure personified, as the ornamental companions of men's non-working hours.... Male conduct book authors point out that ladies were put on earth to make men's leisure more pleasant" (Jordan 114).³ On the other hand, this unsexing may be a symptom of the cat's being "an embodied soul," and not simply a physical, hairy feline body.

The "Cat Geoffrey" section of the *Jubilate* begins with the celebrated line: "For I will consider my Cat Geoffrey" (l. 697).⁴ Because the cat is referred to as "my Cat Geoffrey," an explicit inscription of ownership, we understand that the cat was either incarcerated together with the poet, a pre-asylum pet, or — more likely perhaps — that Geoffrey was befriended by Smart at the asylum. Whichever is the case, the first of pethood criteria, i.e. living in a human household, is met — if the definition of the household is stretched to incorporate the human's nearest surroundings, rather than signifying the human dwelling exclusively. The fact that the cat is "my Cat Geoffrey" is also telling in another sense: the animal is not associated with a hospital attendant or a fellow inmate, nor is it a stray. He is then an animal that the poet does not hesitate to call his own, suggesting the existence of a relationship and bond of some kind beyond that of the master and the slave. On the face of it, however, it would seem that Smart the poet leaves little doubt as to how, in general terms, he views his relationship to Geoffrey: line 751 tells us that Geoffrey "can jump from an eminence into his *master's* bosom" (my emphasis). Although it is the only verse in which Smart mentions where he stands in their relationship, this is by no means all that there is to it. Theirs is far from a clear-cut master-and-pet/slave relationship as discussed by Tuan. Let us now look at how the pethood of Smart's cat is

represented in the lines 697-770 of *Jubilate Agno* and how it sits in its contemporary cultural context.

Today, HAS scholars believe that several conditions must be met in order for an animal to be considered a pet, i.e. a non-human companion. As opposed to “meat” or, more generally speaking, “food” animals, pets⁵ are socially constructed in a way that underscores their relationship to humans (Irvine).⁶ They must live in human homes, although the term “home” may occasionally have to be extended from dwellings to backyards or, if necessary, farm buildings as well. One of the most important aspects of being a pet is that he/she must have a name. As DeMello puts it,

one cannot be a pet and not have a name. Naming an animal incorporates him or her into the human social world and allows us to use their name as a term of address and a term of reference. We can speak to them as we do to our family and friends, and we can speak about them as we do about others that are important to us. In both cases, naming allows for interaction and emotional attachment. In addition, by talking about our pets to other people, the animal’s history and personality become clear. (148-149)

In addition, “ideally, pets should ... enjoy a life of love and attention” (149). In consequence, expectedly, companion animals can hardly escape anthropomorphization, i.e. having human thoughts ascribed to them and being viewed as replacement human companions — substitutes for their humans’ absent or otherwise unavailable relatives or friends (154).⁷

Smart’s cat has a name, referenced in the opening line of the passage, and repeated three times in ll. 742-743, in connection with the cat’s rat bite and subsequent recovery. The latter fact elicits from the poet a heartfelt need to “bless the name of the Lord Jesus that Jeoffry is better” (l. 743). Interestingly, it is now uncertain how common it was for mid-eighteenth-century English pet cats to be given Christian names.⁸ It is said that Isaac Newton had a cat whose name was C.C. Dr. Johnson had a “very fine cat indeed” (Boswell 294) called Hodge,⁹ whom he fed oysters (Berglund). Horace Walpole had a male cat, Harold, and two female cats named Zara and Selima,¹⁰ the latter immortalized in Thomas Gray’s 1747 “Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat Drowned in a Tub of Goldfishes.” In her poem “Mistress Gurton’s Cat: A Domestic Tale” (undated), Mary Robinson depicted a female cat called Grimalkin. Joanna Baillie celebrated the generic

“Kitt,” offspring of “Pussy,” at play (“The Kitten,” 1790). William Cowper, too, used the generic “Puss” for his “Retired Cat” (composed 1791, published 1803).

In her 2008 study of eighteenth-century British elegies and epitaphs for companion animals, Ingrid H. Tague lists Rev. George Huddesford’s 1791 “Monody on the Death of Dick, an Academical Cat”¹¹ (293), and Anne Francis’s 1790 poem dedicated to “a cat of gentle, gen’rous mind,” called Bully¹² (295). Anonymous epitaphs for felines under the names of Tom and Belwet appeared in *Gentleman’s Magazine* (1769) and *London Magazine* (1775), respectively (Blaisdell 223-224). Tom and Dick are about all the cat Christian names that have come down to us; hence the question persists: Why call a cat “Jeffrey?” Perhaps, it would seem, to honor the memory of Geoffrey Chaucer.¹³ Smart was, after all, an ardent admirer of “Chaucer! who the English tongue design’d” (untitled poem, 1756), and he authored a whole sequence of “Chaucerian poems” (Rizzo). Whatever Smart’s reasons may have been, it is a fact that only one of the *Jubilate* “Jeffrey” verses shows the poet in the act of directly apostrophizing his feline companion: “Poor Jeffrey! poor Jeffrey! the rat has bit thy throat” (l. 742). Given this second-person utterance, there is no doubt that — at this point at least — Smart’s cat functions as a substitute for human companionship for the confined poet. Whether this relationship is of reciprocal nature, and whether both agents are equally important and exercise mutual respect (DeMello 157), is a different issue.

To date, the figure of Cat Jeffrey has been interpreted in ways corresponding to the overall design of the poem, i.e. Smart’s insistent praising of the Lord (Shell; Kenyon Jones; Miller; Ozarska, “Presentation”; Ozarska, *Meanderings*; Perkins), proof of Smart’s religious enthusiasm (Hawes), or a metaphorical representation of the poetic process (Ennis). In that respect, too, Jeffrey clearly falls victim to anthropomorphization, an inexorable consequence of anthropocentrism (Fudge, *Animal* 77). For the most part, Smart’s cat is figured as a model worshipper, because all his routine activities can be read metaphorically as inscriptions of an exemplary Christian’s fulfilment of his pious duties (Ozarska, *Meanderings*), although Jeffrey’s *Magnificat* (Hartman) is performed in a human-language-less manner. Still, this indisputably spiritual layer of meaning tells us little about the relationship between Cat Jeffrey and Smart. Even though Jeffrey neatly fits the criteria for the pet category, the word “pet” itself, in use since the sixteenth century (OED), is never used by Smart, whose focus is on praising the Creator rather than dwelling on his bond with Jeffrey.

Beyond the statement of who the master is, Smart is largely reticent about how he views his position in relation to that of his non-human companion. This is reflected in the

verse: “For ninthly he looks up for his instructions” (l. 713), which — included as is it in the passage devoted to Jeffry’s consideration of himself and not of God — may seemingly reinforce his position of dominated yet affectionate slavery. Jeffry is also “docile and can learn certain things” (l. 746), a likely reference to Smart the master’s teaching his pet some tricks.

The rat bite that Jeffry sustains clearly distresses the poet, but is that all that we can say about the poet’s feelings for his companion animal? Does Jeffry’s animal gaze puzzle his human into thought, as Derrida’s cat’s gaze does? Does Smart consider Jeffry’s affections, and vice versa? What does Jeffry see when he looks at Smart? There is no straightforward information on these issues and no trace of an attempt on the part of the poet to see the world through his cat’s eyes: Jeffry’s anthropomorphization is to be taken for granted, and not a word beyond that is uttered. But Cat Jeffry’s recognized position as “the servant of the Living God duly and daily serving Him” (l. 698) is in fact more than anthropomorphization: for me, this and other statements to this effect are proof of Jeffry’s Smartomorphization. It could hardly be clearer what Smart sees when he looks at Cat Jeffry, but the gaze never goes the other way round in any manner conspicuous to the reader.

Still, the gazes potentially or implicitly exchanged between Christopher Smart and Cat Jeffry are very interesting. On the face of it, it might seem that Smart the human dominates Cat Jeffry because his gaze is never visibly reciprocated and Jeffry is never presented in the act of gazing directly at the human. Why is Jeffry consistently shown as failing to reciprocate? Is the Smart-Jeffry relation different than that pondered by Jacques Derrida in his essay “The Animal that therefore I Am” (2002)? In that piece, the human, caught naked by his cat, exposed to the inevitability of a non-human gaze, becomes distressed at becoming the object of such fixed non-human attention — reduced to an embarrassed realization of post-Edenic nakedness. Yet a situation in which the domesticated non-human purposefully and consistently refuses to look at a human confined within the same closed space as itself is not very realistic. So why does Smart never mention his cat’s gaze? Why does he focus on his own gaze exclusively? Is it because he does not consider Jeffry an equal partner in gazing, or are there other reasons? Could they be human embarrassment or fear of exposure, after all? What naked truth is it that Smart is struggling to conceal that makes him refrain from referring to the cat’s gaze even once?

As it is unlikely that Jeffry deliberately and totally ignores his human, it can be assumed that the cat’s gaze must be utterly confusing to Smart, who fails even to

acknowledge its occurrence. The reader is led to believe that the cat's gaze never meets his master's eye: at least, this is what Jeffry's master's version communicates. In the process, however, the "master" seems confused and exposed. His nakedness is not physical but, one is tempted to believe, spiritual. Obsessed with praising God, Smart finds (and shows) himself admitting that a mere animal, whom he apparently considers sub-human most of the time, acquits itself of its godly tasks with more dedication and efficiency ("God tells him he's a good Cat," l. 728) than he does himself. This would explain why Smart consistently expresses his surprise and wonder at the worshipping capabilities of his cat, who makes the human feel unworthy and inadequate. If a language-less creature can "worship in his way" (l. 699), how much more is expected from a human worshipper, equipped with proper human language? Thus exposed, the poet's alleged spiritual barrenness is made explicit to himself, burdening him with a sense of inadequacy, as the quality of Smart's own devotions in comparison to those of his cat, clearly "an embodied soul," is silently meditated on. Just like Derrida who, after Montaigne, comes to understand human impudence in attributing the lack of certain faculties to animals ("The Animal" 375), Smart is led to realize that there exists very little difference between the two of them when it comes to their respective positions within God's creation and the resulting obligations to praise the Lord. Just as Derrida is led to believe that his pet animal is possessed of a capacity to respond, so may Smart — but the latter is unwilling to accept it, much less admit it. This aspect of the Jeffry-Smart relationship demonstrates how much harm was done by the pre-Enlightenment "thingifying attribution of linguistic incapacity to animals" (Shannon 14). It was René Descartes who expressed the opinion that animals were not capable of thinking, simply because no evidence of reasoning was to be found in their speech. If they could speak, Descartes assumed, they would doubtless have made themselves understood by humans as well as by their own species. In other words, "speaking only counts if it means speaking to us and in our language," as Laurie Shannon aptly concludes (15).

Now, what if the cat responded to Smart? Even if Smart hardly finds himself speaking to Jeffry, the cat is responding in its own language — the language of its body, its movements, and manoeuvres, as well as the sounds of its own non-human language, some of which are audible to the poet: "For he purrs in thankfulness" (l. 728). Interestingly, in his view, Smart has no problem understanding and interpreting his cat's language: he claims to know exactly when and with what intention the cat is giving praise to the Lord. Hence his puzzlement, which — intentionally or not — turns Jeffry into the recipient and object of Smart's admiring and respectful human gaze. Thus, facing a cat, a worshipper superior to himself, must be frustrating: after all, it boils down to being seen — and judged — "through the eyes of *the wholly other that they*

call the animal, for example a cat" (Derrida, "The Animal" 380; italics original). It is, as Derrida sees it, "the unveiling and the verdict" (381). Smart might then repeat with Derrida, who is quite explicit in expressing the human response thus generated, that "[r]ather than chasing it away, chasing the cat away, I am in a hurry, yes, in a hurry to have it appear otherwise" (379) — that is, "I, Smart, am in a hurry to try and cover my own spiritual nakedness" by means of an encomium of the cat's anthro-po/Smartomorphized activities.

In this view, it may be that in the case of Christopher Smart's Cat Jeffry it is the cat who — paradoxically — becomes the human's "master." It is the cat who sets the standard and the example for the human to follow, and not the other way round. If that much is accepted, we are facing a definitely pre-Cartesian perception of the animal on the part of the poet. More than that, Jeffry appears capable of reading his human's mind and offering him — with his mute (i.e. human-language-less) example — ideas for worship more perfect than Smart's own. Does this make Jeffry a classic case of Derridean "animot," one wonders, an indefinite being, separate from what constitutes the human and the non-human, and capitalizing on its indeterminate status?

In other words, is Cat Jeffry a representation or projection of the poet himself, or is the poet a representation or projection of the cat "animot"? Does Smart tell Cat Jeffry that "he's a good Cat," as he says God does (l. 728)? Does God tell Smart that he is a good man and worshipper? Does Jeffry tell Smart that he is a good human? If Jeffry "knows that God is his Saviour" (l. 739), is this Smart's devout attempt at bridging the gap between the two of them, or merely a result of Smart's meticulous daily observation and resulting fantasy? If Smart chooses to dwell on the cat's numerous virtues, among which ample space is devoted to a discussion of patience ("For he can set up with gravity which is patience upon approbation. / For he can fetch and carry, which is patience in employment. / For he can jump over a stick which is patience upon proof positive," ll. 747-749), may this not be viewed as Smart's wishful thinking about how he would like to be able to conduct himself under the circumstances of his denigrating confinement? Perhaps, at the lunatic asylum, the poet finds himself as idle as his cat, and thus partially emasculated — another mere "embodied soul" of Coetzee's, a human one this time.

Importantly, the cat's dubious status resulting from the species' long-standing association with evil powers (it should be remembered that, in line 770, Cat Jeffry "can creep" like a serpent, symbolic of its devilish connotations) is dispelled, not only by ascribing the pet with Smarto- and anthropomorphized religious devotions. The figure

of the Devil also serves to establish a connection between the physical qualities of Jeffry's fur and electricity, which is highlighted by the poet in a number of lines:

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

For he counteracts the Devil, who is death, by brisking about the life (ll. 721-722);

For by stroking of him I have found out electricity.

For I perceived God's light about him both wax and fire.

For the Electrical fire is the spiritual substance, which God sends from heaven to sustain the bodies both of man and beast (ll. 762-64).

This fascination with electricity, a common eighteenth-century attitude reflecting the age's excitement with emerging scientific discoveries, is not only coupled with the spiritual dimension, although this is the most obvious way to read it. It turns a statement of poetic ecstasy over the beauty of the bounty of God's creation, prevalent in *Jubilate Agno*, into a particularized take on the pre-Romantic unity between the supernatural and natural spheres. The focus is on the resulting perfection of one feline specimen: "For the divine spirit comes about his body to sustain it in complete cat" (l. 744), to sustain it as "an embodied soul," that is.

For all the above, Smart's attitude to his cat comes across as largely instrumental. Beyond doubt, the poet sees a link between pet keeping and poetic creation: "For he is good to think on, if a man would express himself neatly" (l. 757). This is what Smart needs his Cat Jeffry for: Jeffry's rhetorically inspiring presence is his unpaid occupation (Fudge, "Animal Lives" 23). But the pet cat is not simply a source of poetic inspiration; he is also "an instrument for the children to learn benevolence upon" (l. 729). "Every house is incomplete without him and a blessing is lacking in the spirit" (l. 730), the combination of the pronoun "him" with the overgeneralized "every house" suggesting (it would seem) a somewhat essentialized notion of "English Cats ... the best in Europe" (l. 733).

The above implies that, in his pethood, Smart's Cat Jeffry is at once typical and atypical. In England, the eighteenth century saw a rapidly growing popularity — and population — of domestic animals, mainly dogs and cats, kept for companionship and pleasure.¹⁴ In the early 1700s, keeping pet animals was generally condemned as an extravagant luxury, but with the increasing affluence of the British society as the

century progressed, it was gradually coming to be perceived as proof of an individual's "moral virtue" (Tague, "Animal Companions" 2). It should therefore come as no surprise that this evolving phenomenon was reflected in eighteenth-century poetry, with "an increasing emphasis on the individual animals themselves, not just on the universal virtues and morals they were believed to exemplify" (Tague, "Dead Pets" 290). Earlier didacticism was thus slowly giving way to affectionate and sentimentalized attitudes,¹⁵ which were only becoming possible due to new economic, consumerist, and domestic phenomena (Tague, "Animal Companions").

For felines, however, this newly emerging perception as recipients of care and affection was hardly the norm in Smart's day. The species was still burdened with the legacy of the Middle Ages, which had viewed them as demonic, not only because of their aloof and independent disposition, but also due to their mesmerizing eyes, whose retinas shone with reflected light, bringing to mind supernatural powers of darkness (Masson; Thomas). Low culture and folklore consistently linked cats with female sexuality, hence the view that cats are transgressive creatures threatening the male-instituted world order, or as living paraphernalia of witchcraft (Blaisdell 221; Kete 119; Irvine 7; Kalof 113). For the feline species, indeed, the pre-Enlightenment was a dark period in their "itstory": it was only with the coming of the Age of Reason that their "reduction to the status of 'it'" was gradually beginning to shift (Fudge, "What Was It Like").¹⁶ But, on the whole, in the mid-eighteenth-century companion cats were a luxury to be afforded only by the well-off because, in economic terms, they were unproductive — unless their rodent-catching skills were counted (Tague, "Dead Pets").¹⁷ In Smart's day, as before, many of Jeoffry's feline contemporaries did not fare well: "untold numbers of cats were tortured ... — tied up in bags, hung from May poles, suspended from ropes, burned at the stake, chased flaming through the streets and incinerated by the sackload" (Kalof 112; Thomas). It was not until Charles Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) that the neo-Platonic idea that humans were higher than animals finally began to shift. Consequently, an understanding that humans and non-humans alike were to be contained in "the same category: animals" at last began to take firmer hold (DeMello 41). This turn in the perception of animals had taken a couple of centuries, though. It was Descartes with his *Discourse on the Method* (1637) and his "beast-machine hypothesis" (Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning* 1) that came successfully to influence the European ways of looking at animals for a couple of centuries. Descartes "tied the pair [i.e. humans and animals] in a lasting knot of adverse definition" and "relapsed [them] to a categorical alterity at odds with the genealogical commons established in evolutionary theory" (Shannon 2). This was a marked contrast to the views that came before him: the Classical take on natural history and the Biblical

Genesis with its seven-day creation story, both in a sense anticipating Darwinism with their stress on the shared origins of humans and non-humans (2). In the eighteenth century, the rational-minded times in which Christopher Smart lived and composed his poetry, a popular view was the one expressed by Alexander Pope in his 1733-1734 *Essay on Man*, which attempted to situate humans somewhere between angels and beasts in the neo-Platonic Chain of Being. Little stress was placed on the inferiority of the “beasts”: the focus was rather on the difference between the human and the non-human. But Smart mentions neither Descartes nor Montaigne in his *Jubilate Agno*, while ready to name large numbers of scholars and philosophers of his day and of the past.

If Smart had chosen to analyze his relationship with Jeffry in greater detail, he would probably have found it difficult, if not impossible, to assume any other stance than that of a first-person gazer at his companion animal, reducing Jeffry to a mere third-person: “For I *ble*ss the name of the Lord Jesus that *Jeffry* is better” (l. 743, my emphasis). A modern French philosopher and ethologist (i.e. researcher in animal behavior), Dominique Lestel, has offered the idea that in order to comprehend a human’s relationship with a non-human animal, the human needs to “think hairy,”¹⁸ i.e., to adopt a second-person perspective, reflecting the emergence of both selves in a mutual relationship. This perspective, Lestel claims, enables going beyond the still valid popular perceptions of animality, i.e., zoological objectification and ethical sympathy (19). “I can only understand an animal when I think how the animal thinks about me as it becomes an extension of me through the opportunity of being its extension which it grants me. ‘Thinking hairy’ ... constitutes myself: this concept is central” (20). Thus conceived, being human and being non-human both become relational and unfixed. To understand a non-human animal and take it for what it is, all it takes is to adopt a “you” perspective, with the animal as a first-person subject viewed from one’s own first-person vantage point (20-21), preferably without “an ethologist’s intentness” like Smart’s (Miller 103). To qualify for “thinking hairy,” the human focus ought to be on non-human corporeality, and not “the world of eternal beings” (Lestel 33). Hence, if this view is adopted Cat Jeffry’s hairiness, and not alleged spirituality, should be in focus. “Thinking hairy,” Lestel concludes, “is the ability to think oneself not through one’s body, or even through the human body in general, but through ‘self-embodiment’ of the animal, opening up to the animal body” (33). From this, it is a short way to allowing oneself to believe that the “animal responded” (Derrida, “And Say”). Smart, it would seem, is just beginning to travel along this path, having experienced a fleeting second-person moment of the rat-bite anxiety in his personal relationship with Cat Jeffry.

Because Smart's cat is to the poet more than a pet or a slave to his master, his is a personal presence, which is why I propose to talk about Cat Jeffry's pet-personhood, and not simply pethood. Today, extending the notion of personhood beyond the *homo sapiens* no longer surprises (DeGrazia), and indeed seems well-fitted for the case at issue. Cat Jeffry's othering appears almost marginal as Smarto-anthropocentrism comes to the fore. The actual contact zone (to use Mary Louise Pratt's imperial terminology) between Smart the human and Jeffry the feline is enabled by a requisite measure of colonization (in this case, domestication), but it seems that this imbalanced power relation is of secondary importance here. We have seen Smart try to adopt a second-person lens to parallel the separate and almost equal identities of both selves in a mutual relationship, even if only occasionally. And yes, there is palpable evidence of Smart's "thinking hairy": he achieves an insight into the divine through the literal stroking of Cat Jeffry's hair, which resonates not only with Jeffry's alleged spirituality, but primarily with his tangible corporeality and fascinating likeness celebrated through the cat's downplayed otherness.

In conclusion, the above discussion has demonstrated that, to Smart, Jeffry is a combination of Coetzee's "embodied soul" (complete with a Christian name, personhood, and an almost human gaze, sufficient to embarrass a human theoretically placed above the animal in the Chain of Being and the hierarchy of God's creation) with Lestel's concept of hairy corporeality. The "Cat Jeffry" section of Smart's *Jubilate Agno* is not a polyphonic dialogue between representatives of two dissimilar species, even though this may be suggested by a superficial reading. In fact, the cat's gaze serves to reflect the human's own inadequacy, temporarily shifting the pet animal status from that of the slave to that of the master. This fact, embarrassing to the poet, is not easily disclosed — it is a naked truth that struggles to come through the poet's quill, one that finally makes it into the outside world. Jeffry is thus the Other proper no longer: his eyes are not only seen, but also seeing. And that is precisely one of the cat's ways to respond: between his body language and feline sounds, his is both a hairy and an embodied soul.

Notes

1. In *The Lives of Animals* (1999), J. M. Coetzee has his character Elizabeth Costello say the following in a lecture:

To be alive is to be a living soul. An animal — and we are all animals — is an embodied soul. This is precisely what Descartes saw and, for his own

reasons, chose to deny. An animal lives, said Descartes, as a machine lives. An animal is no more than the mechanism that constitutes it; if it has a soul, it has one in the same way that a machine has a battery, to give it the spark that gets it going; but the animal is not an embodied soul. (Coetzee 33)

2. Referring to cat/dog owners/guardians as cat/dog parents/moms/dads, and to pet cats/dogs as fur children, is today's common idiom used on pet keepers' websites, such as catster.com or dogster.com. I thank Sirpa Leppänen for bringing these aspects of contemporary life-writing activity to my attention in her presentation on *Dog Blogs as Ventriloquy: What Dogs Tell about Women's Domestic Identity Projects* at the International Auto/Biography Association's 2011 European Conference in Tallinn, Estonia.

3. The parallel between later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pets and ladies of leisure is indeed conspicuous: both were to be prettily useless and extravagantly ornamental, fulfilling the role of status symbols (Tague, "Dead Pets"; Jordan).

4. All quotations from *Jubilate Agno* come from Bond's edition of *Jubilate Agno*, and will be denoted by line number(s) only.

5. Not all cases are as unambiguous as those of the dog or the cat: the rabbit is a rather problematic case in point (DeMello 10, 44-46; Fudge, *Animal* 38).

6. Relevant still are those questions which, on a more universal note, Fudge has asked:

Is a pet an animal? This might sound like a rather odd question, but it is one that is worth asking. A pet, simply put, is an animal who enters our (human) domestic space. It is different from other — non-tame or wild — animals, because it lives with us in our homes. On this basis, it is possible to see pets as making up a different class of creature. They are both human and animal; they live with us, but are not us; they have names like us, but cannot call us by our names. (Fudge, *Animal* 27)

7. On a large scale, this has been observed since the Victorian period, and frequently linked with social exclusion, like that of spinsters who lavished all their affections on their pet animals (Flegel).
8. Two queries, posted on ResearchGate and Academia.edu websites, both with large populations of HAS scholars, returned no satisfactory results. Neither did a discussion on H-Animal Humanities and Social Sciences Network (February 1-29, 2016).
9. An epitaph for Hodge was written by a minor poet, Percival Stockdale, and published in 1778.
10. Both, as Coghen explains (112-113), were names of heroines in popular contemporary tragedies: Aaron Hill's 1736 English translation of Voltaire's *Zaireas Zara: A Tragedy*, and Nicholas Rowe's 1702 *Tamerlane*.
11. Who was "ordain'd to mouse in Academic Bowers" of Oxford.
12. According to the OED, in the mid-eighteenth century "bully" was a term of endearment similar to today's "sweetheart" or "darling."
13. This is also a matter of speculation in Sam Sackett's entirely fictional prose piece, "Asher Chomski" (113).
14. In the final decade of the eighteenth century, ownership of one dog per family was exempt from tax (Olsen 32-33), which is taken to reflect the contemporary vogue for pet keeping.
15. These attitudes still persist. As Deleuze and Guattari tell us, there are three modes of relating to animals. One is the individuated, sentimentalized, affectionate view of what they call the Oedipal animal, i.e., a pet. The other two are the Jungian or archetypal animal as found in myths and ancient cultures all over the world, and finally the daemonic animal, one that is forever evolving and thus impossible to capture at any particular moment in time — as close to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "becoming-animal" as can be (240-241).
16. There is, however, evidence of at least one mid-seventeenth-century cat owner making a door hole for his cats to be able to enjoy the freedom of walking in and out of the house (Thomas 96).

17. Thomas tells us that appreciation for these particular skills can be documented since at least the tenth century, while earliest written records of human affection for cats in the British Isles date back to the ninth century (95).

18. All quotations from Dominique Lestel are in my translation.

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