

Christopher Smart, "on his cat Geoffrey" from Jubilate Agno (1762)

For I will consider my Cat Geoffrey
For he is the servant of the Living God duly and daily serving him.
For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way.
For is this done by wreathing his body seven times round with elegant
quickness.
For then he leaps up to catch the musk, which is the blessing of God upon his
prayer.
For he rolls upon prank to work it in.
For having done duty and received blessing he begins to consider himself.
For this he performs in ten degrees . . .

For having consider'd God and himself he will consider his neighbor.
For if he meets another cat he will kiss her in kindness.
For when he takes his prey he plays with it to give it chance.
For one mouse in seven escapes by his dallying . . .

For the English cats are the best in Europe.
For he is the cleanest in the use of his fore-paws of any quadrupede.
For the dexterity of his defense is an instance of the love of God to him exceedingly.
For he is the quickest to his mark of any creature.
For he is tenacious of his point.
For he is a mixture of gravity and waggery.
For he knows that God is his Saviour.
For there is nothing sweeter than his peace when at rest.
For there is nothing brisker than his life when in motion.
For he is the Lord's poor and so indeed is he called by benevolence perpetually -- Poor
Jeffrey! poor Jeffrey! the rat has bit thy throat.
For I bless the name of the Lord Jesus that Jeffrey is better.
For the divine spirit comes about his body to sustain it in compleat cat.

Christopher Smart, who was tossed in the madhouse for his incessant praying (in the street, for the most part), constantly asks what creativity is, what rationality and irrationality are. His poems let loose a portion of the imagination which the age of reason makes a point of keeping fettered with social norms and conventional religion; in this way his raptures are related to the scenes of redemptive or escapest madness we see in the literature of Sensibility: Clarissa's mad letters after the rape and the lunatic picking flowers in Werther. These issues of madness animate the debate we see throughout the literature of Sensibility that revolves around the tension between an imagination founded on the senses, on one hand, and governing reason and judgement, on the other. Foucault in *Madness and Civilization* examines the relationship between passion and enthusiasm and madness. Smart's "madness" is actually grounded in his acute sensibilibious response to the physical world: the "mad" Smart is very much a part of this world, even as he authorizes himself as a prophetic interpretor of the universe. Interested in this world -- the material, the everyday, his cat -- his own senses lead him on a journey of spiritual

discovery. We also see here, as we see in *Sentimental Journey* and elsewhere, the non-human or animal which sparks benevolence, pity, or joy in the human.