

# Melancholia's Dog

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other species as inarticulate, he goes so far as to not recognize them at all: "For what else is there besides dogs?" (333). He assumes his reader is likewise a dog in referring to "dogs like you and me" (326). Moreover, he obdurately refuses—conceivably to retain his freedom—to see humans as the source of his food.<sup>18</sup>

That Kafka can place himself within the mind of another initially contrasts with the dog's inability to recognize others. Or does it contrast? Is not such a narrative perspective bound to lead to skewed, incoherent results? Kafka uncovers the limits of trying to fathom another's consciousness, for to occupy its center of being creates discord. Clearly this is an unlikely dog in its metaphysical meditations—a creature of contrary qualities and bizarre aspirations, neither doglike nor humanlike but an unsettling hybrid.<sup>19</sup> Because the reader cannot successfully place himself in the perspective of this dog, the point of his musings remains only vaguely decipherable. The reader thereby senses his own creatureliness, his own constraints in his inability to conjecture the precise referent of the dog's perceptions. Although exposed to the ontology of another being, Kafka demonstrates the boundaries of access to it. Thus, just as the dog fails to recognize species outside his own, so too does Kafka illustrate—as if through a reversed mirror image—human *méconnaissance* vis-à-vis another species.

Kafka's lesson would then be that one must learn to "deanthropomorphize," an act that would entail the loss of language when one communicates across species. When Gregor loses the ability to speak in words, he is open to music. The dog, too, encounters music as not being uttered through the mouth. What would it mean to escape from language in order to communicate with another species? Can muteness speak? Kafka quintessentially illustrates the major aporia that literature and art on the dog faces: silence lies at the heart of representation of the dog. For how does one make the mute dog speak? How can one enter its consciousness? How does one listen to its muteness? If the dog's voice cannot be understood and if the hunter and the circus dogs are not even voicing their own song, then what does issue out of the mouth—is one with it—is hunger itself. Hunger here can be understood as the expression of the desire for articulateness: "In reality we were utterly painfully one, and when I said to myself, 'That is hunger,' it was really the hunger that was speaking" (348). This is where the reality of communication with the other species lies: in the hunger for communication and understanding. There is a connection, in other words, between the hunger of Melencolia's dog and her own falling silent. And it is to the silences in the representation of the dog that I now turn.



## Muteness

In his *Sonnets to Orpheus* (1923), a cycle devoted to the difficult beauty of poetry, Rainer Maria Rilke addresses his sixteenth sonnet to his friend, a dog. It begins: "Du, mein Freund, bist einsam, weil . . . / Wir machen mit Worten und Fingerzeigen / uns allmählich die Welt zu eigen" (*Werke* 497). [You, my friend, are lonely, because . . . / We, with words and finger-pointings, / gradually make the world our own (47).] Although befriended by the poet, the dog is lonely. And although, given the ellipsis at the end of the first line, the reason for this isolation seems to elude the poet, Rilke immediately juxtaposes the dog to the human being who makes the world his own by familiarizing himself with it through words: hence the dog is presumably lonely because, unlike man, it is without the means of representation.<sup>1</sup> Rilke here joins a long tradition of ascribing muteness, isolation, and hence melancholy to animals. Heidegger in his Freiburg seminar lectures of 1929–30, for instance, speaks of the animal as being poor in the world (*weltarm*), resulting in its sadness. In explicating Heidegger, Derrida sees him as attributing this despondency to the animal's banishment from the world of man, which includes the realm of speech: the animal exudes the "impression of sadness . . . as if [he] remained a man enshrouded, suffering, deprived on account of having access neither to the world of man that he nonetheless senses, nor to truth, speech, death, or the Being of the being as such" ("Eating Well" 111–12).<sup>2</sup> What separates man from beast is the latter's muteness, which is also a dumbness or dullness that mourns for what it senses yet cannot articulate.

Another early twentieth-century German writer whom Derrida discusses in conjunction with animals, sadness, and the lack of language is Walter Benjamin. In his 1916 essay "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," Benjamin speculates that after the Fall nature is engulfed by a deep sadness and muteness (*Stummheit* [2.1:155]).<sup>3</sup> Were nature to be endowed with language she would raise her voice in lament (*klagen*). But such a lament would still be an inarticulate utterance, a physical exhalation (*sinnlichen Hauch*), it being in the nature of the plaint that it is the most undifferentiated, powerless expression (*der undifferenzierteste, ohnmächtige Ausdruck der Sprache*). Such a pure lament would be unable to designate its causes. Thus even while with voice, nature is deemed voiceless. One is reminded of Nietzsche's aphorism in "On the Uses and Abuses of History": "The human may well ask the animal one day, 'Why do you not talk to me of your bliss and only look at me?' The animal really wants to answer and say: 'It comes of always forgetting right away what I wanted to say.' Thereupon it forgot even this answer and fell silent so that the human could only wonder" (2:101). Here too the animal in beginning to speak immediately becomes speechless.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, its forgetting can be attributed not to a pure bliss but to a profound sadness, it being in the nature of melancholy to be unable to locate and articulate the cause of its helplessness.

Precisely because melancholy is characterized by this tendency to fall silent, Benjamin comes to question his initial postulation that it is her speechlessness that lies at the root of nature's sadness. He in fact reverses the order of causation: it is not her powerlessness, her speechlessness that renders nature melancholic, but her melancholy that makes her silent, suggesting that there is another reason for her despondency. Nature, Benjamin then proposes, is dejected because she feels misrecognized in the act of being named by human language.<sup>5</sup> The naming is a form of recognition, but it falsely labels what is essentially unidentifiable (*Unerkennbaren* [2.1:155]). As if resigned to her sorry fate, nature realizes that there would be no point in participating in this language, a language that needlessly, superfluously, and disproportionately squanders itself in what Benjamin calls overnaming (*Überbenennung*). If nature is solemnly mute, then human speech immoderately babbles. *Überbenennung* suggests a dissipation of words and disregard for them. More fundamentally and inescapably, postlapsarian signification sets up an incongruous relation between word and thing; language overshoots the mark. Benjamin thus implies that nature's muteness is a deliberate reticence, a notion to which I shall return shortly.

Although Benjamin casts doubt on human language, which ends up diminishing what it designates, Derrida nonetheless positions Benjamin squarely within the Western philosophical practice that elevates man over animals. According to this tradition, Derrida notes, the single, indivisible limit that separates man from animal is consistently determined by knowledge of the word and the voice that can name. Stated explicitly, the animal is defined as that being that lacks the word. Thus, in its efforts to define the quintessentially human, Western philosophy has sought to bolster human uniqueness and superiority by abrogating to itself the sole command of speech. Indeed, "animal" is the designation that man has reserved for himself to bestow in order to maintain his sole proprietary right over language: "*Animal* is a word that men have given themselves the right to give, . . . reserving for them, for humans, the right to the word, the name, the verb, the attribute, to a language of words, in short to the very thing that the others in question would be deprived of, those that are corralled within the grand territory of the beasts: the Animal. All the philosophers we will investigate (from Aristotle to Lacan, and including Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, and Lévinas), all of them say the same thing: the animal is without language" ("The Animal" 400).<sup>6</sup> Another major contemporary philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, has joined Derrida in this critical analysis of Western philosophy's strategic and persistent denigration of the animal by observing that man "must recognize himself in a non-man in order to be human" (27). This maneuver is accomplished primarily via an exclusionary self-assignment of language: "In identifying himself with language, the speaking man places his own muteness outside of himself, as already and not yet human" (35).

Confronting this philosophical tradition, Derrida questions, during his long meditation on what his cat's gaze means to him, whether there is any sign whatsoever of the creature's linguistic inferiority, for his cat does not exhibit the need for words. Instead it is he, the philosopher, who, in his "*own melancholy*" (387, emphasis mine), desires to lend the cat a voice and to interpret what the creature would say to him. Echoing Benjamin's "*Überbenennung*," this fantasy would indulge in an overinterpretation ("*surinterpréter*" [269, emphasis mine]). Thus, in a fascinating reversal of Benjamin's and Rilke's position, it is now the human being who is melancholic. Derrida leads us to question whose melancholy we are then dealing with. Whose longing and for what? Whose loneliness? Above all, whose muteness? What are the reasons and implications for this projection of one's own melancholy onto the animal? It is this reversal, this folding in on itself, of who is deemed

silent and sad that I want to investigate more closely in this chapter. Where indeed can the distinctions between man and animal be upheld if they so collapse on themselves? And if Derrida's cat demonstrates no need for words and Benjamin suggests that human words are invariably an *Überbenennung*, what would it mean to bestow language on the dog? Can one find such critical reflection on language, even repeal of it, precisely in literary works that narrate from a canine perspective? The question then becomes not "do *they* have language?" but "do *we* have an adequate language to speak to them and about them?" Furthermore, how would one represent the vocal reticence of the animal and how can it signify something beyond lack or deficiency? I want to address the question of "whose muteness" from the philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein to Emmanuel Levinas, from the novelists Ivan Turgenev to Charles Siebert, and from visual artists David Hockney to Pentti Sammallahti.

However much one resists, as does Derrida, denying animals the gift of language and however open one is to other means of communication, whether these be physical or extrasensory, animal stillness is not therefore any less pressing, especially for the devoted pet lover. I have spent hours trying to penetrate the minds of my whippets and despair of ever understanding them fully. Because they are such dear companions, not knowing what they think creates an ache, a yearning that is at times a daily affliction. My fascination and attraction are amplified by their silence, untranslatability, and detachment. The intimacy between us is even enhanced by their silence, for with the failure of words, I encounter instead the loveliness of their bodies and mien, the thereness of their secretive being. My dogs are thus both intimate and distant, and, because I want to be closer to them, I fall prey to a sweet melancholy.

The questions run through my mind: What do they suppose I'm saying? What do I understand them as communicating? In the midst of my attempt to escape my anthropocentrism, I feel I sink more deeply into it by the unavoidability of projection. And even when their sighthound eyes are deeply expressive and responsive, I am still lost. I want to know the true desire of this enigmatic Other and say to their gazes: What do you want? What are you aiming at with your look? In *A Lover's Discourse* Roland Barthes explores these imaginary monologues conducted by the one secluded in love, and he observes in words that aptly fit the longings of the passionate dog owner: "I cannot decipher you because I don't know how you decipher me" (134). And, "The amorous subject suffers anxiety because the loved object

replies scantily or not at all to his language" (167). In our incessant specular reflections, we wonder if the dog, too, would frustratingly accuse us of responding "scantily or not at all to his language," failing to match his attention and devotion.<sup>7</sup> Or does the dog cheerfully assume his barking and tail wagging are transparent and will be immediately comprehended? Is it only we who are melancholic over the gap in communication between us?

But what if they could speak in human tongue? The literary tradition of the dog gifted with human speech goes back to Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* and counts among its writers such luminaries as Cervantes ("Colloquy of the Dogs" [1613]), E. T. A. Hoffmann ("Account of the Most Recent Fortunes of the Dog Berganza" [1813]), Gogol ("The Diary of a Madman" [1833–34]), Franz Kafka ("The Researches of a Dog" [1922]), Mikhail Bulgakov (*The Heart of a Dog* [1925]), and Paul Auster (*Timbuktu* [1999]).<sup>8</sup> In addition, the fantasy of the talking dog has spawned countless sentimental poems and trite stories. In popular visual culture it has inspired cute comic strips from Charles Schultz's *Peanuts* to Gary Larson's *Far Side* and the animated mutt from Pluto to the computer-generated figures in *Cats and Dogs* (2001).

But, although commonplace, either how innocent or high-minded are such attempts to endow the dog with language? The historian of contemporary art Steve Baker coined the word "disnification" to express the dissonance and misleading signification in current Hollywood practice; Disney only makes non-sense of the animal (*Picturing the Beast* 174–75). No less kind to literary forays into the talking dog genre, Roger Grenier, author of *On the Difficulty of Being a Dog*, acerbically observes that "worst of all is a writer who makes animals talk, as Colette does in her *Creature Conversations*. Anyone trying to write like a dumb animal writes, like a dumb animal" (73). Perhaps for this reason Virginia Woolf disparaged her novel *Flush* (1933), where she whimsically expressed the feelings of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spaniel: she called it a "silly book . . . a waste of time" (*Diary* 153). Clearly the imaginative leap into the dog's thoughts arises from the desire to supply what is missing; it is compensatory for both the animal's silence and human incomprehension. But so often the attempt to bring animals to life fails to capture their very presence and, as Baker and Grenier suggest, descends into banality and insipidness. Especially in the humorous genres such as cartoons, the anthropomorphizing gesture reduces the animals to the silliness of humans.

Making animals talk, moreover, betrays the supposition that they don't otherwise communicate. And it presupposes that human verbal

communication always is efficacious and direct. John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, challenges both presumptions in *Strickeen* (1897), a novel on a dog by the same name: "We know about as little of [animals] in their inner life and conversation as we do of the inhabitants of other stars. . . . 'If they could talk' we say. But they do in a universal language no Babel has ever confused; and the gift to them of articulate speech would probably leave us about as far apart as before. How much do we make of speech in knowing each other[?]" (108). The most sarcastic critic of such ventriloquistic chatter is cultural sociologist Jean Baudrillard, who detects in contemporary oversaturation with media signs a nervousness and discomfort with the taciturnness of real-live animals: "In a world bent on doing nothing but making one speak, in a world assembled under the hegemony of signs and discourse, their silence weighs more and more heavily on our organization of meaning. . . . Nowhere do they really speak, because they only furnish the responses one asks for. It is their way of sending the Human back to his circular codes, behind which their silence analyzes us" (137-38).<sup>9</sup>

In the face of such *Überbenennung* (as Benjamin so cogently assessed, as if anticipating today's pervasive "disnification") is it possible to conceive of an alternative? Derrida, in fact, offers an ever so brief and tentative response that I should like to pursue further: "It would not be a matter of 'giving speech back' to animals but perhaps of acceding to a thinking, however fabulous and chimerical it might be, that thinks the absence of the name and of the word otherwise, as something other than a privation" ("The Animal" 416). As an answer to the purported muteness of animals, he points out that it is not a question of endowing them with speech—we recall that his cat demonstrates no need of words. But how could his goal of reconceptualizing what the absence of words would be other than as privation be accomplished? What would it look like?<sup>10</sup> To answer this question I first want to turn to various philosophers who have rethought animal silence, reticence, reserve, and self-containment. I then want to examine how various literary and visual artists reconceptualize the silence in nature alongside man's own pauses, whether these be in his own linguistic hesitation or in deference toward the animal and its enigma. I turn to the literary and visual arts out of the conviction that, precisely because they operate in the realm Derrida calls the "fabulous and chimerical," they can provide remarkable imaginative insight into ways in which this rethinking of animal wordlessness can occur so that it is not regarded as poverty or privation. Art is where the longing to come into contact with the mystery of animal being expresses itself.

### Hearne, Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard, and Levinas

One contemporary author who has responded eloquently and forcefully to the philosophical assumption that animals are deficient in language is Vicki Hearne. An obedience trainer herself, she testifies to the elegant understanding that can arise between an accomplished handler and her dog: they are "obedient to each other and to language" (*Adam's Task* 56). Her paradoxes are just and to the point: "A well-trained dog or horse may be said to have a greater command of language than a human being whose code is infinitely more complex" (*Adam's Task* 42). This communication goes beyond verbal commands to include unmediated bodily response. In her novel *The White German Shepherd* (1988) she encourages her reader to envisage the scenario of a dog "standing by your side, so that you and the dog are both looking ahead, . . . and there is, for the moment, no Gap. The Gap is everywhere, between lovers, between friends, between the world and God, between the mind and what you say. In dog training you go for the right posture, ruthlessly, and then there is no Gap, things fit together, and when they fit, they move" (20).

Among her essays is one that challenges Wittgenstein's claim in *The Philosophical Investigations* that, if a lion could talk, we wouldn't be able to understand him (223). In accordance with his famous dictum from the *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent," Wittgenstein argues that only language gives us access to certain concepts and, hence that, if we do not share the same linguistic system with, say, a lion or horse, we cannot know such things about them as, for instance, their state of being. Moreover he states: "There is nothing astonishing about certain concepts' only being applicable to a being that e.g. possesses a language" (*Zettel* 91, no. 520). Hence he rhetorically asks, "Why can a dog feel fear but not remorse? Would it be right to say 'Because he can't talk?'" (*Zettel* 91, no. 518). Repeatedly, Wittgenstein uses the inaccessibility of the dog, a creature otherwise close to us, in order to illustrate what lies outside the realm of empirical certainty because outside the confines of our language, which structures how we think. Such questions that we cannot answer include, Can a dog simulate pain? (*Philosophical Investigations* 90, no. 250) and Can it experience hope? (*Philosophical Investigations* 174). In another analogy that illustrates this dependency on a shared language or what he calls language games and the misunderstandings arising from assuming even common bodily codes, he writes: "We don't understand Chinese gestures any more than Chinese sentences" (*Zettel* 40, no. 219). He thus

also asks what grounds we have to ask if a dog means something by wagging its tail (*Zettel* 91, no. 521).

Hearne's response is that Wittgenstein incorrectly presumes that a lion and human couldn't understand each other, for as any lion tamer knows they must come to mutual understanding.<sup>11</sup> Inattentive to the subtleties of animal communication, Wittgenstein likewise fails to "consider the possibility that the lion does not talk to us because he knows we could not understand him" (*Adam's Task* 170). In thus grammatically rearranging Wittgenstein's sentence, Hearne proposes that in his "vast self-containment" the lion may be "reticent, but not languageless" (170). Could, then, this reticence or renunciation of speech serve as a model and antidote to human *Überbenennung*? Could one uncover, although I can only begin to do so here, a different genealogy in philosophy, theology, and the arts that acknowledges a sovereign reserve in nature rather than her sad muteness? Her forbearance rather than the passive resignation of her silence? Would ascribing virtues such as reserve to nature fall into precisely the error Wittgenstein tries to isolate, in other words, unreflectingly anthropomorphize nature? Or, rather than a heedless projection of human assumptions, would such an attempt be an attentive listening and observation, as in the case of Hearne? Can one adopt an attitude of respect toward the animal's reserve? And how would this reconceptualization of the absence of language form the basis of a critique of human disregard for language?

Søren Kierkegaard and Emmanuel Levinas are two philosophers who, however briefly in their writing, reevaluate animal silence, both invoking the Judeo-Christian tradition on the holiness in nature, all while addressing the immediacy of the secular world. Although in his essay "The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air," Kierkegaard refers to the silence in nature, it is not a muteness arising from a fallen condition as in Benjamin. On the contrary, the peacefulness in nature is beatific and shows nature living in a state of grace. Kierkegaard cites from the Sermon on the Mount: "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matt. 6:26–29; also Luke 12:24–27). Kierkegaard takes Christ's exhortation to man not to be anxious about the future as a parable on the eloquent silence and reverent waiting in nature: "This silence thou canst learn from the lilies and the birds" (324). Nature is meditatively attentive to the moment; its stillness is a "reverence before God" (328): "Only by keeping silent does one hit

upon the instant, while one is talking, though one says only a word, one misses the instant" (349). Levinas, too, admittedly in a vastly different context, recalls a biblical episode of animal silence in worship before divine presence. In a short essay entitled "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights" and published in 1975, he recalls how in Exodus 11, during the night Israel is released from its house of bondage and the first-born of Egypt are struck dead, the dogs do not growl. Levinas writes: "With neither ethics nor *logos*, the dog will attest to the dignity of its person. This is what the friend of man means. There is a transcendence in the animal! . . . It reminds us of the debt that is always open" (152).

The context into which this reflection is placed has been a contentious one, for Levinas sets up troublesome parallels between dissimilar horrors. In the first half, he begins by discussing Exodus 22:31, where carrion is proscribed as meat to be "cast to the dogs." Levinas argues that, if only wild animals are seen to "half-devour one another," then man can sublimate his own war games and, on par with them, his own carnivorous practices. In the second half of his essay, he then moves from biblical references to a real canid who involuntarily resurfaces in his memory, one named Bobby who wandered into the Nazi labor camp where Levinas was interned during the war. In always delighting to see the prisoners, Bobby was the sole creature to treat them as humans. If one aligns the two halves of the essay, Levinas, as John Llewelyn tersely states, "all but proposes an analogy between the unspeakable human Holocaust and the unspoken animal one" (235). Bracketing aside for the moment the pressing questions that scholars such as Llewelyn and David Clark have courageously tackled in light of this juxtaposition (Is the animal an Other to whom one owes responsibility? Why does the animal not have a face for Levinas? What are the implications of not distinguishing between atrocities committed against humans and the mass slaughter of animals?), I should like to argue that the answer to such questions must be channeled through how Levinas discusses the implications of the figurative use of the animal. Disparaging references to "dog"—such as in Exodus 22—must be seen in the light of another predisposition against animals, namely, the onto-theological tradition of denying them access to "ethics and *logos*."

Following the passage from Exodus 22, Levinas lists various commonplace derogatory usages of the word "dog," such as "a dog's life" and "raining cats and dogs." Such turns of phrase are suspect to him, for they are heedless of the implications of "what comes out of the mouth," namely, the disparagement of both humans ("Someone who is given

the dirtiest work—a dog's life") and animals themselves ("the crouching, servile, contemptible dog"). As David Clark asks: "Figuring animals, we *configure* the human. But at what cost to animals?" (169).<sup>12</sup> Joining such rhetorical commonplaces are the theological and philosophical traditions that deny animals power over the word. I would propose that, rather than necessarily ascribing to this tradition (as Clark maintains), Levinas mocks it, as if to say, precisely the creature deemed to be "with neither ethics nor *logos*" testifies to command over both by remaining silent at the moment of the divine act so that the Jews can safely flee Egypt. If language can all too easily silence others, then here the inverse occurs: the dogs' silence provides testimony and witness to God's purpose. The episode reminds Levinas as well of our debt to animals, which—as he so strongly exhorts, evoking the immeasurable responsibility we hold toward animal life in general—remains open.

The dogs on the banks of the Nile, Levinas continues, are the ancestors of Bobby, who would "bark in delight" when the prisoners assembled. Although lacking the ability to "universalize maxims and drives," Bobby was Kantian in his ethics, in fact, "the last Kantian in Nazi Germany" (153). In contrast to his friendly vocalizing, then, is the Nazis' treatment of the Jews as "beings without language" who jabber "monkey talk." In the camp the Jews are treated as deserving to be "depriv[ed] of expression" (153). Levinas suggests that undergirding the Nazis' labeling of the Jews as "subhuman, a gang of apes" is a tradition that metaphorically debases animals, a tradition, he has just argued, that has justified animal slaughter for meat. By the same token, denying animals language becomes contorted into denying a certain category of humans voice because they are deemed to be merely animals—and hence also worthy of slaughter. That is, Levinas attacks the abusive, violent power of language to "name" both animals and humans heedlessly, with impunity, and without the respect that each are separately due. The problem therefore of ascribing muteness to animals is that it regards them as dumb, savage beasts, as if only man should be granted language. Such reasoning is blind to how language actually gags the other, as in calling Jews apes. The dog, too, is not so much without *logos* as, in Clark's impeccable phrasing, "the site of an excess against which one might measure the prescriptive, exclusionary force of the *logos*, the ways in which the truth of the rational word muffles, strangles, and finally silences the animal" (191). As in Benjamin, naming not only diminishes, it silences the other. For Levinas, moreover, it kills.

Levinas concludes by saying that Bobby's "friendly growling, his animal faith, was born from the silence of his forefathers on the banks of

the Nile" (153). Levinas thereby suggests that, whether it be in a friendly greeting or in deliberate silence and reticence, the dog does command language, perhaps more honestly than do humans, who choose to disregard its rhetorical implications. Moreover, the dog is gifted with its animal faith. But is to ascribe to the dog the capacity for faith, ethics, language, testimony, and transcendence not a dangerous anthropomorphization? Does Levinas back away from such claims, as Clark maintains, by redrawing the line between human and animal in saying, for instance, that the dog cannot universalize maxims or that it is without *logos*? Is Levinas speaking "only" figuratively (using Bobby, like the dogs in Egypt, as "a figure of humanity"), although he has just instructed us to be attentive to the unspoken assumptions of analogies? In other words, if elsewhere in this essay the confusion of man and animal in rhetorical speech has led to the unspeakable in the Holocaust, is Levinas not now intimating the opposite, that, as his own usage of terms such as transcendence implies, man and beast cannot and should not be so tidily separated—that language can help us imagine the dog otherwise? Indeed, the references to faith and transcendence seem far too weighty to be classified as mere sentimentality.<sup>13</sup> Could the powerful ascription of wisdom and judgment to the animal signify instead, rather than anthropocentric pathos, a humility on the part of the human who usually reserves such attributes for himself? Ultimately, Levinas leaves the answer to these questions open, but he does suggest that such a recognition of the animal would mark the first step toward reciprocation—toward meeting the unfulfilled debt to it.

In sum, then, in the reticence of Hearne's lion, the silence of Kierkegaard's lilies and birds, and the reverence of Levinas's dogs, the absence of language is conceived other than as deprivation. Moreover the silence of the beasts becomes a model for the human; it inspires deference in reply. To put it another way, I have endeavored to trace a 180 degree turn: rather than project poverty onto the animal, as Heidegger does in his term *weltarm*, human discourse can be seen as needing to recognize the imperative to reticence, circumspection, and awareness of its own moments of muteness. Such a discourse would grieve over its own impasses. As the early nineteenth-century German writer Jean Paul Richter observed, addressing the questions "Whose muteness?" and "Whose poverty?": "Language. In the impossibility of bringing the animal voice into words I see the poverty of the letter" (173, no. 355). Thus, it would be the human response to animals that needs to be assessed in terms of melancholy, for which purpose I now turn to Julia Kristeva's analysis of different forms and manifestations of depressive

language. If the sign of human melancholy after the Fall is a compensatory *Überbenennung*, then Benjamin's essay merits alignment with Julia Kristeva's *Black Sun*. In turning, at this juncture, to psychoanalysis, I aim to develop a heuristic vocabulary that would help us think through and articulate what is at stake in our melancholy, our sadness over animal loss and animal silence. I then want to see how various literary and visual artists via their minimalist, collapsed, melancholic language reflect on their own unsureness as how best to represent the animal.

### Julia Kristeva

According to Sigmund Freud in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), one of the main features of the melancholic personality is that it cannot name its loss and falls speechless because the lost object has become such an integrated part of the self. If it cannot separate the ego from the object with which it identifies, it cannot name it. Unless the melancholic can pinpoint the source of her mourning, she mourns interminably. Taking her cue from Freud, French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, in her book *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, notes that the melancholic, who unconsciously yet loyally adheres to the beloved lost object, proves the failure of the Symbolic realm. Because she cannot identify or verbalize the loss from which she suffers, the melancholic's primary characteristic is her silence. Although language falters when it cannot adequately measure the impoverishment, how the melancholic individual preserves the object is nevertheless characterized by her language use—the departed is invariably wrapped up in words, even when they are halting. Kristeva captures this predicament of language—its silences yet also its exuberant compensations.

Kristeva isolates three successive depressive categories, three stages of dysfunctional language, each an enhanced response to the one that preceded it, each a different form of repression. Relying on Freud's terminology, Kristeva names them *Verneinung*, *Verleugnung*, and *Verwerfung*. She begins with the negation (*Verneinung*) of loss. It is the state where the subject on some level acknowledges the forfeiture of an essential object only to claim to recover it in signs. In his 1925 essay "Die Verneinung," Freud writes that it "results in a kind of intellectual acceptance of the repressed [*des Verdrängten*], while at the same time what is essential to the repression persists" (14:12). Representation is allowed on the condition of denying loss, which it amply papers over. What characterizes

such language is its proliferation of signs and a signifying exaltation. Because of its linguistic overproduction in the face of loss, it is the mode most comparable to Benjamin's postlapsarian *Überbenennung*. What is peculiar to Kristeva, however, is that language is a compensatory pleasure that is counterpoised to privation and soothes with the creation of loveliness. *Verneinung* is the realm of sublimation. "Beauty is consubstantial with it. Like feminine finery concealing stubborn depressions, beauty emerges as the admirable face of loss" (99). The lost object is retrieved in images and words.

*Verneinung*, however, can be disavowed by depressed persons, such that they fall back on the "Thing" of their loss and remain painfully riveted to it. Here language, less exalting, breathes sadness; it is "an artificial, unbelievable language, cut out of the painful background that is not accessible to any signifier and that intonation alone, intermittently, succeeds in inflecting" (44). Words seem extinguished, absurd, and delayed. "That is what one deciphers in the blanks of discourse, vocalizations, rhythms, syllables of words that have been devitalized and need to be restored by the analyst" (26). This is the state of the denial or disavowal (*Verleugnung*) of negation (*Verneinung*).

The most enhanced state of depression is total catatonia. Psychosis in the form of repudiation (*Verwerfung*) occurs when even the representative function of repression is halted and linguistic signs are denied in mutism. In the milder stages of *Verwerfung*, *Verleugnung* prevails over *Verneinung*; but repudiation can develop fully into asymbolia. As an extreme case, it demonstrates the converse—why language is so crucial to the healing of depression. Kristeva writes: "Naming suffering, exalting it, dissecting it into its smallest components—that is doubtless a way to curb mourning" (97). Language, of course, cannot always be so perfunctorily manipulated, which is why melancholia is so protracted and, on final account, is associated with artistic expression, which knows the complexities of representation.

The pet dog in today's culture is granted the extravagant, intense value that marks it as compensatory for an originary loss. In this capacity, the dog fits into the category of *Verneinung*.<sup>14</sup> As the metonymy of pleasure, the dog serves as a replacement for the archaic Thing, which Kristeva locates in the maternal. It offers an idealizing comfort and, indeed, the historical rise of the pet dog starting in the latter part of the eighteenth century coincides with the development of the bourgeois family, whose investment in the mother Freud exposed. The soft, warm closeness of the pet, together with its fixed, loving gaze is evocative of maternal proximity and reassurance. To own a pet, then, means refusing



to give up the lost object; it is a shield against recognition of forsaken-ness; and it allows for an intimacy that would otherwise be forbidden with the pre-oedipal object of desire. The dog, of course, is a remarkably efficient substitute, who always exists in the immediate present in its companionship, love, and capacity for affection.

Not unsurprisingly, given the surrogate yet immediate pleasure the dog provides, it spawns its own metonymic, fetishistic signs, as if the dog were "the Thing" itself to which Kristeva alludes and that generates the desire for other proxies, in other words, for substitutive erotic compensations.<sup>15</sup> Serving as objects of reverie, dog collectibles are a case in point. Imitation and proliferation in the form of family photographs, porcelain figurines, even handsome coffee table books on dogs function as safeguards or antidotes against their loss. The collectibles sentimentalize the pet and hence evoke a pleasurable but imprecise nostalgia, a melancholic dwelling on reminiscences of the pet. Conceivably it could even be the realm of silence—the canine lack of speech—that requires this plethora as compensation.<sup>16</sup>

More contemplative, overtly melancholic and artistic works return to the domain of loss and demonstrate, in contrast to *Verneinung*, the workings of *Verleugnung*. This is the mode where language hesitates, thereby dampening manic *Überbenennung* and revealing its depressive underside. Given its tendency to reflect on its own sparseness, poetry in particular can link the dog to wordlessness and to affect, which arises in the absence of words. Paring down its language, poetry wants to resonate with the animal's own lack of speech. Take, for example, "Les hurleurs" (The howlers [1855]) by the French nineteenth-century poet Leconte de Lisle. He writes of a night by the sea, where the moon is silent, casting its sepulchral reflection on the ocean. Along the beach, "De maigres chiens, épars, allongent leurs museaux, / Se lamentaient, poussant des hurelements lugubres" (151). [Emaciated dogs, straggling, lifting their muzzles, lamented and howled mournfully.] The paroxysmal lament of crying dogs, the sheer giving voice to despondency without the capacity to verbalize what it is that they lack, evokes melancholy's tendency to asymbolia. The lonely cry evokes some unnamable, inaccessible trauma, resistant to translation into words. The speaker then addresses the emaciated, lamenting dogs with the question: "Quelle angoisse inconnue, au bord des noires ondes, / Faisait pleurer une âme en vos formes immondes?" (What unknown suffering, at the edge of the black waves, made a soul weep in your impure forms). The question will never be answered, for however powerful the cry, it remains opaque to human comprehension. Leconte de Lisle calls the

dogs specters, and indeed they evoke his own confused past, encrypted away beyond recovery. In its place remains, forever present, the harrowing affect or cry. Because of its inarticulateness, he names this sorrowful feral (*douleurs sauvages*).

As with Leconte de Lisle, there is something of the suffering animal in the inability of another nineteenth-century French poet, Alphonse de Lamartine, to name his pain. Even the joyful greeting by his whip-pet after a long absence brings forth cloying emotion that can express itself only in the affect of sadness. A passage in *Jocelyn* (1836) recounts this solitary reunion and contains numerous references to the sight-hound's silent gaze: "tes yeux sur les miens, / Le silence comprend nos muets entretiens" (195). [Your eyes on mine, silence understands our mute dialogues.] Affect is thus paired with the absence of words, for the melancholic compensates for his halting language primarily by reliance on bodily signifiers. Generally speaking, in its somatic communication, in its display of pure affect, the dog can be said to appear quintessentially sad. In words seemingly meant for the canid, Kristeva writes: "Unbelieving in language, the depressive persons are affectionate, wounded to be sure, but prisoners of affect. Affect is their thing" (14).<sup>17</sup> Lamartine thus focuses on the physical expressions of their love: "Oh! viens, dernier ami que mon pas réjouisse, . . . Lèche mes yeux mouillés! mets ton cœur près du mien, / Et, seuls à nous aimer, aimons-nous, pauvre chien!" (196). [O come, the sole friend who rejoices at my footstep. . . . Lick my moist eyes! Put your heart close to mine, and alone in our love, let us love each other, poor dog!] The designation "poor dog" underscores the abjection that the species face and from which Lamartine empathetically suffers. His poetry tries to redeem an affection so deep that it reads as an affliction.

Rather than on *Verneinung*, which overcompensates for animal muteness, tries to paper over the gap of absence, and denies its own melancholy, I want to focus in the rest of this chapter on the implications of *Verleugnung*. Briefly put, I look at works that meditate on silence and, in their own meditation, fall silent. They exemplarily mourn the loss of the animal to human beings and the communicative gap between them and are cognizant of their own melancholy. Aware of the dangers of *Überbenennung*, they reflect on their own symbolic limitations and are reticent, halting, and minimalist in their descriptions. They point to what lies beyond signification—an ephemerality, an expectancy of what is about to happen, an elsewhere that intimates a realm beyond the human senses, and even a self-contained wholeness in the dog that has no need of words. Coming to the brink of abandoning the attempt at

representation, such artistic expressions resist falling into the total asymbolia of *Verwerfung* and ultimately countervail against their own latent depression.<sup>18</sup> The following pages examine the contemporary canine photography of Keith Carter, Otmar Thormann, and Pentti Sammallahti, political allegories involving the dog by Ivan Turgenev and Tibor Dery, a cynomorphic novel by Charles Siebert, and the paintings of his pet dachshunds by David Hockney.

### Keith Carter, Otmar Thormann, and Pentti Sammallahti

Documentary photographers and photojournalists have been keen observers of canine life in the twentieth century, as testified in such recent collections as *A Thousand Hounds: The Presence of the Dog in the History of Photography, 1839 to Today* and *The Dog: 100 Years of Classic Photography*. Notable dog photographers in the realist tradition include Frank Hurley, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, Robert Doisneau, Jacques-Henri Lartigue, André Kertész, William Eggleston, Richard Billingham, Elliott Erwitt, Michel Vanden Eeckhoudt, Josef Koudelka, Baylón, Jill Freedman, Ralph Gibson, Robin Schwartz, Keith Carter, and Pentti Sammallahti. Wherein lies, one wonders, the affinity of photography for dogs? Is it the thereness of the dog—its living in the present moment that the shutter catches? Is it the insouciance and openness of the dog before the camera—its lack of self-consciousness? Does its omnipresence in the city attract the street photographer's eye? Or does the dog's attentiveness lend itself to the intimacy of portraiture? I want to follow a different tack from these questions, however, and suggest a peculiar link between the dog and what the photograph cannot capture, in other words, its resistance to signification. Paradoxically, then, a realist mode of representation ends up partaking of the randomness, intermittence, and indifference to meaning that Kristeva finds haunting melancholic language.

In *Camera Lucida* Roland Barthes writes: "I cannot penetrate, cannot reach into the Photograph. I can only sweep it with my glance, like a smooth surface. . . . I have the leisure to observe the photograph with intensity; but also, however long I extend this observation, it teaches me nothing" (106–7). In *A Lover's Discourse* he likewise records his visual concentration: "I catch myself carefully scrutinizing the loved body (like the narrator watching Albertine asleep). *To scrutinize* means *to search*: I am searching the other's body, as if I wanted to see what was inside it" (71). Our fascination with canine photography, especially of a

breed that we love, I would suggest, derives from this desire to wrest a secret from the animal being, as if we longed for the photograph to be somehow magically revelatory in its documentary capacity. Rather than recording mundane actuality, photography inversely promises to capture that for which there can be no proof, for it is, after all, an art that arrests ephemerality. Although the photo cannot spell out the mystery it apprehends, it nonetheless can intimate it, leading us to scrutinize it fixedly, though ultimately in vain. To gaze at my whippets, too, is to sweep my eyes over their smooth fur, to study them in their perfection, namely, to dwell with their muteness.

In his canine portraiture, Texan photographer Keith Carter excels in intimating that which lies beyond signification. In the introduction to his collection entitled *Bones* (1992), he writes: "Is it too improbable a leap to suppose [the dogs] might also have a spiritual life? One not defined by human sensibilities? . . . At times I have felt both a sentient power and a spiritual presence in the dogs I have photographed" (n.p.). How, though, would one read for this spiritual presence, especially if it is not "defined by human sensibilities"? How can photography express that which is ineffable? Can it be possible paradoxically because the animal is mute? Indeed by pointing to that which lies outside the viewer's grasp, Keith Carter imbues his photos with a sense of both melancholy and sublimity. The techniques at his disposal are as varied as they are ingenious. For instance, the dog's ears may be pricked up, signaling that its concentration is directed at a source the camera cannot capture. Or, the dog may turn its head, so that it looks outside the margins of the photo, alerting the viewer to an unseen, enigmatic presence. Insofar as it ignores the camera, it also seems to be preoccupied with thoughts focused elsewhere. In its very keenness and attentiveness the dog seems to be on the verge of saying something that we know it never will; it remains inaccessible to us in its silence, but a silence not born of dullness. Yet despite this distance, Carter's photography creates a thusness, a being in its own world—via the loveliness of the fur, the large, dark eyes, and the unique contours of the canine body. Carter thus ultimately plays between immediacy and thereness, on the one hand, and absence and elsewhere, on the other.

One particular photo entitled "Lost Dog" (1992) illustrates how Carter signifies an elsewhere that lies outside representation. He trains his camera on a close-up of an older dog (fig. 3). The graying muzzle becomes blurred as the camera focuses on its large black eyes that look past the photographer. Due to the reflection in the dog's eyes of light and shadow from a landscape in front of it but that the viewer cannot



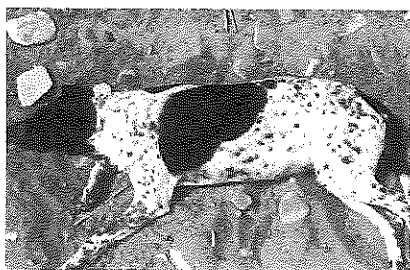
3 Keith Carter, "Lost Dog," 1992. Gelatin silver print. 15 × 15 inches. Copyright Keith Carter, Beaumont, Texas.

see, the dog seems somewhere else in its mind, even confused. The ears are pinned back so as to be invisible and to indicate its fear or trepidation. The absence of the ears accentuates the dome of the head and the eyebrows that frame the worried eyes and thus draw attention back to them. The neck and head are lifted as if the dog were searching for something in the distance or longing for it. It tries to apprehend something but is cautious at the same time. As the background fades to black, the viewer notices the empty space that engulfs the dog. Despite the close-up, the hound is lost to the viewer, as its muzzle, ears, and the rest of its body recede into darkness.

Christian Metz has written on photography: "The spectator has no empirical knowledge of the contents of the off-frame, but at the same time cannot help imagining some off-frame, hallucinating it, dreaming

the shape of this emptiness" (87). Oddly enough, what Metz describes in reference to the viewer also applies to Carter's lost dog: the hound seems to imagine and to long for what lies beyond its ken. Again in Metz's words, the photograph is "haunted by the feeling of its exterior, of its borderlines, which are the past, the left, the lost" (87). The helplessness that "Lost Dog" conjures is thus twofold. However long we scrutinize the photo, we cannot penetrate the thoughts and worries of the dog; it lives in an enigmatic world that we cannot perceive or read. Consequently, we are the ones who are lost. By the same token, the dog seems perplexed by human codes that it cannot interpret; hence it can neither find its way home nor understand why it seems to have been abandoned.

Keith Carter has also written: "Use the camera well, murmur the right words, and it is possible to conjure up proof of a dream" (n.p.) It is this manifestation of the dream that contemporary Austro-Swedish photographer Otmar Thormann alludes to in his photo collection *Dreaming Dogs* (1990). In this series he, too, conjures up the muteness and elsewhere-ness of the dog. For the gallery installation of the series, Thormann hung ten small snapshots of dogs sleeping on the ground under ten larger still life photos (fig. 4). The body of the dog takes up the whole frame of the photo, as it lies lost to the world on a beach of sand and rock. In some photos one can see traces in the sand of the legs having moved over it, indicating that the dog was dreaming and running in its sleep. The composition of the matching still life vaguely parallels the canine photo: it too is taken on a beach and features detritus from the sea—arrangements of rocks, shells, squid, a feather, or other washed up debris, some of which is indistinguishable. Shapes and lines that are common to each photo in the pair materialize before the viewer's eyes. The outline of a crumpled discarded paper, for instance, may mimic that of a curled up dog, or the stones resemble its spots. In fact, after noticing these formal similarities, one returns to the dreaming dog to see it, too, as a kind of still life, to whose organic form one now pays closer attention. Especially because there is not a one-to-one correlation in size between the photographic pairs, an imbalance is built into the arrangement, causing the viewer to shuttle between the two photos in an effort to make sense of their relation. Moreover, although the isolated objects suggest a concrete palpability and immediacy, they lack the precision of allegorical reference that characterizes baroque still life, making Thormann's photos seem drained of meaning. Although the relationship of the still life to the sleeping dog is tangential and strictly formal, one wonders what the dog could be dreaming. Could the image that forms beneath its eyelids be identical to the one before the viewer?



4 Otmar Thormann, from *Dreaming Dogs*, 1992. Black-and-white photographs on paper. 23 × 29 and 14 × 9 cm. Copyright Otmar Thormann. Courtesy Fotohof Gallery, Salzburg.

In all likelihood, Thormann is not trying to literalize what the dogs are dreaming, but he does set up corresponding enigmas. Insofar as the arrangements might subconsciously awaken symbolic associations for the viewer, they place her into the same onerous realm that the dogs inhabit. What one sees in the photo appears as if in a dream, that is, in enigmatic code. Its larger size intimates a reality grander than the actual world: it is a world magnified in close-up. The dreams rise up out of the same earth on which the dogs lie and, containing refuse from the sea, suggest memories of something resurfacing in altered, worn-out, extinguished appearance. The objects are evocative but undecipherable, seemingly erratic in their selection. As Kurt Kaindl writes in the introduction to the collection: "In these photos traces seem to be laid that point to what is absent in the photos" (n.p.; my translation from the German).

But there are also differences to the dream as commonly understood. Thormann's is a photography that challenges the assumptions of psychoanalysis, which claims to access and signify the dream world. Because we have no entry to canine memories, there is no hidden elsewhere to which one can trace back. Thormann's dream spaces do not have their source anywhere in a past but depict instead pure phenomena. The sheer visibility of the detritus thus paradoxically produces invisibility; the larger photograph withdraws from the world of representation as we see it in the smaller photograph of the sleeping dog and shows us something that cannot appear. Lest we forget the inaccessibility of the canine world, Thormann restores it here. We cannot even know if dogs possess a private inner life, since that too would be the construct of a humanist-centered psychoanalysis. Thormann's photography thus successfully imagines and embodies, in Derrida's words, the "fabulous and chimerical": it helps us accept the secrets of dogs and welcome their silence as an answer.

I want to look at one final example of a photography that tries to capture the mystery of the world in which the dog moves and that reminds us that the human cannot be the measure of this world. Pentti Sammallahti is a contemporary Finnish photographer who frequently incorporates the dog into his landscapes, whether they are shot in Karelia, Siberia, Buryatia, Wales, or Italy. The documentary realism of his landscapes demonstrates the randomness and arbitrariness of the signified that characterize melancholic language according to Kristeva. She describes how, for the melancholic personality, sublimity—which Sammallahti evokes through the use of a panoramic lens—"is already detached, disassociated, it has already integrated the traces of death,

which is signified as lack of concern, absentmindedness, carelessness" (*Black Sun* 100). Within the limitless, desolate vistas he photographs, the dog seems to have suddenly materialized. It seems to have walked incidentally into the viewfinder, and the camera seems unintentionally to have captured it, an apparent lack of design and indifference that enhance the depressiveness of the black-and-white photography. Often shot at the edges of the frame or as a small object in a wider scene, the dog signifies the fragmentary. In its registering of the transience of light, moreover, this landscape photography appears inherently melancholic. In his beautiful, brief essay on Sarmallahti's "The Russian Way," John Berger notes a "light in which there is no permanence, a light of nothing longer than a glimpse" ("Opening a Gate" 4).

Sarmallahti also indexes the sign of time passing in the metaphor of the path. The roads he photographs seem to lead only to more vastness. A lone dog cuts across the path, having no intention to follow it and leaving the viewer to question what it sees or smells. Its isolation underscores the emptiness of the uniform landscape, especially in the snowy terrain and abandoned villages of Siberia where the winter light is dim. Through the panoramic lens, Sarmallahti evokes the immensity of a world reaching endlessly and monotonously to the horizon. Moreover, his wide angle lens seems to want to capture something in the landscape but is not ample enough to do so. As opposed to *Überbenennung*, this sublimity and minimalism bespeak a stillness, and indeed Sarmallahti travels to countries where the noise of the simulacra has not yet invaded or permeated.

The dogs in the landscapes seem outcast and half feral. Normally man's companion, here the dog is a sign of human absence, is man's metonym. Just as the road leaves a trace of the humans who made it but shows no figure traveling along it, so too does the dog appear as the remaining vestige of a living being. Like the huge truck tire left abandoned on the road, the dog is a lone object in the desolate landscape (fig. 5). Even when other dogs or people are present in Sarmallahti's photography, they do not interact with each other. Moreover, despite his apparent loneliness, the dog does not care to approach the photographer, even notice him.

The avatar of the artist, the dog discovers the world. As John Berger muses, "Probably it was a dog who led the great Finnish photographer to the moment and place for the taking of these pictures. In each one the human order, still in sight, is nevertheless no longer central and is slipping away. The interstices are open" (5). But although the dogs "are the natural frontier experts of these interstices," the realm they open



5 Pentti Sarmallahti, "Venejärvi, Karelia," 1992. Gelatin silver print. 11.7 × 26.5 cm. Copyright Pentti Sarmallahti. Courtesy Candace Perich Gallery, Katonah, N.Y.

also closes shut before the photographer. The dog lives and moves in his surroundings, indeed is at home in them and commands their vastness in a way the human never will. Not a part of this foreign world, Sarmallahti remains melancholically detached from it in his observation. Hence, in Berger's words, "there is more solitude, more pain, more dereliction" (6). Not heeding the presence behind the camera, the dog thus signifies a lack of communication and the silence of the landscape. He is also the totem of its secretiveness.

In sum, if photography points to the imprint of what was but no longer is, Carter, Thormann, and Sarmallahti point to yet another absence—what the photo cannot show at the moment when it was taken, a vastness of the world of the dog that it can never capture. All three remind us that dogs inhabit a realm foreign to us, an awareness that is cause for melancholic reflection but also a certain humility on our part. In other words, in their engrossing photography something hopeful countervails their melancholy, namely, an openness, a possibility, a limitlessness, or, in Berger's words, "an expectancy which I have not experienced since childhood, since I talked to dogs, listened to their secrets and kept them to myself" ("Opening a Gate" 6).

#### Ivan Turgenev and Tibor Dery

The questions, whose silence? and whose melancholy? lie at the crux of the political allegory involving the dog. Censorship, either internal or external, is a form of silencing, leading an author to take recourse to

allegorical indirectness, such that the injustices done the canid represent the oppression of the human being. The animal's mute, helpless response to physical deprivation and senseless cruelty illustrate its master's forced silence. Since the latter cannot tell his story, the dog's story must stand in for it. Because the focus is not on the human but a mere pup, the author can feign that his topic is an innocent one and not a subversive criticism of the state. However, the charade of naïveté actually serves to mock and taunt the political and social status quo. Such irony and mockery, though, do little to mitigate the persistence of melancholia—the listlessness and despair that result from being robbed of direct critical speech. As in Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev's story "Mumu" (1854) and Tibor Dery's short novel *Niki: The Story of a Dog* (1956), melancholia manifests itself in the presence of coerced silence.

Mumu is a spaniel; however, the muteness in Turgenev's tale belongs to the main protagonist who is a deaf-and-dumb serf named Gerasim. Like other realist narratives, such as Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's tale "Krambambuli" (1883), D. H. Lawrence's story "Rex" (1936), and Vittorio de Sica's film *Umberto D* (1955), "Mumu" aligns the oppression of the poor and voiceless with that of the dog. In more ways than one, then, the muteness in "Mumu" pertains to the human. It is also intimately connected with the loss of the spaniel, thus suggesting a Kristevan descent into symbolic collapse.

The story runs as follows. A strong, massive peasant, Gerasim is summoned to Moscow by his owner, an ailing old woman, to join her retinue of servants. There he falls in love with one of the laundresses, Tatiana, and despite his physical handicap and shyness endears himself to her. As fate would have it, though, one day the old lady decides to promise Tatiana in marriage to Kapiton Klimov, the drunken shoemaker, in the hope that a wife will turn him from his vice. Fearing Gerasim's wrath on hearing the news, the servants encourage Tatiana to trick him by playing drunk so that he will despise her and fall out of love. Hiding his feelings, Gerasim displays no sign of sadness at her loss, apart from seeming somewhat more morose than usual. One day Gerasim happens on a drowning puppy whom he rescues. She is a pretty spaniel with large expressive eyes and long ears, and he passionately cares for her like a "little nursling" (379). Knowing that his "inarticulate sounds call the attention of others" (379), Gerasim names her Mumu. The crotchety old lady, however, again intervenes in the burgeoning happy relationship when she comes to fancy that the dog's barking keeps her awake all night. Though Mumu's delicate little voice had only been raised to ward off an intruder, she must be disposed of.

Gerasim rescues her from the initial banishment and tries to sequester her away in his garret, but unbeknownst to him her cries for attention betray her hideaway. He then, tacitly resigned to the wishes of his mistress, takes it on himself to kill the dog, in the end wringing her neck and dropping her body into the river. Following this painful incident, Gerasim packs up his meager belongings and returns to the countryside.

Throughout the story, Gerasim is compared to various animals—a strong, young bull, a gander of the steppes, a bear, a lion, and, generically, a beast. In the final words of the story, he is implicitly compared to a dog: his fellow peasants observe that he needs no watchdog for no thief would dare go near his dwelling. With such similes, the divisions between human and animal are traversed and establish the basis for further comparisons. About Gerasim, Turgenev writes: "Like all deaf-mutes, he was very suspicious, and very readily perceived when they were laughing at him" (363–64). Animals are often considered deaf and dumb in that they do not seem to be on the same communicative level as humans, and dogs in particular can be hurt when made fun of. But a special sensitivity comes with this lack of communication and tightly bonds the giant and his dog. This tie, however, does not hold. Mumu's trusting eyes fail to meet his at her hour of death, for he turns his head away from her. Not only deaf and dumb, he chooses to be blind as well. His obliviousness to her suffering, symbolized by his lack of hearing and sight, thus embodies human stupefaction: he is not even an animal, he is, according to the observation of one character in the story, a block of wood (369), and his face seems turned to stone (389). Notwithstanding his apparent dullness and denseness, Gerasim garners the reader's sympathy because, like Tatiana and Mumu, he is the victim of serfdom. His animal silence contrasts with the irresponsible, careless orders of the old lady.

But what does his muteness signify? The name Mumu spells out a stuttering, in fact, an inability to name. His devotion to the spaniel is dumb both in the sense of besotted and in that it is so deep as to be inutterable. Moreover, because he is unable to communicate his forfeiture of Tatiana, the dog serves to cover up and to displace this prior loss. In its alliteration the name Mumu furthermore suggests a repetition. Just as Gerasim returns her to the waters from whence he rescued her, so too does he return home in the end. At the start, the narrative mentions that he was deaf and dumb from birth. Then at the close, in an uncanny moment out of place in the realist narrative, Turgenev describes him as hastening "as though his old mother were waiting for him at home, as though she were calling him to her after long wanderings

in strange parts, among strangers" (403). Although Gerasim has no mother to return to, he does seem prompted to retrieve something at his birthplace, something doubly lost with first Tatiana and then Mumu, but ultimately left unuttered and unutterable, a traumatic parting that goes back to his birth and is connected with his mother. This loss, and with it an admission of love, seem to be repressed in the symbolic submerging of Mumu under water, which Gerasim cannot bear to watch. That is, perhaps it is not so much that he is born deaf and dumb and that these forfeitures occur subsequently during his life, but that inversely, on a symbolic level, separation precipitates his muteness and deafness. Words have lost for him their value in a devitalized world. He thus falls into Kristevan *Verwerfung*, refusing to admit his love and express his grief. Moreover, thrust into withdrawal, he fails to respond to or "hear" the world around him. Thus, in this repudiation, he goes back to his routine, as if nothing had happened. The only outward sign of his despondency is affective, that is, wordless, when two tears fall from his cheek as he gives Mumu her last meal.

Clearly, Gerasim's muteness also refers to a lack of voice under serfdom. The indenture reduces him to the level of an oppressed brute. To have no language means one has no power and means of protest despite one's massive size. Hence neither Gerasim nor any of the servants in sympathy with him can lift their voices in protest against the orders of the old lady. Turgenev's social criticism is thus strong but one that needs to be veiled through the poignant focus on the little bitch. "Mumu," in fact, belongs to a small but significant tradition of dog stories that are used as vehicles to express human muteness in the face of censorship.<sup>19</sup> What is prohibited from being uttered directly by a human being is represented via the dog, considered to be a creature without language. Over a hundred years later, Soviet writer Georgi Vladimov joins this tradition in *Faithful Ruslan: The Story of a Guard Dog*, which begins in the winter of 1956–57, after Khrushchev denounced Stalin and an estimated 8 million prisoners were released from the gulags. The novel, narrated from the perspective of the abandoned guard dogs from one such camp, tells of the dogs' incomprehension when the orders they were trained to enforce no longer hold. As we shall also see in *Niki*, here the dogs stand for human bewilderment and helplessness before arbitrary and perverse rule of law. Not surprisingly, although first conceived in 1963–65 as a short story entitled "The Dogs," *Faithful Ruslan* only saw print once its manuscript was smuggled out to the West in 1974. It first appeared with a German press in 1978 and was translated into English the following year.

Tibor Dery's *Niki*, although ostensibly about a dog, scathingly criticizes the repressive Stalinist regime in the author's native Hungary. Dery was prosecuted for writing this novel, dubbed "conspiracy against the state," and was sentenced for nine years, though released in 1960 due to international protest against his incarceration. His own gruesome fate is uncannily foreshadowed in *Niki*, where the dog's owner is imprisoned for five years for pointless reasons. The novel begins in spring 1948 with the fifty-year old engineer Janos Ancsa, a committed socialist, being posted to the directorship of the Mining Equipment and Tool Plant in Budapest at a time when Hungary's larger factories were being nationalized. Before he and his wife move to the city, a fox terrier mixed-breed bitch adopts them, preferring their gentle treatment to the rough handling and lack of care by its owner, a retired colonel. Mr. and Mrs. Ancsa come to realize that Niki's fear at raised voices "revealed and condemned the methods of intimidation of which she had formerly been the victim" (36). The novel is replete with such turns of phrase, which allude to the victimization of its citizens by the state. Indeed, although the subtitle reads *The Story of a Dog*, it is very much Ancsa's untold misery that Dery wants to impart, for the engineer is deposed from his position shortly after moving to Budapest, is arrested a year and a half later, and spends five years in prison, never informed of his crime, just as Mrs. Ancsa and Niki, through whose eyes the tale is told, barely hear news of him during this half decade. The very simplicity of the subtitle, then, characterizes the understatement and subtle irony that operate on all levels of the novel. The displacement of human aspirations, confusion, struggle, and grief onto the ordinary, simple-minded yet endearing mongrel lends to *Niki* a certain wistfulness, despite its bitter criticism of the communist regime. One is tempted to speak here of an ironic melancholia: Dery achieves distance from his painful subject matter via the displacement onto the bitch's story, whereby the necessity for this representational indirectness and inconspicuousness compounds his melancholia.

Tongue-in-cheek Dery admits that he reluctantly compares man to a dog, for "it would be blasphemous to draw a parallel between a soulless brute, and a man, with his sublime feelings and his vast intelligence" (68). On another occasion, Dery mimics the Communists' disparagement of the pet as a useless item of bourgeois luxury (30), implying, again in understatement, that his tale is insignificant. Yet such feigned self-deprecation actually functions to signal that its author is about to launch into trenchant comparisons between man and dog. As a domestic pet, Niki's liberty has to be kept in check, and discipline comes hard



to a young dog, even though, unlike on Hungary's citizens, "no pointless constraint was placed on Niki's freedom" (38). Dery compares her to men whose "nerves can only stand [punishment] if the subtle mechanism is revealed to them, if it is all explained to them" (68). More unambiguously, Dery later writes: "In her total dependence on man, Niki was like those detainees who have no idea why they have been put in prison nor how long they will stay there" (114).

Niki's freedom is priceless to her. Given that she must be confined to the apartment during long hours, when her owners do play ball with her, "as if to revenge herself for her lost freedom, she would destroy, with blood-thirsty fury, the very object that, for brief minutes, gave her back the illusion of freedom" (72). Mrs. Ancsa concludes from this intense play that "nothing can replace freedom, nothing can possibly be superior to it" (73). A few pages later, Dery then makes explicit the connection to the human longing for liberty: "Was she trying to make up for the miseries of the body, inflicted on her by the long inertia of winter, by a heightened intensity of feeling, as do prisoners shut up in cells for many years?" (75). As the years pass and Niki grows bonier and her hair duller and thinner, Mrs. Ancsa is tempted to attribute her infirmity to worms or cardiac affliction. "But Mrs. Ancsa understood, or thought she understood, her bitch's ailment better than that. 'It's the want of liberty that's killing her,' she thought. The liberty which would have included the right to live with the engineer, the master she had adopted for herself of her own free will" (138). Her torpor, in a decline that mirrors her owners', indeed becomes symbolic for the melancholy of an entire nation: during these years of the early 1950s, general "public feeling was in a state of depression" (105). Yet however much Tibor Dery deploys the dog for the purposes of his political fable, he never abandons deference to the creature itself; Niki's own listlessness becomes all the more poignant and salient through a respectful analogy to human emotional grief. Conversely, human incarceration appears all the more unbearable insofar as Dery points out that all living creatures naturally long for health and liberty.

It is, however, on the issue of communication and silence that the interconnection—the convergence yet also scission—between human and animal becomes most complex. After Mr. Ancsa is incarcerated and Mrs. Ancsa must try to make ends meet on her own, Niki is left more frequently alone. Her depressed resignation to this treatment expresses itself most saliently in her silence: "What gave [Mrs. Ancsa] the most pain was the terrier's silence, the muteness of her whole body. The bitch neither cried, nor argued, nor protested, nor demanded explanations,

and it was impossible to convince her. She simply resigned herself to her fate in silence. This silence, which resembled the ultimate silence of a prisoner broken in body and soul, was, for Mrs. Ancsa, like a violent protest at the nature of existence itself" (93–94). As Niki's health deteriorates, she becomes even more taciturn and remains mute for days at a time. "It was Niki's silence which made Mrs. Ancsa realise that the bitch was sick" (131). The fact that the creature knows not how to ask for help and withdraws into itself makes its suffering all the more painful for Mrs. Ancsa to watch.

Through Niki the reader is reminded that Mr. Ancsa, too, has become silenced: not only does the reader never hear his story but he is literally given no means of protest, even to inquire what his crime could have been, as the reader finds out on the last page when he suddenly appears before Mrs. Ancsa in the doorway:

"Were you told why you were arrested?"

"No," the engineer replied, "I was told nothing."

"And you don't know, either, why you were released?"

"No," the engineer replied, "I wasn't told." (144)

Of course, here silence is the prerogative of the state that exerts terror through being inscrutable and reducing its citizens to dogs in their utter dependency on its whimsical exercise of power. Niki, by contrast, however mute she might be, is beautifully transparent in her expression of both joy and sadness. Her body language is clear. On one issue, though, she cannot communicate to her mistress, and that is to tell her that she is still waiting for Mr. Ancsa to return home (107). Likewise Mrs. Ancsa is powerless to tell the terrier what she eventually does find out about her husband. "And even later when, three or four times a year, she was able to visit her husband in the Central Prison, she had no means whatever of telling the bitch about it. Yet Niki was in dire need of some such encouragement" (94–95). Is it then out of hopelessness, one wonders, that Niki finally dies?

The timing of Niki's death, or I should say, Ancsa's reappearance, comes as a shock to the reader: the dog dies hours before the husband walks in the door. Is it a senseless coincidence, mirroring the haphazard fate and pointless suffering to which the Ancsas are subject? Is her meager, short life intended to span and represent their most trying years? Does Dery wish to emphasize that Ancsa's ordinary story, an everyday occurrence in Stalinist Hungary, is not the heroic myth of Ulysses, whose dog Argos dies only after greeting his master on his return? Ultimately,



the reason for the timing of Niki's death is another of the silences in the novel. What one can say is that Dery refuses to sentimentalize the Ancsas' story by having Niki live to see her master again. Mrs. Ancsa does not even have a photograph to remind her of the terrier, but keeps, in the final words of the novel, "by way of a souvenir, . . . a stone which she had recently found under the carpet" (144). During a time in which she had no play toy, a stone was Niki's sole joy, a substitute ball that she would bring home. How, one asks, is one to commemorate such a life of poverty and deprivation? The novel itself, of course, does attempt to recollect, assess, and protest postwar years for the Hungarians, but, given that human life and happiness were officially treated as worthless and insignificant at that time, such a tale is bound to be, so to speak, nothing but a meager stone, merely "The Story of a Dog."

### Charles Siebert

Making the animal speak, as in *Faithful Ruslan*, or focusing on the dog, as in *Niki*, is a way of expressing one's own censorship and muteness—which brings us to the theme of stories that give the dog voice but in so doing also reflect on human muteness. Given all the talking-dog stories, comic strips, and movies, it is surprisingly rare to find those that take seriously the attempt to find an adequate voice for that which remains inaccessible. For how can one possibly capture the subjective character of an animal's experience in a language foreign to it? As mentioned previously, the real danger with such cynomorphic stories lies in their *Überbenennung*, in making the animal chatty, and therefore deliberately going to the opposite extreme from assuming it is mute.<sup>20</sup> Viennese writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal wrote that animals are "ciphers, which language is powerless to unlock" (*Prosa* 2:102) and that they "sense [*wittem*] that which goes beyond human comprehension" (*Prosa* 1:411–12). The challenge to which the poet would be drawn, her ideal, then, would be to grasp that which stretches beyond the confines of human thought. Accordingly, she would need to *wittem* precisely that which was foreign to her own perception of the world. In other words, the poet would take what Hofmannsthal called the animal's uncanny sensory capabilities as her own model.

Fundamentally motivating such writing would be the desire to escape anthropocentric limitations, which include those of human speech. To imagine becoming an animal, that is, holds the promise of breaking away from one's solipsistic self. A famous example of such

ecstatic taking leave of oneself occurs in Hofmannsthal's "Letter," where Lord Chandos writes of watching poisoned rats die and finding himself being filled, not with compassion, but something far more intense, "a monstrous sympathy, a flowing over [*Hinüberfließen*] into those creatures" (*Prosa* 2:17). Chandos confesses a simultaneous breakdown in human language: words dissolve in his mouth like rotten mushrooms (*Prosa* 2:13). This *Hinüberfließen* into mute beings, even into repugnant dying rats, leads him not only to ecstatic self-abandonment but also a liberating asymbolia: he instinctively realizes that words would be too restrictive to describe his new elated state.

Hofmannsthal was influenced by the German Romantic writers and he could have been alluding to the process of self-alienation that Friedrich von Hardenberg (also known as Novalis) wrote about a hundred years earlier. Breaking with the eighteenth-century notion of the Great Chain of Being, which placed rational mankind at its pinnacle, Novalis envisaged the final development of his hero Heinrich von Ofterdingen as a metamorphosis into a plant, an animal, a stone, and a star (1:392). Even more audaciously, Novalis pondered whether God, since he could become man, could not also become a stone, plant, animal, even an element, thereby instigating an "ongoing salvation in nature" (2:826). At the basis of such interspecies reincarnation was Novalis's response to Fichte's ego philosophy, which claimed that the self posits itself and everything around it. Novalis rejected the solipsism Fichte's philosophy entailed and envisaged instead an eccentric pathway to self-knowledge that demanded taking leave of the self: he spoke of the necessity of springing over oneself (*sich selbst Überspringen* [2:345]) and traveling away from oneself in order to return there (*zu sich selbst wieder heraus* [2:224]). Hence, his ideal of a perfect protagonist for a novel was someone who was so infinitely open to all experience that he could be transformed unendingly.<sup>21</sup>

Theologically speaking, Novalis's theory of metamorphosis is indebted to a Spinozistic pantheism (*Deus sive natura*), whereby all of nature is infused with divinity. As in Spinoza, it is not an undifferentiated unity of substance that concerns Novalis but multiple concrete individuations. The infinite multiplicity present in each individual and interconnecting them is what comprises the One; an infinity of modifications pervades nature and is identical and extensive with the infinity of God. In his advocacy of the freedom of radical transformation, Novalis strikingly heralds Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "becoming-animal," first mentioned in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* and then more fully developed in their similarly jointly authored

*A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Like Novalis, Deleuze and Guattari are concerned not with identifying with the animal but with becoming it, again following Spinoza, not in a totality or unity of substance but in accidental forms and haecceities: "Not following a logical order, but following alogical consistencies or compatibilities, . . . because no one, not even God, can say in advance whether two borders will string together" (*Thousand Plateaus* 250). Here, too, the vision is to break loose from a false sense of groundedness in one's (for Deleuze and Guattari, bourgeois and oedipalized) subjectivity. If one pursues the implications of Novalis, Hofmannsthal, Deleuze, and Guattari for cynomorphic tales, to narrate from the animal's perspective would mean to shift one's locus suddenly into an entirely different being and picture identification as a leaving of oneself. Consequently, the imaginative leap into the consciousness of the animal would signify not the attempt to erase differences but precisely the contrary—to think through the differences in all their alogical complexity and thus to gauge the vast distance from animal being.<sup>22</sup>

Virginia Woolf yokes such contradictory impulses in her novel about Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spaniel Flush. She probes into Flush's thoughts yet acknowledges the difficulty of accessing the canine mind: "And yet sometimes the tie would almost break; there were vast gaps in their understanding. Sometimes they would lie and stare at each other in blank bewilderment. Why, Miss Barrett wondered, did Flush tremble suddenly, and whimper and start and listen? . . . Flush was equally at a loss to account for Miss Barrett's emotions" (36). The fact that they cannot communicate to each other in words leads Miss Barrett to ponder whether "words say everything? Can words say anything? Do not words destroy the symbol that lies beyond the reach of words?" (37–38). *Flush* is one of the most notable cynomorphic stories to reflect on the impasses of interspecies communication. What makes it stand apart from other examples of this literary genre is that, rather than blithely anthropomorphizing the dog, making it into a mirror in which human behavior is confirmed, the gap between the species is acknowledged and probed.<sup>23</sup>

To operate at the edges of poetic language can also mean exploring the place where language is assumed not to be, namely, in animal consciousness.<sup>24</sup> In O. Henry's short story "Memoirs of a Yellow Dog" (1906), the canine narrator is suspicious of the power of human speech and wittily reverses the terms of who is endowed with language: "But, of course, he [his master] couldn't understand. Humans were denied the speech of animals. The only common ground of communication upon

which dogs and men can get together is in fiction" (99). In narrating from the consciousness of the dog and in their struggle to find an adequate voice for animal thought, Woolf and O'Henry thus explore the limits to human language.<sup>25</sup> Among cynomorphic tales the most extreme example of such self-reflection on language and the unbreachable gulf between species is Kafka's "The Researches of a Dog." As discussed in the introduction, the canine narrator, in failing to recognize species beyond his own, illustrates a profound *méconnaissance vis-à-vis* any being outside the confines of his own consciousness. In the bizarre creature that he invents, the Czech author illustrates the boundaries of access to the inner life of another being: this perplexing dog—neither humanlike nor doglike—embodies the failure of the writer's attempt to hypothesize him and to fashion a creature who makes sense. As with Lord Chandos, the attempt to imagine a *Hinüberfließen* into the mute animal entails the inability of human language to cohere.<sup>26</sup>

In his illuminating short history of the cynomorphic tale, Theodore Ziolkowski argues that what uniquely characterizes this literary tradition is how the canine narrator poses as a philosopher. I would add that it is most often about language and communication that the canine philosopher broods. A contemporary novel narrated from the perspective of a dog that sensitively reflects on the incommensurable gap in communication between species is Charles Siebert's *Angus* (2000). Its narrative structure alone is complicated. Angus is a Jack Russell terrier, who at the start lies dying, having been attacked by coyotes one night after his owners, on vacation in the woods of southern Quebec, let him out. But this very situation is itself unclear and only revealed in the course of the narrative that leads up to it. At the opening the reader can only discern that the narrating "I" has been wounded outdoors but does not know the circumstances. What is recounted from this starting point onward are the dog's last thoughts, comprising recollections from episodes in his brief life. The reader learns, for instance, of the warmth of the whelping den, how his owners arrive one stormy night to pick him out of the litter, of his constricted, frustrating existence in a London flat, his travel in the cargo hold to Brooklyn, and finally of the enticing outdoors at the cabin in Quebec. As he lays expiring, these past experiences and reflections on them flit by his consciousness, interrupted periodically by his owners calling "An-gus?" as they search for him in the dark. In fact, what makes this tale so intriguing is that it is rendered as the dog's stream of consciousness, with the staccato-like style, digressions, and self-questioning unique to this narrative technique.

The stream of consciousness allows Siebert to relay in prose the keen alertness and attentiveness to the moment that characterize the terrier breed. The narrative style itself is fragmentary and on edge, capturing the liveliness, intensity, and distractedness of the Jack Russell, who even in his last moments is "an urge, an instinct, trying to climb away from the consequences of responding to [the] last one" (113). This very rush of the senses leads Angus to find human responses slow and human lives full of incomprehensible tedium. He wonders, for instance, referring to the couple who own him, whether "sometimes the world doesn't move enough for you either" (59). Canine time thus contrasts with human time. Angus writes of his species: "We do sense things, the about-to-happen, the disposition of every day toward dishevelment. . . . We're tuned to the things you can't hear, to extremes. . . . There's no middle ground for us, no half measure. Again, your province, the lukewarm, the static sphere of hope, and doubt and worry" (86). Whereas the dog is attuned to a dynamic present, so much so that they can anticipate the "about-to-happen," humans are either beset by worries about the future or weighed down by remorse over the past. As Angus, the keen observer and philosopher of human life, remarks: "Deep sorrows, harbored grudges, regrets of the centuries? Your sphere, remember?" (79).

Charles Siebert thus inverts who is regarded as the dumb beast, in other words, which creature—dog or man—is deemed to be without the means to interact fully and immediately with the world. Through the dog's intense feeling and ability to communicate it directly, Siebert calls attention to the inarticulate human self. Only his mistress, whom Angus calls Sweet-Voice, is "restless, like me, impatient in her bones. She senses the unseen, the about-to-happen." "Her days, too, are sensory onslaughts, of textures and touch" (66). For instance, she is "just too impatient to hunt for the words" (105) to respond to her husband's empty chitchat, to his naive, offhand question about Angus, "What's he thinking?" (105). Indeed, Angus wonders if his humans are at all capable of imagining his world, at least to the extent that he tries to fathom theirs (33).

In his essay "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" philosopher Thomas Nagel investigates how inexorably foreign the subjective consciousness of another being is to us. His example is that of the bat whose sonar capability, "though clearly a form of perception, is not similar in its operation to any sense that we possess, and there is no reason to suppose that it is subjectively like anything we can experience or imagine" (483). This conundrum is not unique to the divide between species, for he also says that it occurs between people. For example, "The subjective character

of the experience of a person deaf and blind from birth is not accessible to me . . . nor presumably is mine to him. This does not prevent us each from believing that the other's experience has such a subjective character" (440). Nagel elaborates at length on how difficult it would be to imagine the subjective character of the experience of the bat: "I want to know what it is like for a *bat* to be a bat. Yet if I try to imagine this, I am restricted to the resources of my own mind, and those resources are inadequate to the task. . . . The best evidence would come from the experience of bats, if we only knew what they were like" (439). As the example of the deaf and blind person illustrates, however, it would be false to deny that person a subjective consciousness only because we cannot fathom what it would be like to be that person. Hence the same holds for other species: "The fact that we cannot expect ever to accommodate in our language a detailed description of . . . bat phenomenology should not lead us to dismiss as meaningless the claim that bats . . . have experiences fully comparable in richness of detail to our own" (440).

Charles Siebert's *Angus* is unusual in that, unlike most cynomorphic tales that have a dog straight-forwardly narrate its daily encounters, this novel attempts to render the phenomenology of the dog through the interior monologue, as it switches from registering present sensations to recollecting episodes from the past. In so doing, Siebert renders Angus's feelings, thoughts, and desires as "fully comparable in richness of detail to our own." Rather than, as one would initially think, contesting or disregarding Nagel's claims that we cannot imagine another's consciousness, he actually underscores their veracity by making us aware that we generally mistake a dog's lack of language to mean the absence of a complex interior life.<sup>27</sup> Angus himself challenges this false assumption in his rhetorical question: "Who deemed that . . . we be the dimmer ones who live so much more fiercely than you do?" (34). What is even more remarkable about *Angus* is that, not only does Siebert try to answer the question of what the subjective experience of the dog would be like (though the result is clearly fictional), he also has the dog ask this very question about humans. He then portrays the frustrating limitations Angus encounters in trying to comprehend the human world and adjust to it.<sup>28</sup>

Angus is a profoundly Lacanian dog who longs to reach the Other and who, though embodied in Angus's rather prosaic owners, still remains inaccessible and unfathomable.<sup>29</sup> Angus wants to understand, meet, and be the desires of Huge-Head and Sweet-Voice. If he could speak, his very first words would be "what is it that you want, and how can we get it for

you?" (142; see also 79).<sup>30</sup> Unlike Kafka's dog, who obstinately and implacably refuses to acknowledge species outside his own, whether they be birds or humans, Angus knows that the very ground of his being is defined by dependency. Who he is relies on a similarity and correspondence to this supreme Other: "So who and what are we really, then, and have we, would you say, hearts like yours?" (35). This address to the "you," indeed its pleading invocation, performs this subjection. Indeed, it is a recurrent refrain in the novel (see also 33 and 104). Moreover, it is not enough for Angus to wonder whether his existence could be confirmed by having a heart that pulsates with emotions similar to a human's, he must petition his owners on the matter. Thus, instead of the animal being considered mute, its language and desire are presented as the entreaty for dialog, an open address to the human being.

The pathos of this plea lies in the dog's struggling against the accusation of its inferiority yet feeling it nonetheless: "What are we, I wonder, that we have, like you, deep emotions and yet can't ever really live up to the notions you have of us? . . . What are we that we don't live up to your notions and yet end up living entirely for you?" (33). The repetition and the grammatical use of the question rhetorically underscore the longing. Indeed, because of its servile reliance on the Other and because of its constant second-guessing of human behavior, the dog lives against its will in a state of perpetual benightedness: "We will remain forever in the dark, won't we, about your moves, about what moves you?" (108). Conventionally, an animal's thoughts are seen as inarticulate and opaque to human understanding. Siebert dialecticizes this presumption by making the dog unknowable precisely because it mirrors back to the humans their own lack of transparency.

The intensity of Angus's dependency and longing leads him to make the comparison: "Our devotion makes yours pale" (92). This attentiveness, worship, even guarding meet the human's own profound neediness. The full citation reads: "Every day is an open book of devotion to me. That's why you keep us. I know that now. You keep us because our devotion makes yours pale" (92). Even as a puppy the Jack Russell terrier notices the clinging hands of Sweet-Voice and her lips pressed against him as expressing such a depth of "will and want and longing" (143) that he wonders where they come from (44). It is this Lacanian desire of the Other that Angus wishes to fathom and respond to. Reversing the question humans so often ponder about dogs, namely, what do they dream, here Angus wonders the same of his humans (91), in other words, he craves to know the unconscious needs of his owners, of which they themselves are not even aware.

In writing from Angus's perspective, then, Charles Siebert does not so much anthropomorphize him, imputing canine similarity with the human mind, as he probes the gaps between the two that lie at the foundation of the profoundly melancholic desire of one species for the other.<sup>31</sup> In so doing, he does not have the dog serve merely as the blithe narrator of external events but tries to imagine or track the dog's own form of consciousness. The results, the kinds of yearnings that arise in Angus's mind, are startlingly unique in the canon of the cynomorphic narrative.

### David Hockney

The modernist writer Elias Canetti pondered whether animals have less fear because they live without words (19). And early twentieth-century writer John Galsworthy postulated that the tranquility of dogs is tied to their muteness. For him, the essence of companionship with pets lies in the peacefulness and centeredness they can impart: "For it is by muteness that a dog becomes for one so utterly beyond value; with him one is at peace, where words play no torturing tricks. When he just sits, loving, and knows that he is being loved, those are the moments that I think are precious to a dog" (156). Such thoughts recall the silent meditation and calm Kierkegaard praised in nature. I had earlier positioned the Danish philosopher as offering a different way of conceptualizing the absence of language in animals, one that does not see it as lack. To regard the animal as dwelling beyond human language, then, can lead to two diametrically opposed views, both of which locate the animal as other to the human: animals may be either denigrated as inferior, dumb brutes or idealized as embodying an imaginary fullness of being that has no need of words. Such animal completeness and peacefulness are beautifully captured by American artist David Hockney in a series of oil paintings and crayon drawings that he made of his pet dachshunds. Hockney's collection *Dog Days* (1998) is a tribute to stillness, a reinterpretation of what animal muteness can be. If the best literature on the dog reflects on the impasses of communication with another species and hence on its own shortcomings and silences, what, one wonders, would be a comparable self-reflexive move in the visual arts? Like Thormann, Hockney suggests that the nonverbal art form can self-consciously gravitate to the representation of mute being—of the animal in deep sleep.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, his dachshunds' stillness makes Angus's thought seem voluminous.

Describing the genesis of his canine paintings, Hockney writes: "In order to draw them I had to leave large sheets of paper all over the house and studio to catch them sitting or sleeping without disturbance. For the same reason, I kept canvases and a fresh palette ready for times when I thought I could work" (5). The result is portraits of absolute calm and candor. Curled up together, their bodies pressed against each other, the pair of dachshunds lie in undivided repose and well being (fig. 6). Their warm russet figures sink into a lemony yellow pillow with sky-blue edging and demonstrate how color can set off form, the square cushion contrasting with their oval roundness. Hockney positions his canvas close to the dogs so that only enough of their surroundings—the pillow, wall, and floor—are depicted to frame them. This proximity and minimalism help to convey intimacy and simplicity. If Elaine Scarry has observed that "beauty always takes place in the particular," (18), then the beauty of these dachshunds seems to reside not in their generic dogness but in their specificity as Hockney's companions whom he so esteems and loves that he wishes to capture their perfection in his art. Some of the oils show one of the hounds preferring to sleep stretched out on its back; it is so trusting of its safe environment that it exposes its vulnerable belly. Beauty thus also lies in this arrested nature that the viewer can contemplate at ease, appreciating the dachshunds' self-containment and admiring the otherness of their rotund bodies and sleek coats. Complete and separate unto themselves, the dogs exist in their own serene world, without need of the addition or complementarity of words. Their perfection and apartness reinforce their muteness.

Hockney's canine portraiture is reminiscent of the German Expressionist painter Franz Marc, whose painting *The Blue Rider* gave the name to a school of painting centered in Munich before the First World War and to whom Wassily Kandinsky, August Macke, Paul Klee, Gabriele Münter, and Alexey von Jawlensky also belonged. Marc's numerous paintings of horses and deer share not only the same palette of primary colors as Hockney's (especially the redness of the animals) but also the striking juxtaposition of color. One of Marc's most famous works, *Dog before the World* (1912), depicts a seated white dog gazing intently into a distant landscape, its whiteness suggestive of its essential purity and simplicity.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, in an essay from the same year entitled "The New Painting," Marc spoke of the need to depict the "inner, spiritual side of nature" (102), and in "On the Animal in Art" (1910) he voiced that his goal was to "feel out the inner, quivering life of animals" (98). "Who is able to depict the soul of the dog?" (100), he asked, wanting to immerse himself in the essence or spirit of the animal in order to divine how it



6 David Hockney, *Dog Painting 42*, 1995. Oil on canvas. 12 × 15 inches. Copyright David Hockney.

pictured the world (*um dessen Bilderkreis zu erraten* [99]). He guided his vision according to how he imagined nature would reflect itself in the eyes of an animal (99).<sup>34</sup>

Marc's utopian artistic program may be foreign to Hockney, but the postmodernist does capture how the dog exists in a realm of purity unto its own. One could say that, with their roundness and repose evoking an interiority, his dachshunds embody a materialized secret. However much they might evoke the closeness and intimacy one experiences with a pet, they are still shut off in their own dream world. Surrounded by an aura of pale gold, like icons they exist in a realm of purity unto their own. This transcendence in the animal marks an outer limit of accessibility to the viewer. We are fascinated and transfixed by this body of the animal, so perfect in its existence, as if before the dogs' self-containedness we didn't exist at all. We, then, are the ones on the outside, without the pure subjectivity that the animal possesses.

Several of the paintings show one of the dachshunds, while still motionless and ear flopped over the pillow, opening an eye to check on its surroundings. The single orb gives the impression of being pure "eye." Before it drowsily shuts again, it briefly registers the world but

does not acknowledge it, as if the object it were registering (perhaps the viewer?) were not important but had vanished into thin air. In other words, this one open eye signifies a passive looking and not that the animal sees or acknowledges the human viewer. The languid gaze of Hockney's dachshunds, though, is not the profound, ideal recognition that the human longs to receive from the animal and that Maurice Maeterlinck, for instance, imagines seeing in his French bulldog's eyes: "He was there, studying, drinking in all my looks; he replied to them gravely, as from equal to equal, to inform me, no doubt, that at least through the eyes, the most immaterial . . . , he knew that he was *saying* to me all that love should say" (42). Rather, with Hockney's dogs, it is the look from the animal that is at one with itself and environment onto the human who doesn't possess that same groundedness, centeredness, and serenity. Contrast the gaze of Maeterlinck's dog, then, with J. R. Ackerley's Tulip's: "The look in hers disconcerts me, it contains too much, more than any beast may give, something too clear and too near, too entire, too dignified and direct, a steadier look than my own. I avert my face" (138). Unlike Maeterlinck, Ackerley notes the unsettling disjuncture between canine and human. Tulip looks back at the narrator, as if he were caught looking at himself, but her clear, steady gaze does not confirm him in his existence, rather he looks away in shame.<sup>35</sup>

I began this chapter with Rainer Maria Rilke, and I should also like to close with him. In his *Duino Elegies* (1923), Rilke addresses this precariousness and trepidation of the human when faced with the gaze from the animal. In the first elegy he writes that animals notice that we are not at home in the world: "und die findigen Tiere merken es schon, / daß wir nicht sehr verlässlich zu Haus sind / in der gedeuteten Welt" (*Werke* 441). [The knowing animals know / we are not very securely at home / in our interpreted world (5).] The phrase *gedeutete Welt* refers to a world signified through language, the act of interpretation that, say, Derrida's cat or Hockney's dogs, with their stillness and centeredness, have no need to command. But it is the eighth elegy that most famously juxtaposes human and animal gazes. It begins:

Mit allen Augen sieht die Kreatur  
das Offene. Nur unsre Augen sind  
wie umgekehrt und ganz um sie gestellt  
als Fallen, rings um ihren freien Ausgang.  
Was draußen ist, wir wissens aus des Tiers  
Antlitz allein. (470)

With every eye the creature sees the open.  
Our human eyes alone are inward-looking  
and stationed there for all the world like traps  
around the exit which they interdict.  
The world outside of mind we only know  
from the beast's face. (57)

For Rilke, the human is always a mere observer (*Zuschauer* [472]), never a participant in the immediacy and unboundedness of life. The animal's seeing is a full immersion in this openness. Our eyes, by contrast, are not focused on what should be manifest and clear; they are "turned around" or away (*wie umgekehrt*), in a sense blinded, so that they perceive what is only indirectly, via the face of the animal in which is embedded "the open" (*das Offne, das / im Tiergesicht so tief ist* [470]).

In a line that speaks to the gaze of Hockney's dog, Rilke furthermore writes, "daß ein Tier, / ein stummes, aufschaut, ruhig durch uns durch" (471). [A dumb brute, / in looking up, serenely looks straight through us (57).] The phrase *durch uns durch* suggests simultaneously both a penetrating look that sees through human dissimulation and a disinterested gaze that goes through us, as if we didn't exist at all. Either way, this gaze positions the human as always standing outside, in opposition to life (*gegenüber sein / und nichts als das und immer gegenüber* [471]), in contrast to the animal's state of grace in oneness with life. The animal perceives a world that is intact (*geheilt für immer*) and sees itself not just as part of a whole but itself in the whole (*sich in Allem* [471]). Whereas the first elegy suggested that man was not at home in this world because he interpreted it, here the key to the animal being able to see such wholeness, oneness, and openness is that it is *stumm*.

And yet (*Und doch*), Rilke cannot help but register that a certain melancholy with its weightiness and care (*Gewicht und Sorge einer großen Schwermut* [471]) also clings to the warm-blooded animal, that it is often overwhelmed by memory of a happier past. Again, then, we come back to the question, Whose melancholy? Are Hockney's sleeping dogs reminiscent of the tired hound curled up in Dürer's engraving and thus related to the iconography of melancholia? Although the eye is open in expectancy, is it about to close again out of the boredom and listlessness that characterize the melancholic temperament? Because the dogs cannot tell us how they feel, ultimately we cannot interpret their pose, and it is this uncertainty and unbridgeable distance from the pet that is otherwise so close—and our resignation to the fact of this separation—that

renders us bereft. However long we immerse ourselves in gazing at Hockney's dogs, we cannot reach into the painting and stroke them.

Yet it is also our melancholic longing for the grace and redemption though the animal, for this closeness to it, that creates the loveliness of Hockney's art. Beauty resides, too, in seeing the perfection of the animal Other, in the idealization of the beloved object with which, though, the melancholic can never be intimate enough. This idealization and yearning also inform the labor of artists to be discussed in the next chapters—among them Michael Field, Marie Bonaparte, Elizabeth von Arnim, Rhoda Lerman, and Sally Mann, who in their works, in the last words of Rilke's eighth *Duino Elegy*, are constantly taking leave of their beloved pets: "so leben wir und nehmen immer Abschied" (472). [Thus, do we live, forever taking leave (61).] Thus art tries to articulate loss and silence and, in some measure, to compensate for them, yet art is also consciously marked by its deviation from its original model in the living animal. As Kristeva points out, the melancholic is deeply familiar with the arbitrariness of the signified. As I have attempted to show, all the artists discussed in this chapter grapple with and reflect on the limits of representation. They do so in mute sympathy with what the animal itself cannot utter.



## Shame

Under the knife of his murderers, Josef K. dies in Kafka's novel *The Trial* (1925) comparing himself to a dog: "Like a dog," he said, it were, as if shame [*die Scham*] should survive him" (*Der Prozeß* 165). A sense of shame, both Freud and Lacan intimated, is what sets the human apart from animal. Lacan noted that the animal became human the moment it confronted the problem of what to do with its excrement. And in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) Freud remarked that the two traits of the dog that make it repugnant to man are its lack of shame about its excrement and its sexual functions (14:459). If Josef K. dies in disgrace, is he paradoxically more human than dog for his sense of ongoing shame? In the vivid experience of shame, our entire being feels engulfed and overcome. It leaves us grappling and hopeless. Thus Josef K. muses in his abrupt last thought that it seems shame would outlast him. Shame indeed can be so powerful that it possesses the whole self to the point that it becomes synonymous with a painful self-consciousness. Western philosophy, of course, has denied animals this capacity for self-consciousness—the reflection on one's present state of being—in order to reserve it as the preeminent characteristic of the human. Dogs are said to lack shame because they apparently cannot internally observe, monitor, and castigate themselves. Why then does Josef K. compare himself to a dog in terms of shame? Is it because he feels, due to a sense of shame, less than human? In this case, since degradation is shameful, it turns one into a subhuman creature, "like a dog." The reader thus confronts the dilemma: Is Josef K. in his

7. This inability to declare or concede closeness furthermore explains the “fear of the familiar” among the postmodern artists Steve Baker discusses and it informs the abjection with which they display the body of the dead animal (as with Jordan Baseman, Mark Dion, and Damien Hirst), as if trying to exorcise any conceivable tie to it as an individual, living being.
8. Baudrillard brilliantly draws out the implications of animals not being “intelligible to us either under the regime of consciousness or under that of the unconscious. Therefore, it is not a question of forcing them to it, but just the opposite of seeing *in what way they put in question this very hypothesis of the unconscious, and to what other hypothesis they force us*. Such is the meaning, or the non-meaning of their silence” (138).
9. I am thinking here of Adam Phillips’s characterization of psychoanalysis as “essentially a transitional language, one possible bridge to a more personal . . . idiom. It is useful only as a contribution to forms of local knowledge, as one among the many language games in a culture” (8). I thereby acknowledge that at different times I deploy different psychoanalytic models that can compete with each other, for instance, in chapter 3 I turn to Jessica Benjamin, whereas in chapter 1 to Julia Kristeva. I have opted, however, not to take on the task of sorting out their differences.
10. For an excellent overview and assorting of the various theories of melancholia from Aristotle to Kristeva, see Radden’s introduction to her collection of excerpts from these various thinkers.
11. I wish to echo the words of Elizabeth Costello in J. M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals*: “That is the kind of poetry I bring to your attention today: poetry that does not try to find an idea in the animals, that is not about the animal, but is instead the record of an engagement with him. . . . That is why I urge you to read the poets who return the living, electric being to language” (51, 65).
12. I here borrow throughout this discussion from the masterful exegesis by Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panowsky, and Fritz Saxl. They examine the philosophic, astrological, medical, and art historical traditions, leading back to the Ancients, that informed Dürer’s etching.
13. Taking this medical-philosophical tradition into consideration, one finds much in Lucian Freud’s oeuvre that would signal the melancholic humor. The somber tones characteristic of his canvases seem to reflect a certain malaise. In the spirit of the melancholic, Freud shuns ceremony and paints a drab reality. Mostly composed in his studio and adopting unsettling angles, the works emit a sense of claustrophobia; the space is eerily barren and littered with used paint rags, which art historian David Cohen called “overt symbols of mortality” and “symbols of the passage of time, of waste and decay” (35). In the sparseness of the decor, it was as if Freud, like Dürer’s Melencolia herself, wanted to see beyond materiality and uncover the truth behind appearances.
14. See the collection of illustrations in Schuster, vol. 2.

15. Dürer also painted the sighthound in his engraving of Saint Eustache. According to legend, the saint was hunting when he discovered a stag with the crucifix mounted on its antlers and instead of shooting it, knelt down in prayer. The dogs stop their coursing as well and look on with awe or respectfully lie down. The dogs participate in experiencing the miracle and regard nature as a manifestation of the sacred, of which they too are part. Here then, again, the dog can represent the reverse facet of melancholia—instead of regarding the world as empty, nature is idealized and sublimated.
16. Unless I specify another source, all translations are my own.
17. The page reference is to the German edition, *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, while the translation is from *Kafka’s Selected Stories* (New York: W. W. Norton, forthcoming). I thank Stanley Corngold for sharing his translation with me before it went to press.
18. Could Kafka here be alluding to the fable by Jean de La Fontaine where the wolf says to the dog that he prefers to keep his freedom, even though he is starving, rather than be subservient to a master?
19. Compare Deleuze and Guattari, who maintain that all resemblances between man and dog are “energetically eliminated. Kafka attacks ‘the suspect temptations of resemblance that imagination proposes’; through the dog’s solitude, it is the greatest difference, the schizo difference that he tries to grasp” (*Kafka* 14) and that “it is no longer a question of a resemblance between the comportment of an animal and that of a man; it is even less a question of a simple wordplay. There is no longer man or animal, since each deterritorializes the other, in a conjunction of flux, in a continuum of reversible intensities” (22).

## CHAPTER ONE

1. Rilke’s first *Duino Elegy* inverts this claim: “die findigen Tiere merken es schon, / daß wir nicht sehr verlässlich zu Haus sind / in der gedeuteten Welt” (441). [The knowing animals know / we are not very securely at home / in our interpreted world (5).] Now it is the humans who are estranged from the world because they interpret it. I shall return to the *Duino Elegies* in the conclusion of this chapter.
2. Derrida further discusses Heidegger’s essay in *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*. Lippit investigates Derrida on Heidegger (55–66). See also Agamben’s lengthy analysis of Heidegger in *The Open*.
3. That nature is in need of salvation after the Fall is also reflected in Rom. 8:19: “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.” Rilke similarly posits the need for salvation for the animal when, referring to the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 27, he writes at the close of the sixteenth sonnet that he shall present the dog to God for a blessing: the dog is Esau in his hide (*Esau in seinem Fell*), for his coat actually disguises his humanness, which is evident in his loyalty and willingness to



- share man's company. Contrast this with Milan Kundera's observation in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1982) that the longing for Paradise is man's longing not to be man and that dogs were never expelled from Paradise: "No one can give anyone else the gift of the idyll; . . . The love between dog and man is idyllic. It knows no conflicts, no hair-raising scenes; it knows no development" (298).
4. Cary Wolfe, in an analysis of Lyotard on language, goes one logical step further and says that to deny animals the capacity to phrase also means that the "'silence' and 'feeling' of the mute or unspoken are not available to the animal" (16).
  5. Compare the feminist-inspired short story by Ursula K. Le Guin, "She Unnames Them" (1985), where the animals in the world decide to abandon their names. As a result, the female speaker says: "They seemed far closer than when their names had stood between myself and them like a clear barrier" (27).
  6. Wolfe aligns Derrida's interrogation of this philosophical tradition with biologists involved in animal language studies, such as Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, who look at how the linguistic patterning among animals is not dissimilar to human language-building systems.
  7. In his 1980 novel *Loim (Far Away)*, French psychoanalyst J.-B. Pontalis has his narrator dream that he is writing at his desk, while his dog is growing impatient, wanting to go out. He tells him, "I promise, in just a moment." Astonished to see the dog in response moves its lips, he bends down to him, only to hear in soft but clear words the rebuke, "I don't believe you" (148).
  8. See Ziolkowski's treatment of this tradition in his essay "Talking Dogs: The Caninization of Literature."
  9. Cf. the concluding words of Marian Scholtmeijer in *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction*: "In their very being, animals repudiate our efforts to subjugate them to cultural purposes. When we ask them to affirm the importance of human existence, their silence is more articulate than any of the words we impose upon them" (297).
  10. Compare Lippit's related questioning: "Given the openness of animals, what Lyotard refers to as their 'passivity,' one must ask whether human beings have learned to read or decipher such animal disclosures. And to the extent that animals are incapable of maintaining secrets, mustn't one question not only the nature of their expression but also its figurative modalities, its expressive form? For if animals are indeed incapable of language, as most traditional philosophers argue . . . , then mustn't one be attentive to the possibility that another communicative medium may in fact be operative in nature's animal provocations?" (22).
  11. In discussing Hearne's response to Wittgenstein, Wolfe perceives that she actually takes a hint from his notion of a shared language game. He points out, that, according to Wittgenstein, "a world emerges from building a shared form of life through participation in a language game. And

- indeed, this is the direction in which Hearne has taken Wittgenstein's cue in her writings on how the shared language of animal training makes possible a common world between beings with vastly different phenomenologies" (5). But Wolfe then goes on to say that Hearne thereby limits her very attempt to open up transspecies dialogue: "It is not at all clear, of course, that we have any ethical duty whatsoever to those animals with whom we have not articulated a shared form of life through training or other means" (8).
12. Clark similarly observes that Levinas "reminds us that the animalization of animals is in its own way also deadly, and thus worthy of our concern. How are animals animalized by humans? Levinas's answer is at once complex and brutally simple: *we eat meat*" (169).
  13. Clark is more skeptical: "Levinas continues to feel as if his account could, at any moment, fall into mere fabulation, or worse, sentimentality. Throughout, the thought of the animal is always somehow too anthropomorphic, always vanishing beneath the surface of its humanistic interpretations" (173).
  14. Because of its compensatory function, the presence of a dog will always mitigate against the psychotic state of *Verwerfung* where no substitute or language is allowed, and which explains why elderly patients and autistic children will unexpectedly communicate with a therapy dog; they abandon the mutism of *Verwerfung*.
  15. There is some ambivalence in Kristeva whether fetishism functions as a cure or symptom of melancholia. She writes that the fetish "appears as a solution to depression and its denial of the signifier" (45); at the same time, like melancholia, fetishism operates via disavowal of loss and adherence to the object.
  16. Revealing this melancholia to be operative on a mass scale (though hardly expressive of the beauty of sublimation!) is the pervasive "disnification" (Steve Baker) of the animal. John Berger, in particular, has pinpointed how in industrial and postindustrial societies the existence of the household pet itself compensates for how animals have otherwise disappeared from daily life: pets are thus themselves a sign of bereavement.
  17. Compare Lippit on animals, affect, and the absence of words: "The other side of thought . . . appears in the animal's visage—a countenance that, for Giorgio Agamben, 'always seems to be on the verge of uttering words.' On the verge of words, the animal emits instead a stream of cries, affects, spirits, and magnetic fluids" (166). He also observes that the animal marks "a limit of figurability, a limit of the very function of language" (163). Lippit examines how Lewis Carroll, Franz Kafka, and Akutagawa Ryunosuke dynamically stretch the limits of language in their treatment of the animal. In this chapter I am looking more at melancholic linguistic breakdown, which is empathetic with the animal's imputed muteness.
  18. Since contact with canine somatic communication can prevent humans from falling into *Verwerfung* (see n. 14 above), where can one look to find a suitable illustration of the third Kristevan category? William Wharton's *Birdy* (1978)

takes as its subject the melancholic desire to communicate with the beast, resulting finally in the loss of ability to speak with one's own species. *Birdy* demonstrates the mania possessing one boy to chirp, fly, and even mate as a bird. The main protagonist, nicknamed Birdy, psychotically tries to imagine away the barrier between himself and the canaries as well as between dream and reality. By the end, which is where the narrative begins, he is housed in a mental institution fully incapable of human speech. He thus moves from the *Verneinung* of difference (between the species) to the catatonic extreme of *Verwerfung*. Yet despite the psychosis into which he descends, Birdy's capability for empathy and compassion is also portrayed by Wharton. The boy melancholically senses his separation from his comely pets: "I'm yearning to shift my finger through the bars of the cage and touch her foot. I feel caged out of her cage" (45) or "I feel like an awkward giant; the bird is only a bit of feathers beating and struggling in my hand" (204). Birdy lyrically expresses admiration for the gracefulness of the canaries, the longing to share in the beauty of flight, and the effort to imagine their existence. But the desire to be part of the animal world, the tragedy of human exile from it, is ambiguously sullied by the teenager's alienation from his own body: "They don't recognize me at all. . . . It makes me feel rejected, alone. I spend my days watching different birds with the binoculars because it gets me close, blocks everything else; the birds fill my whole vision. . . . I'm getting to hate taking my eyes from the binoculars and looking at myself and everything around me. My hands, my feet, are grotesque. I'm becoming a stranger in myself" (203). The melancholic feels unworthy, for the loss of closeness to the desired object translates as a sense of his own deserted, devalued self.

19. "Mumu," *Faithful Ruslan*, and *Niki* are political allegories, but inner censorship can also structure masquerade in dog stories that allude to homosexuality. For more on this topic, see my article "Literary Fiction and the Queer Love of Dogs," in particular the discussion of Jean Dutourd's novel, *A Dog's Head* (1951).
20. I borrow the term "cynomorphic" from Theodore Ziolkowski. Cynomorphic tales are ones narrated from a dog's perspective in the third person or by a dog in the first person. On language and animals in literature, see also Margot Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination: Darwin, Nietzsche, Kafka, Ernst, and Lawrence*. For her, the beasts are these writers themselves, "who create as the animal—not like the animal, in imitation of the animal—but with their animality speaking" (1). She calls such writers "biocentric."
21. For a lengthy discussion of this matter see my article, "A Higher Language: Novalis on Communion with Animals."
22. Note the difference here to the highly anthropomorphic arguments of Temple Grandin, the autistic woman who has designed humane devices for cattle being led to slaughter. She argues that her autism, her thinking in pictures rather than words, allows her to perceive how animals see the world.

What she does share with the writers discussed here, however, is an awareness of the limitations of human language. And she cautions: "Animal researchers take a lot for granted: 'animals don't have language,' 'animals don't have psychological self-awareness'—you find blanket assertions like this sprinkled throughout the research literature. But the truth is, we don't know what animals can't do any better than we know what they can do" (Grandin and Johnson 283).

23. Neumann argues that the portrayal of the dog in art and literature is devoted to holding up a mirror to the human being—for instance, the dog becomes the symbol of idealized human loyalty or fidelity. In the play between man and animal, nature and culture, talking dogs represent the artist's desire for spontaneous, natural speech.
24. Lest one also assume that animals have no artistic sense, see the fascinating collection of photographs in Vicki Mathison, *Dog Works: The Meaning and Magic of Canine Constructions*.
25. Compare Scholtmeijer's general comment about the animal in fiction: "But since fiction does not close off the world, it is in a unique position to give material representation to the inadequacies of language and thus to sustain without finality the multi-sided and conflicted being of the animal. Fiction elicits the reality of the animal by revealing the fragmentariness of human responses" (*Animal Victims* 91).
26. Compare Norris: "Speaking as the animal requires the abolition of human speech and the repeal, if not entirely of the intention to communicate, then certainly of the intention to mean and signify. But the solution to this dilemma could not simply be silence: it had to be silence with a difference, silence that signaled the renunciation (not merely the absence) of speech. Only Kafka and perhaps [Max] Ernst, in their repeal of reason and logic and in the strategies to frustrate meaning and communication, approximated this condition" (225).
27. The majority of works in the popular cynomorphic genre (which I would set in opposition to the philosophic tradition Ziolkowski uncovers) banally reduce what could transpire in a dog's mind to fixation on a bone, anticipation of the next walk, or preoccupation with scents on the roadside. Nagel's point is that we cannot know that their inner consciousness is so simplistic.
28. In "Our Friend, the Dog" (1903), which is similarly an homage to a dead pet, Belgian writer Maurice Maeterlinck also muses on how arduous the task must be for a young dog to adapt to the arbitrary strictures of human life.
29. The epilogue in which the author assumes back his own voice is flat and mundane. Here he narrates how they found Angus and took him to the veterinarian, where he dies.
30. To appreciate Siebert's uniqueness, contrast his depiction of Angus with Norris's characterization of animal behavior: "The animal's desire is direct and appropriative while the human's is mediated and directed toward the recognition of the 'other.' . . . The animal is autotelic and lives for itself in

the fulness of its being while the cultural man lives in imitation of the desire of the 'other,' driven by his *manque à être*; the animal surrenders to biological fate and evolutionary destiny while the human disregards the physicality of what is and reads his fate in the gaze of the 'other'" (4).

31. To speak through the dog in the cynomorphic narrative is to incorporate the dog into one's own body, to become one with its voice. It is thus an inherently melancholic genre. Martin Buber, who often speaks of the "melancholy of our fate" in *I and Thou*, refers to his cat's glance as a "speech of disquietude" and, much like Siebert, sees in this glance an array of pressing questions that the cat poses to him about their precarious interdependence, that for that moment of the glance becomes an I-Thou relational event: "The beginning of this cat's glance, lighting up under the touch of my glance, indisputably questioned me: 'It is possible that you think of me? Do you really not just want me to have fun? Do I concern you? Do I exist in your sight? Do I really exist? What is it that comes from you? What is it that surrounds me? What is it that comes to me? What is it?'" (97). As in Siebert, this ventriloquized rhetoric of questioning stems from a melancholic desire to be closer to the animal.
32. Although they share a fascination with sleeping hounds, the two artists could not be more different: Thormann is preoccupied with the intangibility and enigma of their dreams, while Hockney focuses on the immediacy of their dormant bodies.
33. In an essay wonderfully entitled "Iphigenie als Hund," Johannes Langner argues that the pose of the dog recalls Anselm Feuerbach's 1871 painting *Iphigenie*, which Marc's own *Exlibris* lithograph also resembles with a seated woman posing pensively, her chin propped up by her hand. I would add that this iconography traces back to Dürer's *Melencolia I*, with the result that Marc could be collapsing into one figure the white hound of Dürer's engraving and *Melencolia* herself!
34. Compare Rilke's notion of gazing into the dog discussed at the end of my introduction.
35. Gerhard Neumann, in an article on the motif of the dog and ape in literature, argues that the gaze of the dog functions as a mirror to the human: it authenticates or guarantees his identity and bestows a false sense of the true and natural. Neumann's insight would apply to Maeterlinck's *Pelléas* but not to Tulip, who, precisely because she signifies a natural authenticity, serves to expose Ackerley's disingenuousness.

## CHAPTER TWO

1. Wills mistranslates *pudeur* as "immodesty" (372), hence I cite the French original.
2. See Morrison and Stolorow.
3. Jack Katz writes: "Literature has suggested that shame is the primary social emotion, in that it is generated by the virtually constant monitoring of

the self in relation to others. Such monitoring . . . is not rare but almost continuous in social interaction" (210).

4. Donald Nathanson, in his introduction to his edited volume *The Many Faces of Shame*, writes: "The human being is not the only animal that displays shame affect. One of the reasons dogs have been the favored companion of so many people for so many generations is the general resemblance of the canine facial affect system to that of the human; Darwin drew many of his analogies from pictures of dogs. It is hard not to smile when a beloved dog, made aware of its transgression, responds to verbal censure with bowed head, averted eyes, generally decreased body tonus, and drooping tail" (30-31).
5. Rego is one of the leading figurative artists today. Starting with her first major piece, *Stray Dogs (The Dogs of Barcelona)* (1965), canines populate her works. Almost as if they were her familiar, they figure alongside women from the *Girl and Dog* series (1986) to *Betrothal* (1999).
6. The impurity of the mongrel mix between human and canine haunts several examples of contemporary science-fiction novels. Neither human nor animal, the figures in Carol Emshwiller's *Carmen Dog* (1988), Kirsten Bakis's *Lives of the Monster Dogs* (1997), and Jeff Noon's *Pollen* (1995) represent awkward, provisional bodies. In Emshwiller's feminist novel, females of all species start to metamorphose and are subject to degrading experiments and persecution by the male members of society. The heroine Pooch develops from the household pet into a lovely woman who still carries with her the subservient modesty and self-uncertainty of a downtrodden dog. In Kirsten Bakis's novel, the dogs are the actual result of cruel operations that embedded voice boxes in their throats and substituted prostheses for hands. Having taken up abode in New York City, they are the object of "amusement and revulsion" (7). The main character, Ludwig von Sacher, is sensitive to the shame of being "ugly parodies of humans . . . caricatures of human beings" (8) and recognizes that "there is no place for monsters in this world" (8). In *Pollen*, the character Clegg exclaims: "Shit, there's too much dog in me, I guess. . . . You humans don't know what it's like. The dog in my veins is a slave to love" (150). If Rego's dog-women seek to release the instinctual in themselves, the cyborg dog is ashamed of its animal residue.

But if Bakis's cyborg dogs dress in nineteenth-century garb and sequester themselves away from the shaming gaze of humans, in Noon's postmodern world, hybridity and fluidity are inescapable and everywhere: "Every combination was there. Not many pure dog or pure human, but hundreds of crazy messed-up mutants in-between. Evil-looking creatures for the most part; bits of dog sprouting from human forms, scraps of humanity glimpsed in a furry face" (95). When, at the end of the novel, the canine-human mutant Coyote dies, he springs from the grave again: "His body is a compound of flora and fauna; flowers and dog-flesh. And humanity. Somewhere in that bouquet, a tiny trace of the human" (239). Contamination becomes a cause for reveling in a polymorphous

- Meat*, Sue Coe repeatedly observed the horror and fear of animals watching as, in front of them, their fellows are stunned and have their throats slit.
12. Wurmser differentiates between shame as stemming from the violation of self and guilt from the violation of others (17). See Lewis's helpful table on the differences between guilt and shame (113).
  13. See also Elizabeth Costello's words in *The Lives of Animals*: "To be alive is to be a living soul. An animal—and we are all animals—is an embodied soul" (33).
  14. See Joseph de Maistre: "The innocent can pay for the guilt . . . a less valuable life can be offered and accepted for another" (358).
  15. In *The Lives of Animals*, Elizabeth Costello compares the killing of animals in the meat industry to Treblinka.
  16. See Derrida: "I situate disavowal at the heart of all these discourses on the animal" ("And Say the Animal" 128).

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## Index

- Abracadabra* (Rego), 79
- Abraham, Nicolas, 7, 138, 144, 149, 164, 170
- "Account of the Most Recent Fortunes of the Dog Berganza" (Hoffmann), 29
- Ackerley, J. R., 64, 188n35
- Adams, Carol, 11, 111–12, 181n2, 192n6, 192n11, 195n9
- Adams, Richard, *The Plague Dogs*, 190n6
- Adams, Robert, 111
- Adams, Shelby Lee, 194n29
- Adamson, Joseph, 74
- Adam's Task* (Hearne), 31–32
- affect: animal, 72, 73, 84, 102, 189n4; definition of, 110; human, 71, 72, 123; and muteness, 38–39; of shame, 11, 71, 72, 74, 84
- Agamben, Giorgio, 27, 175, 181n5, 183n2, 185n17
- All the Dogs of My Life* (von Arnim), 113–16
- American Human Society (AHA), 171–72
- American Kennel Club, 2, 136
- Amores Perros (Life's a Bitch)* (Iñámitu), 145, 167–72, 173
- "And Say the Animal Responded?" (Derrida), 98, 99, 175, 196n16
- Angus (Siebert), 57–61, 141, 143, 187n30
- animal caring ethics, 11, 112–13, 181n2
- Animal Portraits* (Schels), 81–82, 191n12
- "Animal que donc je suis, I'" ("The Animal That Therefore I Am") (Derrida), 5–6, 27, 30, 45, 69–71, 82, 173, 193n23
- animal rights, 4–5, 9, 111–12, 116, 123, 173–74
- anthropocentrism, 8, 23, 28, 54
- anthropomorphism: and animal emotion, 6, 82, dangers of, 29, 35, 155–56, 173; "deanthropomorphism," 24; of nature, 32; and nonreciprocity, 56, 105–6; resisting, 3, 155; sentimentality of, 6, 101, 102, 103, 123
- Anubis, 150
- Aristotle, 11, 27, 182n10
- Attridge, Derek, 173, 174–75, 178
- Audry, Colette, 144; *Behind the Bathtub*, 141, 145, 151–56
- Auster, Paul, *Timbuktu*, 29, 141
- Bachmann, Ingeborg, "Das Gebell," 193n26
- Baker, Steve, 90, 91, 102, 103; "disnification," 29, 30, 185n16; "fear of the familiar," 4, 134, 166, 182n7
- Bakis, Kirsten, *Lives of the Monster Dogs*, 189n6
- Bark*, 3
- Barnes, Djuna, *Nightwood*, 190n8