

In Dog He Trusts: Retrieving Burke's Pun from Goodall's Detective Trilogy

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Puns are central to dramatism, offering alternative meanings and voices, both within and across texts. As such, the dog-god pun guides an interpretation of H. L. Goodall, Jr.'s "detective trilogy," focusing on the drama of the self in quest, as well as his interactions with the various "others" encountered. The dog-god pun reflects the carnal and spiritual dimensions of the quest, involving both gender and ethnicity, particularly as they are enacted within the rock n roll of Goodall's narrative ethnography. This essay traces the development of the dog-pun, drawing parallels between Goodall's detective's voice and that of mystery writer Raymond Chandler's own detective, Philip Marlowe, and the cycle of guilt, purification, and redemption.

You *get* this pun, understanding that the pun is wordplay, or, a play on words. The pun in the title, "in dog he trusts," relies on the similarity of *sound* between "dog" and "god." However, your interpretation is also based on understanding the *context* in which the pun occurs: "In God We Trust," which is the motto appearing on U.S. monetary currency. And maybe you have a sense that "god" and "dog" are also opposites, in a couple of ways. One word is the other spelled backwards, or *vice versa* (cf. Burke, "Language 73; Empson, "Structure" 163-164). But perhaps you also think they are opposites in terms of order or hierarchy. And you may find humor that something "lower" is supplanting something "higher." Of course, the humor might depend on what you think or feel about dogs. Or god (cf. Burke, "Rhetoric of Religion," "Language," "Rhetoric of Motives").

I didn't start out looking for the god-dog pun; rather, it emerged as I read Goodall's "detective trilogy." I'd come looking for the organizational detective, finding him in the pages of an article published in the *Southern Communication Journal* (1989a). Goodall's detective is a real wise-ass. He'd been reading Raymond Chandler's detective novels and I could hear Chandler's detective, Philip Marlowe, in Goodall's voice. However, by the time the article was

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published in Goodall's next book, *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery* (1991), some of the detective's wise-ass attitude was gone. This led me to consider Goodall's use of puns, but left me with a mystery: what had happened to Goodall's detective?

In keeping with the "spirit" of the final book of Goodall's detective trilogy, *Divine Signs* (1996), I enter his texts, retrieving opportunities to riff on Goodall's use of puns, particularly in *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery* (1991), and to resurrect a discussion on the representation of race, which has been a point of critique in *Casing a Promised Land* (Descutner), but which is much more ambiguous in *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery* (1991). Goodall's books offer an opportunity to show how puns function in the service of "spirit," and how puns and spirit resonate with Goodall's representations of race, religion, and rock n roll (cf. Rushing).

The detective trilogy is Goodall's journey of his "*self in quest*" (Rueckert, "Drama" 96; emphasis added), his path to finding a way to exist in the academy and the world. The quest marked Goodall's defection from more traditional ways of approaching the study of communication; his quest marked his dissatisfaction with how he had been doing scholarship. It made Goodall question the communication discipline, his career, and his future in academia ("Casing"). This quest is consistent with the purpose of Kenneth Burke's dramatic perspective. It is no surprise, then, that Burke is prominent in *Casing a Promised Land* and *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery*. Goodall's quest continues in *Divine Signs*, and while Burke is used in a more subdued manner, Goodall's use of puns is more explicit. In the final book, puns are linked with "spirit," which is Goodall's central interest; Goodall does not reference Burke when referring to puns, but his familiarity with Burke's theories—in which puns play a significant part—suggests that a longer look at Goodall's use of puns is warranted.

Puns

Puns are a type of word play, used by people in both oral and written discourse, in art and in nature (Bates; Culler).¹ However, puns are maligned, viewed with suspicion, and induce snarling in others because puns run against the everyday business of logic, reason-giving, making arguments, and moving forward with whatever it is we are talking about, or writing about (Bates; Pollack). Rather, puns are subversive, run contrary to our taken for granted ways of communicating. Additionally, puns may also address "fundamental divisions in the writer's mind" (Empson "Seven" 192; see also, Pollack); the idea here is that there are opposing *contexts* involved, and that there would be some sort of conflict, or dissatisfaction in the mind of the writer (Empson, "Seven" 193).

¹ Puns are found in the literature and poetry of Milton and Shakespeare, in the philosophical treatises of Plato and Aristotle, in nature, and advertising (e.g., Bates; Brown; Culler; Lederer; Pollack; Quandt; Redfern).

To the extent that Kenneth Burke's dramatism guides much of Goodall's research, it is worthwhile to consider how puns are used within Burke's perspective, since both Burke and his critics acknowledge the significance of puns as a central element within dramatism.² For Burke, puns have an "important and serious function" and it is in puns that he puts "the heart of what he has to say" (Hyman 60). The analysis of puns is central to "the drama of the self in quest [which] is the idea that lies behind the whole theory of symbolic action" (Rueckert, "Drama" 90).

Burke (1984) extends puns conceptually through his discussion of puns as way to develop a "perspective by incongruity," which he refers to as "a methodology of the pun" ("Attitudes". 308-314). Puns are infused with symbolic content that is tied to the purgative and redemptive journey: the cycle of guilt, purification, and redemption. This includes cathartic imagery of the body, expressed as the "thinking of the body," in which the so-called "demonic trinity"—the scatological analogies that are sexual, urinary, and fecal—must be expressed in order for redemption to be complete (see Rueckert "Drama"). And as Burke "turned his attention to shit" (Hawhee 125), we may say that the self-described "word-man" is our most pungent "pun-gent."

The Detective as Dog

As metaphors go, a detective and a dog are not so far apart. Consider that the term "sleuth," which is synonymous for "detective," is a shortened form of the word "sleuthhound," another word for "bloodhound" (Guralnik 1339). Critics have been referred to as "barking dogs," who use reason to "scratch" for the meanings of art (Empson, "Seven" 9). Like the Cynic philosophers of ancient Greece, whose rejection of conventional behavior in ancient Greece caused them to be named after dogs, Goodall's detective trilogy presents an alternative to, and a rejection of, some of the conventional forms of argument and logic of research generally, and to more traditional "realist tales" in particular (Van Mannen).

And Goodall's detective may have a bit of the dog in him. Consider interpretive scholar Michael Pacanowsky's comment to Goodall at an academic conference, that Goodall's study of a computer software firm, investigated by Goodall as an organizational consultant in the guise of a detective, is a "portrait of the artist as a young dog," which Goodall assumes is Pacanowsky's "way of providing a moral for my immoral willingness to be seduced into serving the needs

² Burke's use of puns is consistently evidenced in his major works, appearing in a number of books including *Attitudes Toward History*, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, *The Rhetoric of Religion*, and *Language as Symbolic Action* and the unfinished *A Symbolic of Motives* (Rueckert, "Drama," "Symbolic," "Essays"). The most prominent statement about Burke's use of puns found in Rueckert's *Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations*.

of the military/industrial/high technology complex" ("Casing" xiv-xv). The allusion to James Joyce's book, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) suggests an alternative reading, one that is different than Goodall supposes. Joyce's book was revolutionary in transforming fiction (see Gorman v-xii), and the Joyce pun may suggest that Goodall's contribution to interpretive scholarship and narrative ethnography might potentially transform academic research (cf. Boylorn; de la Garza, Krizek, & Trujillo; Descutner; Lindemann; Ruud; Tracy).

Ambrose Bierce's *Enlarged Devil's Dictionary* defines "dog" as "a kind of additional or subsidiary Deity designed to catch the overflow and surplus of the world's worship" (Hopkins. 69). The idea here is that dogs are praise-worthy in their ruggedness, their reliability, their good nature, their rebelliousness (see Empson, "Structure" Chap. 7). However, dogs remain in a subordinate and hierarchal relationship of dog to god, Empson comments on the relationship between the words "dog" and "god," noting that "the 'swearing by Dog's wounds instead of God's might also be mentioned; the dog is God's opposite in sound so you can swear by him as the scapegoat—blame everything on the dog'" ("Structure" 167). Relatedly, in American slang, "doggone," is a euphemistic substitution for "goddamn" (cf. Empson, "Structure" 167; Guralnik, 415). And in the role of the scapegoat, we can imagine the dog as a means of purification, and thus redemption.

In short, the word dog has been transformed over time: once, "dog" was a metaphor for bad temperament, lose morals, filth, and cruelty (Empson, "Structure" 163). However, "dog" became associated with "natural wisdom, faithfulness" (164), "cheerful stoicism based on independence and indifference to dignity" (166). Empson states, "when you call a [human being] a dog with obscure praise, or treat a dog as half-human, you do not much believe in the Fall of Man, you assume a rationalist view of [human beings] as the most triumphant of the animals" (176).

Goodall's detective is suggestively linked with words that are themselves linked with dogs. Goodall ("Casing," expanded edition), in reflecting on his search for self-as-a-researcher, states that the process entailed "separating from what I thought I was—an academic—from who I lived myself into being whenever I could—a *rogue* rock n roll detective" (173; emphasis added). The term "rogue" is linked with "dog" in Empson's examination of the development of the term "rogue" ("Structure" 161; 166). Empson provides an example from 17th century literature in which the human rogue "shakes his ears" at life, dog-like behavior signaling a sense of independence, which Goodall also manifests in his writing, his own declaration of independence directed at the constraints of academic writing; the bark of a dog-like critic who "shakes his ears" at traditional scholarly writing, with its god-like omniscience.

And so I examine Goodall's detective trilogy for evidence of the dog-god pun, knowing that the words might in some senses be opposites, and might therefore

reflect some sort of tension or division that is part of Goodall's quest. And that the detective trilogy reflects not only Goodall's quest, but bleeds over into the stories he tells about the "others," who are also humans on quests, and who are, like Goodall, temporarily suspended in webs of hierarchic and symbolic orders, moving upward and downward, alternately drawn to both "dog" and "god," symbols, respectively, of the carnal and the spiritual (cf. Pollack 142). Within this framework, I ask the following research questions: (1) how do Chandler's ideas about developing the voice of his own detective, Philip Marlowe, relate to Goodall's detective's voice? (2) how is the dog-god pun used within and across Goodall's detective trilogy? and (3) how is Burke's purgative-redemptive cycle enacted in Goodall's detective trilogy?

Analysis

The analysis is of three parts. The first part examines Goodall's ("On Becoming") initial detective story, describes the genesis of Goodall's dog-god pun, and how the revised version of that text ("Living") brings together Raymond Chandler's ideas of "cannibalization" and Kenneth Burke's idea of mortification, and how Goodall's modified narrator conforms with Chandler's ideas on the proper heroic attitude for his own narrator, Philip Marlowe. The second part argues that Goodall's detective metaphor has been largely replaced with the dog-god pun ("Living"), and pays particular attention to how that pun juxtaposes Goodall drama of the self with various "others," and that representations of religion, region, race, and rock n roll conform to Burke's purgative redemptive journey. The third part of the analysis focuses on Goodall's ("Divine") most explicit theoretical acknowledgement of the pun's subservience to "spirit." Goodall's use of the dog-god pun is used to interrogate that limitations of oppositional forms of argument. Goodall's sense of "spirit" inspires a critical look of Goodall's use of the god-dog pun in terms of ethnicity.

Hounding a Pun

In *Casing a Promised Land*, Goodall notes that he's "been hitting Raymond Chandler novels pretty hard" (7), and notes that "in choosing the prose style of a mystery writer — in my case the persona of an independent private investigator...a scholar enters into the culture of organizations armed with a sense of mystery" (xiii). There are still a lot of tales in the book with Goodall being the detective, but unlike his first detective story ("On Becoming"), the book's stories are sandwiched between more theoretical chapters, where Goodall is "telling," not "showing." Goodall is a detective by virtue of telling us that he is adopting that metaphor, a metaphor that at times strains. As a researcher, there is a need for Goodall to tell what he is doing while noting Chandler's influence. Goodall's

(“Casing”) narrator’s voice echoes that of Raymond Chandler’s narrator, Philip Marlowe, and both Goodall’s and Chandler’s detectives dovetail with Burke’s ideas.

Raymond Chandler uses the term “cannibalization” when referring to his practices of making modifications or combining parts from his previously published stories in small “pulp” magazines (e.g., *Black Mask*) to recreate content in his larger novels (Day 214; Durham 4; Hiney 103-104; MacShane 67, 84, 168; Marling 31). In translating Chandler’s idea of cannibalizing into dramatic terms, it is no great stretch to find associations with death and killing. For Burke, the hope is that language provides ways to dramatize situations so that human beings don’t really have to kill one another. In this way, the symbolic violence suggested through cannibalization may be seen as the “scapegoating” of others or “mortifying” ourselves.³

I use Goodall’s first detective story, which first appeared as a journal article (“On Becoming”) around the same time as the publication of *Casing a Promised Land* and which “should have been includ[ed]...because it so clearly sets the noire detective tone” (Goodall, “Writing” 80).⁴ The earlier story was included in a revised form as a book chapter in *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery* and in an “expanded edition” of *Casing a Promised Land*. I use the earlier edition to show how Goodall used puns and how Goodall’s voice changes over time, to mark those convergences with Chandler’s ideas on how a literary version of a detective should

³ Burke uses a variant of the word “cannibalization” in a discussion involving “body puns,” when he notes that “cannibalistic connotations could be interpreted as a tragically dignified version of an infant eating its feces” (“Language” 341; see also Burke, “Religion” 260-263). In Goodall’s text, however, it is the “elimination” of text for authorial and narrator mortification. I will note also that Burke is second to none when it comes to cannibalizing previously published essays to put into larger works, including *A Grammar of Motives*, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, *Language as Symbolic Action* (1966) and the various attempts to envision *A Symbolic of Motives* (see Rueckert “Symbolic”).

⁴ Goodall, also, cannibalized his previous studies. In this essay, “autocannibalism” might refer to the “ingestion of one’s own body [of work]” (Petty 27). For example, “Writing Like a Guy in Textville: A Personal Reflection on Narrative Seduction,” includes parts of the story about Mr. Seeman that has been previously published in *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery*, the expanded edition of *Casing a Promised Land*, as well as the version published in the *Southern Communication Journal*. Importantly, in all of these cases, there is a sense that the reason for the cannibalizing is for expanding previously published work. Fletcher suggests that the “spiral-form” informs much of Burke’s writing, where shorter essays are understood in the context of larger and more encompassing ideas (154-155). The same sort of idea may inform both Chandler’s “cannibalizing,” and also Goodall’s. Thus, in “Writing like a Guy in Textville,” Goodall is expanding on ideas, ideas about writing that “genderally” involved male writers.

act. I also use it to show how Chandler's ideas about his own writing converge with Burke's.

Goodall's first detective story begins with a pun, which does much to establish a *noir* voice for the detective, with "voice" being a central concern in autoethnography (Goodall, "Living" xvii):

His name is Edward R. Seeman.

"Call me Ed," he commands as we shake hands. We are doing the usual male thing with the squeeze, each one of us applying a little more pressure until it becomes just uncomfortable enough for one of us to release. Because he's paying the tab, I release, although I don't want to. *Call me Ed*, you muse, Call me Ishmael, and his name is Seeman. Where's the whale? (Goodall, "On Becoming" 42)

Goodall's presence as the narrator-detective is established immediately. The pun is used as a "wisecrack" — standard patter for the detective genre since the 1930s (Hiney 104) — which establishes the detective's voice. In case the reader misses Goodall's pun, we are shoved — and not too gently — to confront the pun.

Goodall's detective mocks Seeman's demand for informality ("Call me Ed"), by first repeating what Seeman demands, and then mimicking it ("Call me Ishmael"). Goodall provides contextual clues to help the reader "get" the pun. First, the sentence, "Call me Ishmael," is a very famous first line of the Herman Melville novel, *Moby Dick*; in the book, Ishmael is a "seaman." In case the reader needs more context, Goodall's comment, "Where's the whale?" refers to the novel's whale, named Moby Dick. Here's the question: Does Goodall want us to hear the pun, hearing "Seeman" as "seaman"? Presumably he does, and the references to *Moby Dick* are meant to lead us toward that interpretation. However, it is the reader who must assemble the clues; Goodall's detective does not supply the reader with the word "seaman." Rather, "Where's the whale?" is more wise-guy patter to coach the reader's association to the word "seaman," which is the pun, an artifact of Goodall's establishing his narrator's ethos as a wise-guy.

Goodall's use of the term "muse" also offers some foreshadowing of the dog-god pun that will become prominent in later works. That is, Goodall uses the term "muse" as a synonym for "ponder." However, the word "muse" is also linked to *the muses*, "the nine goddesses who presided over literature and the art and sciences" (Guralnik 938). Additionally, the word "ponder" is also associated with dogs, in the sense that to ponder is to "stand with one's muzzle in the air" [and] "to think deeply and at length" (938). The muzzle also has alternative meanings, including "the projecting part of the head of a dog," but also refers to "prevent[ing] from talking or expressing an opinion" (940). Thus, the reader senses that the "detective" acts like a dog. Sniffing around for clues, being dogged.

So here is a phrase, "*you muse*," which implicate not only god and dog. Although Goodall's detective speaks in the second person (i.e., "you"), he is his

own audience as well, such that when he says to himself, “you muse,” he also suggests the reader as well as himself; thus, both author and reader are tied to the ideas of “god” and “dog.” And although Goodall is writing in a style that is mostly antithetical to the traditional voice of god-like omniscience, he still retains vestiges of that voice, and that vestige become stronger throughout the detective trilogy.

The passage suggests a certain god-like judgment or grinning dog-like cynicism that the detective has for Seeman. Because, clearly, Goodall’s detective is not really pondering, he’s made up his mind: Seeman is a jerk. And Goodall’s use of the second-person (“you muse”) makes the reader complicit with the detective’s judgment of “Call me Ed,” which is not kind. Goodall mocks Seeman throughout the story, repeatedly referring to him not as “Ed,” but rather, as “Call me Ed.” The reader hears “Call me Ed” as the detective’s ongoing wisecrack, a feature of the detective genre (Hiney 104).

In the story, when Goodall first states, “Call me Ishmael,” his detective’s voice is an aside, an intrusion on Seeman, and is mocking Seeman even as he feels obliged to engage in the “usual male thing,” which Goodall disdains. Beyond that, the name “Ishmael” is a Biblical reference to one of Abraham’s sons, the one who is banished to the desert, but who becomes the leader of the Arab tribes. Thus, we have two Biblical allusions, one to “the promised land,” which is part of the title of Goodall’s first book of detective stories (*Casing a Promised Land*), and the second to a mythological figure, Ishmael, whose descendants also figure into the story of “the promised land.”

In the introduction to *Casing a Promised Land*, Goodall states that “this is a new *promised land* made out of a rhetoric of technology and hypercapitalism, a place where the future makes the news everyday” (xii; emphasis added). But the name “Ishmael” — the son banished — is associated with outcasts and exiles (Kazin; Pettey). One gets the sense that Goodall’s dissatisfaction with the traditional forms of writing — making arguments — left him feeling isolated; *this* is Goodall’s *quest for self* — the central tenet of dramatism — that led him to forge a new path, a more literary one, which Goodall details at the end of *Casing a Promised Land*. Thus, not only is Goodall “casing” a new technological promised land, he is making a “case” for narrative ethnography, which is Goodall’s own “promised land.”

Goodall maintains the wisecracking detective — especially in regard to Ed — throughout his first detective story, published in the *Southern Communication Journal*, referring to Seeman as “Call me Ed” over 30 times. However, Chandler, in discussing his own writing and the construction of his detective-narrator Philip Marlowe, believed that “he [i.e., Chandler] must not make his hero too-self-indulgent” or “give an offensively cocky impression” (Hiney 104). It is here that the editing out of material between versions of the same story suggests the convergence of Chandler’s cannibalization with Burke’s mortification. When Goodall’s first detective story was republished in *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery*, the most notable revision was that references to “Call me Ed” were replaced by

“Ed.” The net effect of this is that the detective narrator comes across as far less of a wise-ass. Goodall is constraining, mortifying his narrator, thus securing redemption for the detective narrator, and by extension, himself. But this may be also understood as Goodall’s desire to perfect his detective, and the idea that Goodall’s love for the detective-narrator is symbolically attained by killing off particular characteristics; in this we can note the temporary attainment of Goodall’s mythic quest, a grappling between *eros* and *thanatos*, between love and death (see Burke, “Language” 388).

Eventually, the detective story ends. It ends with a powerful woman who has “something, something ineffable, in her eyes” (Goodall, “On Becoming” 54). And the quality of being “ineffable” is, by definition, “too awesome or sacred to be spoken,” like God’s name (see Guralnik 719). And it is this ending in which the detective finds redemption, a way to carry on, even when he’s been conned. Goodall’s detective doesn’t always come out on top; the detective-consultant is more-or-less snookered; it turns out he has been hired to produce a bogus report that is part of a larger game. In this story, Goodall’s detective is at his Chandlerian best: proud and heroic, aware, and “fit for adventure” (Chandler 18). When Goodall realizes that the fix is in, that he’s just been a pawn in the corporate game, he notes that “there are times in your life when even your best dog...won’t bring you any comfort” (“On Becoming” 52). Thus, the hierarchic order of corporate life is set up by the pun, and ends with the detective, who shares substance with his “best dog,” faces off—both grappling and admiring—the “ineffable” god(dess). In sum, Goodall’s best detective story marks the beginning of the end of the detective, while providing the origins of his use of the dog-god pun.

Rocking in the God and Dog Mystery

Goodall’s *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery* is primarily about Goodall’s experiences in a rock n roll “cover band,” playing music already popularized by those who originated the songs. For Goodall, “rock n roll” is more than music; it refers to all manner of other social life, including the doing of narrative ethnography and autoethnography (Chap. 1).

We journey with Goodall into Alabama, and his arrival juxtaposes southern gothic imagery with that of the “New South,” a place that *appears* to be up-and-coming. In *Casing a Promised Land*, Goodall travels down “narrow, shoulderless, potholed roads lined with rotting wooden two-room rusty tin-roofed shacks” (1) before entering the New South and the cultures he studies, yet all the while noting the cultured divisions between men and women, rich and poor, Blacks and Whites. Goodall’s stories show us the ways of life, and we see the problems of people and society.

Other stories are blended into Goodall’s narratives about the band, but the book’s pastiche jacket cover is a clear sign of its content: Goodall’s sea-foam green

Stratocaster electric guitar, a bottle of Jack Daniels Tennessee Whiskey, a White Dog tee-shirt, the sunglass-wearing white hound wagging a long red tongue to rival The Rolling Stones own logo, an adorably cute black-and-white puppy of indeterminate breed, and a group photo of the band, with Goodall staring off to the right, hands hanging off the belt loops of his jeans, wearing a “wife-beater” tee-shirt, and, a *goddamn*—or “doggone,” if you prefer—mullet haircut. And the name of the band and the tee-shirt with the dog logo run along the bottom of the photograph. It is clear, readers: *We are under the sign of the dog*. And the dog—appearing three times on the jacket—is foundational, in the sense that the words of the book’s title, “*Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery*” rest atop those dog images.

After that, Goodall-the-detective pretty much vanishes, a somewhat “banal” metaphor slipping away as the dog-god pun emerges (cf. Frith 118). The dog-god pun is perhaps a reflection of division in Goodall’s mind. It is clear in both *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery* and *Divine Signs* that Goodall is purposefully juxtaposing “dog” and “god.” Pollock notes that “punning reveals the naturally competing impulses, carnal and spiritual, that lie within most people” (142); these ideas seem to line up with those of Empson, Freud, and Burke. For the purposes of this essay I’ll tend to use “dog” as the base from which spring the *carnal* and *showing* and *description*, and “god” as a base for *spirit* and *telling* and *theory*.

Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery includes chapters that largely privilege either *theory*—a “god-term” for academics—or doggish description. The theoretical chapters frame the overall narrative, telling us the theoretical bases from which Goodall then shows us self, others, and contexts. The book is a bit more theoretical than *Casing a Promised Land*, with more chapters that lean toward god than to dog. That said, the book problematizes theory, which is characterized as mysterious and god-like (“Yahweh”), such that “our scholarly lives are spent contributing to and occasionally revising the sacred texts that we pass on to new generations of worshipers” (31). Such nipping supports Goodall’s argument for broadening what counts as scholarship, and the book is an example of a new way of sacred writing.

Within each doggedly descriptive chapter, the theory-gods are segregated. In particular, the writers informing Goodall’s perspective—Herbert Blumer, Kenneth Burke, and Mikhail Bakhtin—are presented as monumental, assuming their positions as theoretical gods, architecturally rising to prominence at the top of the page at the start of each chapter. Rather than disrupting the “showing” of the story, with Goodall forcing himself into the position of having to strain his voice to make Houdini-like escape moves—as if wriggling free from a theoretical straightjacket, magically inserting himself into the text to demonstrate theoretical interpretations, then extricating himself to continue the story—the theory reclines, Sphinx-like, mysterious, a riddle, an enigma. Their positioning is redemptive, although their *segregation* from the story told is suggestive in ways that will become apparent.

In addition to combining telling and showing, Goodall combines images of God and dog to suggest regional violence and incivility of people out of touch, out of patience, and out of time: “God is well-armed around here, inspiring a belief in instant guard dogs with bad gums who bare their teeth and barbed-wire fences upon which grow roses the color of blood” (“Living” 180-181). Goodall shows us a South that “is a mythical substandard land where Confederate flags still blazon the rear windows of dangerous pickups, pickups that proudly display gun racks upon which are mounted real guns” (179). And Goodall has hatred and fear, and the guilt of hierarchy, of being “up” when others are “down.”

The regional violence is enacted in familial conflict. Goodall spends a day with real estate agents on a caravan showing houses or “dreams.” One of the agents, who becomes Goodall’s pal, is Drew Thompson, who is also Goodall’s bandmate in the White Dog rock n roll band. The violence and incivility get closer to home when Goodall describes a father-son interaction between Drew Thompson, and “Mr. TMT,” who is Drew’s father, and owns the real estate company. There seems to be little affection between father and son, and Drew and his dad are at odds over religion; Drew was “reared a strict Southern Baptist...until he gave his soul to rock n roll and broke with his father over the hypocrisy of deacon religion” (199), which gives local church officers authority over non-religious matters. Understand Drew’s father as a sick old White man, a bible-beater for a hard-ass God, who whips his son like a dog because Drew doesn’t spout enough real estate company gospel to suite Mr. TMT. And Goodall’s response is that “in my heart, for a brief but certain moment, I wish [Mr. TMT] would simply die. This is a report, you understand, from the friend who just saw his pal *put down*, the same friend who has been hearing consistently negative stories concerning the ‘father’ of this particular business family” (199; emphasis added); and hear the “put down” of Drew, as a dog, being symbolically euthanized. In this scene, we are given a foreshadowing of the last book in the trilogy, *Divine Signs*, in the shape of a White God to come, and how do we find community with people with whom we cannot communicate?

Once the day is over, and Drew ceases to be “Mr. Salesperson Anonymous,” he becomes “the guitar-god of WHITEDOG” (Goodall, “Living” 186). Again, Goodall joins “god” and “dog,” and it is the proximity in time and space between the two words that suggests that Goodall’s wordplay is a conscious decision. There is a sense of hierarchic order between the terms “god” and “dog,” which is enhanced by the fact that “god” is singular and is being used to refer to an individual (“the astonishing Drew Thompson”), while “dog” is used to refer to the collective unit, the band “White Dog.” In the hierarchy of the band, we have a sense of ambivalence about Goodall’s status in the band; Goodall is the “guitar player” to Drew’s “guitarist,” and Goodall tells us that he and Drew have spoken of the difference. This is more apparent during the band’s gigs. On stage Goodall is introduced as “Doctor of Rhythm, Doctor of Style, the One and Only Dr. Bud”

(p. 186). Dr. Bud is “god-like” in the eyes and ears of the audience, but that’s about it. “Dr. Bud” is the lesser god, often the “dog” to his pal Drew’s “god.” And to Dr. Bud’s credit, he accepts his “dogness,” acknowledging Drew’s superior guitar chops:

Playing rhythm to our Hendrix and Led Zeppelin set does not involve very much thought. Hendrix and Page were great lead artists, so this is all about the astonishing Drew Thompson, and over here on the corner of the stage good ol’ three-chord me is just along for the ride. (245)

Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery comes to its climax as both the band and their audience achieve some sort of divine state. We get the sense that Goodall’s religious upbringing may have at least partially worried itself into Goodall’s consciousness:

Then it was God’s turn to speak.

Thunder shakes the building and the lights dim, but our instruments—thank you sweet rock n roll Jesus—never fail. Maybe God is speaking to me directly...And maybe Jesus, who was, after all, God’s rock n roll son and who did, after all, die once already for our sins, is up there jamming with the WHITEDOG band and doesn’t want the song to end.

I don’t know.

I left the church years ago, preferring the energy of faith to the boredom of religion.

(251)

The detective has left the building, but the goddamned band remains. But *maybe* Jesus is jamming with the band, and is, in fact jamming with the band because he—Jesus—“doesn’t want the song to end.” And maybe, just maybe, the White Dog for whom Jesus died is symbolically redeemed—is raised up—transcending their “dogness.” Better yet, the men and women of the audience are on the verge of some sort of transcendence, and are becoming divine figures. And yet. Are the humans/dogs being raised up as gods? Or are the gods being lowered to dogs?

From where I am standing this scene looks like a Baptist version of hell. Everyone has the look of pure drunken fornicating ruin and nowhere is repentance in sight. The Angel of the Lord has joined hands with the Holy Ghost and is headed for the soft backseat of an old Chevrolet parked in the lot outside. And that angel is *ready*, honey, and I wouldn’t be surprised if the Holy Ghost was carrying a gram or so of coke, either. (253)

The representation of the audience on the dance floor seems something out of Hieronymus Bosch’s painting, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Goodall looks

down and notes that “bodies and souls rub and bump and grind, there is slut dancin’ going on right down in front of me” (253).

One might wish—given the god-like status Goodall grants Bakhtin—for a more carnal and less “disciplined” view of the bodies in the Chevy’s back seat. Carnivalized bodies are “epitomized by events and activities in which the boundaries between bodies and between bodies and the world are most obscured and eroded,” such as copulation and defecation (Jefferson 166). In the soft backseat, “the carnival body is a collectivised jumble of protuberances and orifices,” including breasts, butts, stomachs, penises, vaginas, lips and mouths (166). But instead, Goodall’s reader is taken to the brink of sex.

Goodall gives us a view of religion that is at once dog-like in its cynicism, a grinning rejection of the religion from which he himself has broken (cf. Empson, “Seven” 164). And yet. In this instance, the melding of old-time religious imagery with a fairly tame rendering of a sexual encounter might be just what the doctor ordered. Audience members are likened to religious figures, although the imagery is cast as a “Baptist version of hell,” not heaven. Raised up as gods only to be brought down as dogs. There is a sense that Goodall’s embroidering of religious imagery into the story suggests his own ambivalence toward religion, and that ambivalence becomes the actions of the “others” about whom Goodall is writing. And this ambivalence leads into and becomes the central focus of the final book in the trilogy, *Divine Signs*).

Ethnicity in the Rock N Roll Mystery of White Dog

Goodall knows where the music the band plays comes from and tells us so: blues, spirituals, and gospel music; music written, sung, and played, by African Americans. This was music that was “cultural rhetoric whose purpose was both to create and to share human feelings, communal senses of place and displacement” (“Living” 4). And we know to what this may be referring: Slavery. Racism. Lynchings, the Civil Rights Movement, a prison-industrial complex disproportionately imprisoning men of color, African American men being beaten, shot, and killed in the streets. These activities have been going on for well over 200 years—*centuries*—generating community protests, legal proceedings, sometimes going as far as holding individual police and police agencies responsible for these deaths. Some things have changed, other things have not.

Everything counts (Goodall “Living”), including the works of art that are voices of protest. In October 1970, *Life* magazine publishes a story called *White Dog*, by author Romain Gary. Later the story is published as a book, about how Gary and his wife, actress Jean Seberg, adopt a stray Alabama police dog, not knowing that the dog has been trained to attack African Americans.

The book becomes a movie directed by Samuel Fuller, who directed other films dealing with racism and bigotry (e.g., *The Crimson Kimono*). As a film, *White*

Dog, was “an impassioned attack on racial hatred” (Dombrowski 47) and an “unusually blunt and suggestively metaphoric account of American racism” (Hoberman 12). However, the film “was *muzzled* by a collision of historically specific economic and political interests, as support for freedom of expression took a backseat to Paramount’s bottom line and the NAACP’s ongoing battles with Hollywood over representation and employment” (Dombrowski 49; emphasis added). The film was “*hobbled* by unfounded rumors of racist content” (47; emphasis added), and waited a decade before it was “*unleashed*” (Hoberman 12; emphasis added), in a limited number of theatre screenings. Note the wordplay used in discussing the treatment of the film and use those same terms to question my own discussion of the band “White Dog.” Am I in some way “muzzling” the text, or am I providing space in which the text may be further “unleashed,” a quarter-century after its publication?

The history of *White Dog* suggests that the combined attention of *Life* magazine, Paramount Pictures, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), make it problematic to casually dismiss the idea of a rock n roll band gigging in Alabama using the name “White Dog.” Rather, there is significance in the name “White Dog” for audiences, including not only Goodall and the band members and the audiences who heard or chose not to hear the band perform, but also, the various audiences within the academe, including professors and students — most likely graduate students — who discussed or were muzzled from discussing, the book as an example of narrative ethnography.

Every band has a name and every band’s name has a story. Here’s my interpretation about the name of Goodall’s band, “White Dog.” Or is it “WHITEDOG”? The cover of *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery* presents us with the textual representation “White Dog.” Twice. On a tee-shirt and on the band’s publicity photograph, the one given to clubs and newspapers, the “official” photograph. And yet. Once we get into the book, “White Dog” becomes “WHITEDOG,” exclusively. Is there a difference? Should we care? Yeah, there’s a difference, and yeah, just maybe we *should*.

The first word is “White.” The second word is “Dog.” Now as two words: “White Dog.” Now, this time, as one word: “WHITEDOG”. In changing the name of the band from “White Dog” to “WHITEDOG,” what happens? Two words become one, and all the letters become capitalized. Certainly the band’s name as it appears on the cover of the book, which is to say, as the name “White Dog,” appeared on the actual physical real-world artifacts that were generated by the band. Would we agree that the change was not a result of lousy proof-reading? I am left with the conclusion that what is going on here is that black-and-white ethnicity is being subtly suppressed. The word “White” *goes away*, or at least seems to be blended into WHITEDOG; so, too, “Dog” goes away as a separate term, and becomes part of WHITEDOG. Should a band playing in Alabama in the late

1980s have the name “White Dog”? Should there have been *some sort of explanation* in the book about the name of the band? Or an explanation about why the band formerly performing under the name “White Dog,” is now being represented as “WHITEDOG”? Pesky questions, like a dog nipping at your ankle. I do not have answers for these questions, which is more than a little troubling. *Everything counts* (Goodall, “Living” 8), including raising questions about a text for which there may be no answers.

And I am not the only person who raises these questions. While writing this essay I asked Professor Bryant Keith Alexander whether he had knowledge about “white dogs,” which brought to mind two reflections.⁵ First, the experience as a Black male growing up in the South and hearing stories from his elders about “White dogs.” In this sense, a white dog was a remnant of Slavery and the Jim Crow South in which White people trained dogs, sometimes, dogs to hate, hunt and ultimately to attack Black people. The reference to “White dog” was thus a dog trained by White people for a particular chore—and, while the dog did not necessarily have to be “white” in color, the social image of such “white canines” reified the purity of whiteness as the privileged position in relation to the object of its disdain, Black people. Professor Alexander remembers the stories told by elders in the community as fact, referencing cases of threat, their own attack or that of friends and community members. Second, Alexander remembers his first academic encounter with Goodall’s book, *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery*, and the reference to White Dog, and having a visceral response to the ideology and nomenclature of the term in his childhood experience in Southwestern Louisiana. He remembers bringing up the issue as a critique of the origins, and as a textual/subtextual reading of the essay in a class—and having his opinion—and worse yet, his cultural/historical knowledge disavowed—relative to a more critical/intellectual/engagement of the academic work and the author. Alexander’s critique is less of Goodall as much as about the critical academic endeavor that often dissuades racial critique in the White Ivory Tower and regulates privilege. Such a critique suggests political “dog-whistling” writ small, where the coded appeals to White academics—“let’s appreciate the innovative autoethnographic work of Bud Goodall”—marginalizes racial critique (cf. Hsu 66).

Goodall’s point about our problematic treatment of our scholarship as “sacred texts” is as true for his research as anyone else’s, and if Goodall’s published scholarship can be critiqued in writing (e.g., Descutner), the treatment of scholarship as “sacred texts,” should also apply to a graduate seminar. As students and scholars, we can dog our gods. It’s what academics do.

And yet... Goodall feels badly. For the people he is studying, and for himself: their puny lives, our puny lives. The difficulties encountered in his own life. He

⁵ Personal Communication, Bryant Keith Alexander, August 25, 2015.

feels guilt. And I hear the name “White Dog,” as the purification of that guilt. Metaphorically, Goodall is a white dog, playing music with other white dogs, for an audience of white dogs, in a region where many people feel like white dogs. Some of this may be “whiteness.” And some “dogness.” At least Goodall mortifies himself and attempts to understand the “others,” even those who hate him. And so, White Dog is a pun unto itself, referring alternately as a symbol of scapegoating violence, but also as a symbol of mortification; and lastly, in a less wised-up world, merely a white dog, an object of love, and god-like in its joyous “puppyishness” (Empson, “Seven” vii).

But from another view, considering the pun in light of Burke’s “perspective by incongruity,” we would consider the “White Dog” to be understood from the implied context of a *White God* (Goodall, “Divine” 186-197). In *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery*, the “white dog” is mortified in the presence of a “white god.” Goodall is the dog to Drew’s guitar-god, as well as to Vince, Maynard, and Tubby, men who are Black muses, who school young Goodall, before being symbolically killed by a White judge-god, who sends them to Vietnam, where their fate as Goodall’s minor muses is sealed. Likewise, Drew is the dog to Mr. TMT’s real estate god, their estrangement built on interpretations about White God religion. And all them redneck good ol’ boys⁶ who scare the shit out of Goodall are ultimately white dogs, just like Goodall. Perhaps, subconsciously, to drive home his ideas on the futility of it all, Goodall leaves us with the image of “an old blue-tick hound” who “ignores our passing” (“Living” 180); although this occurs as Goodall is about to begin his tour of real estate “dreams,” the image of a dog passing judgment on them also suggests the incarnation of the pun as a dog-god. To mortify one’s self, or community, or region as being treated like a dog—by a dog—might suggest motives to transcend our material existence.

Unlike *Living in the Rock N Roll Mystery*’s emphasis on damnation and mortification, Goodall’s motive in *Divine Signs* is for a kinder and gentler view of God as “spirit,” to move us beyond adversarial ideological positioning; puns provide the resources for a more spirit-centered space for building community, locally, nationally, and internationally. By the time Goodall writes *Divine Signs*, he is both explicit about puns, but also seems ambivalent about them, treating them,

⁶ Although I am focusing on Goodall’s use of the dog-god pun, and looking at “White Dog,” it is worth considering “White Dog” in relation to the metaphor of “White Trash,” which has redemptive elements, though less apparent, and less cuddly than Goodall’s “White Dog.” “White Trash” joins *race* with *class*, and the term may be interpreted in various ways and in various contexts. Goodall’s “rednecks” are “white trash” and Goodall’s linking Rush Limbaugh with Protestant fundamentalism (“Divine Signs” 190) suggests the Pentacostal religious practices of snake-handling as an indication of a “white trash religion” (Wray 193). Likewise, the “white trash” roots of rock n roll might also be teased out (see Sweeney).

well, like dogs, to the extent that they are conceptually subservient to “spirit.” Nonetheless, the idea of “spirit,” in addition to its “divine” component, has qualities that are dog-like (cf. Empson “Structure”). The terms “dog” and “god” are used as a representative anecdote for the problem of opposing viewpoints being able to move beyond their ideological constraints, with Rush Limbaugh as “god” and Goodall as “dog.” In this sense, then, the dog-god pun surfaces briefly and then is gone. Goodall identifies himself as becoming “a very bad dog” (i.e., liberal, progressive, democrat) in response to right-wing conservative radio personality Rush Limbaugh who is “talent on loan from God,” with the implication that he and God are consubstantial, sharing the same substance (190). However, it is worth noting that as Gods go, Limbaugh is something of a dog—at least in Goodall’s characterization: Limbaugh is *carnal*, and is concerned with the body and the flesh, rather than the spiritual. That is, Limbaugh is “spewing forth his daily whitewheat bread, his greasy double-cheeseburger and raw onion God ‘n’ Country, prayer-snaking...” (190).

It is also worth noting that, as opposed to a humane “spirit,” traditional articulations of religion take a beating here, with “God ‘n’ Country” standing for a fundamentalist Protestant zealotry, with “prayer-snaking” suggesting the Pentacostals, a denomination known for snake-handling and talking in tongues. Goodall’s quest is a vision of God that is spiritual and loving, not one who packs a high-caliber weapon. Goodall uses his characterization of himself and Limbaugh as an example to show the futility of traditional argumentation, in which opposing ideologies only entrench and get angry with each other, and never progress beyond that. There may be dialogue “*but it doesn’t get us anywhere*” (Goodall, “Divine” 191; emphasis in original). Goodall’s idea of “spirit” wants to articulate a way to disrupt fruitless opposition, and to find a way to create a space where real communication can create dialogue and community between and among diverse and opposing groups of people. Puns are the resource that creates that possibility.

Conclusion

Goodall’s detective’s voice sort of faded away. In my reading of the detective trilogy, the detective became a sleuthhound, which became a bloodhound, which became the voice of a dog: sometimes howling and snarling in its descriptions, and sometimes playfully puppyish. And sometimes the voice of the dog became a voice that was more omniscient, more theoretical, more god-like, by facilitating monumental piety in declaring his devotion to his own theoretical gods. The dog-god pun reflects both the carnal and the spiritual (Pollack), which suggests the divisions of Goodall’s mind, as well as the orientations of the chapters of Goodall’s books, sometimes accepting the reigning attitudes, but at other times, dancing an attitude closer to rejection, and in this, Goodall moves our ongoing conversation

about scholarship into less charted waters. Herman Melville's narrator in *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael, tells the story of pursuing the White Whale, where Goodall's detective is pursuing the taken-for-granted ways of scholarship within the Ivory Tower, a tower in which its Whiteness is increasingly problematic. However, the detective metaphor, while perhaps big enough for a story, is too small for a human who wants to reimagine the worlds in which he lives. But the pun's ambiguity, its mystery, is something that serves well, both for Goodall and the good texts that live after him.

The dog-god pun is used to great dramatic effect, with Goodall's stories of rock n roll showing us social hierarchies, the tensions generated, and in Burke's terms, the motives for guilt, which require purification and redemption. At times, Goodall pauses to clue us in on the use of theory, but otherwise we walk with Goodall's detective amidst thick descriptions. My reading of Goodall's tales positions the dog-god pun serving as Goodall's mostly unacknowledged linguistic companion. However, there is a postmodern vibe about puns, and puns might rightly belong to a chorus of postmodern voices, including, irony, sarcasm, and mockery that suggests the pun's return, its rebirth (cf. MacLure; Pollack). Burke's use of puns reveals the pun as an underused linguistic trope that may serve rhetorical criticism by creating dogged alternatives to more "authorized" interpretations.

Cave canem. Beware the dog. We may reconsider the "god" side of the pun, which in this essay is less frequently visited than the "dog." There are other versions of "god," and we do our deities an injustice when we mock—no matter how appropriately—the "god-like omniscience" of authorial voice. For author Franz Kafka's narrator, who is a dog in the short story, "Investigations of a Dog," adopts a god-like omniscience over other dogs (Clark & Holquist 248). Goodall, like Kafka's dog, sometimes "gives up the privilege of a distinct and higher being to descend into his text, to be among his creatures" (249). Goodall is accessible. And so, Goodall may remain a spiritual source for us as we ponder, dog-like, "What would Bud do?" (de la Garza, Krizek & Trujillo 1; see also. Boylorn; Clark & Holquist 248; Franks; Lindemann; Pelias; Poulos; Saldana; Tracy). And so a human, neither dog nor god, continues to be known to us through his good texts, letting us know there are spirited mysteries to write, tales to be wagged.

Finally, we may consider puns within the context of Goodall's idea of spirit. And toward that end, and in that spirit, Goodall's name *names*—and even the act of naming—might be thought of as a pun. Thus, Bud—whose name puns with "dub," meaning "to name"—enacts the spirit of what he advocates, which is that people need new ways to communicate, to create community, in order to survive and thrive. And that message is of growth, *positive growth, for everyone*, and it is heard

in a new name—which is Goodall’s name—but with altered syntax and with altered meaning. Listen: “bud good all.”⁷

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⁷ Tracy uses a similar pun in the title of her article, “Buds Bloom in a Second Spring: Storying the Male voices Project.”

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