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# Marrying My Bitch: J. R. Ackerley's Pack Sexualities

Susan McHugh

J. R. (Joe Randolph) Ackerley's increasingly persistent interlacing of sex, men, and dogs in his narrative writing contributes to both the canonical marginality and emerging centrality of his work in queer critiques of British modernism. Born the year after Oscar Wilde became the first public figure convicted of having committed sexual acts of "gross indecency" under the Labouchere Amendment and dead seven weeks before Parliament passed the Sexual Offenses Act decriminalizing sex between consenting male adults, Ackerley positioned himself as a homosexual writer during the most virulent period of sexual persecution and prosecution in England.<sup>1</sup> Illicit sex between men is a common thread through Ackerley's writing, and the strain, anxiety, and wariness characterizing these precarious intimacies often says more about their larger cultural and historical context than about the "friendly hand" recording them.<sup>2</sup> Yet Ackerley persists as one of the wilier fairy godfathers of literary history because his campy, scatologically funny, and popular narratives consistently test the limits of queer culture.

With disarming candor, Ackerley's stories of sodomite intimacies examine how "the homosexual" emerges as a "species" in twentieth-century

I thank Richard Dienst and the editors of *Critical Inquiry* for their thorough, thoughtful, and inspiring responses to earlier versions of this essay.

1. See Joseph Bristow, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885* (Buckingham, 1995), p. 2, hereafter abbreviated *EE*; and Peter Parker, *Ackerley: A Life of J. R. Ackerley* (New York, 1989), p. 339, hereafter abbreviated *A*.

2. J. R. Ackerley, *My Dog Tulip* (1956; New York, 1987), p. 158; hereafter abbreviated *MDT*.

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England.<sup>3</sup> In particular, the late narratives for which Ackerley is most remembered—the memoirs *My Dog Tulip* (1956) and *My Father and Myself* (1968) and the novel *We Think the World of You* (1960)—test multiple boundaries as they revolve around a man-loving man and his canine bitch, united in their sexual frustrations. In one sense, these texts increasingly deprivatize the modern British gay man's sexual anguish by aligning it with that of his canine companion, two sorts of outlaws in parallel structures who, in Ackerley's mind, are searching for sex in a cold cultural climate. In England at midcentury (where and when the stories are set), laws outlawing human anal sex augmented a customary prudishness about animal sex in public, what Ackerley terms a "human conspiracy" against canine sex, indicating how dogs and gay men come to embody "sexual trouble" (*MDT*, pp. 149, 154). Starting from these strangely shared circumstances Ackerley persistently weaves a mature version of the boy-and-his-dog tale—"a fairy story for adults," as he coyly termed his novel (*A*, p. 261)—that transforms this special zone of cross-species intimacy, what Marjorie Garber terms "dog love,"<sup>4</sup> into a powerful means of countering the pervasive puritan mindset.

Reading these narratives together, I trace a pattern in which Ackerley couples man love and dog love to exploit the slippage between *sodomy* and *sodomite*, between defining homosexual identity and marking "the public space of gay identity."<sup>5</sup> Taken together, Ackerley's narratives of man-dog intimacies work not only to conceptualize canine agency as constitu-

3. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, 3 vols. (New York, 1978), 1:43. In relation to the emergence of "the homosexual" as a form of clinical sexual agency, Foucault positions "the sodomite" as "a temporary aberration" (*ibid.*).

4. Garber takes Ackerley's narrators' positioning at face value, while playfully inverting the idea that his narrative dogs serve as "substitute[s]" for male human lovers (Marjorie Garber, *Dog Love* [New York, 1996], p. 135; hereafter abbreviated *DL*).

5. Jonathan Goldberg develops the "categorical confusion" by which "sodomy [as buggery] is equated with bestiality" in English law (Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* [Stanford, Calif., 1992], p. 3). On the historical conflation of "human-animal sexual contacts and male-male sexual relations," see also Jonathan Ned Katz, *Gay/Lesbian Almanac: A New Documentary In which is contained, in Chronological Order, Evidence of the True and Fantastical HISTORY of those Persons now called LESBIANS and GAY MEN, and of the Changing Social Forms of and Responses to those Acts, Feelings, and Relationships now called Homosexual, in the Early American Colonies, 1607 to 1740, and in the Modern United States, 1880 to 1950* (New York, 1983), p. 668 n. 3. I thank Siobhan Somerville for calling these connections to my attention.

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tively different from that of the human individual but also to launch a notion of sodomite culture founded on aesthetics of multiplicity rather than individuality. These narratives start with the gay man's fascination with "marrying" his bitch to a suitable dog-mate and self-consciously tweak attitudes toward canine sex. But Ackerley's work does not simply position sexually frustrated bitches as symbolic manifestations of his own "conflicted response to the construction of identity through sexuality" (*EE*, p. 150). Together these texts walk the dog along a thin line between recording gay male sexual frustration and validating outlaw sex in forbidding circumstances, ultimately positioning human-animal intimacy as a means of transportation from liminality in a sexually repressive heterosexual culture to centrality in sexually promiscuous sodomite cultures.

Men and dogs do not have intercourse (or penetrative sex) in these texts.<sup>6</sup> Instead, in terms of what Michael Warner has called heteronormative culture, Ackerley's treatment of sodomy highlights how heterosexuality's juridical, economic, and aesthetic structures extend into the definition of nonhuman animal bodies and their behavior.<sup>7</sup> Not content to rail against or imagine a reversal of this colonization Ackerley, through his reconceptualization of cross-species agency in dog breeding and gay male sex, develops an aesthetic that accounts for human and canine sex as defining public spaces as well as private identities. By focusing on relationships between sexually active gay men and dogs, he comes to launch a notion of sodomite culture that I formulate along the lines of what Warner and Lauren Berlant term a "queer counterpublic," that is, queer culture formulated as a subordinate (and explicitly not separate) sphere founded on "nonstandard intimacies."<sup>8</sup> Not quite partners in crime, Ackerley imagines the gay man and his bitch as queer comrades, who together can depersonalize the overwhelming sense of their failure to couple according to heteronormative standards.

Ackerley's triangulation of gay men, bitches, and their usually "mongrel" (whether human bisexual or canine mixed-breed) sex partners provokes a reconceptualization of sexual agency through cross-species relationships, for which I develop the term *pack sexualities*. Accounting for the participation of many agents in the production of identity forms in what they term "becomings-animal," Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari use the concept of the "pack," a model of Deleuze's earlier notion of "radical multiplicity" (in the Bergsonian sense, collapsing the binary opposition of the one and the multiple), to foreground the critical role of the animal in detonating the psychoanalytic compression of agency into the

6. In this respect, biographical narratives of Ackerley's physical intimacy with his bitch Queenie differ sharply because they are "deliberately open to interpretation" (*A*, p. 270).

7. See Michael Warner, introduction, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Warner (Minneapolis, 1993), pp. vii-xxxii.

8. See Lauren Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Winter 1998): 558-64.

binary model of a “self” that is the mirror opposite of a singular “other.”<sup>9</sup> In my analysis, pack sexualities similarly complicate conventional self/other couplings by incorporating a third agent, another body that not only witnesses sex acts but also becomes incorporated in the construction of their broader social significance. Through the concept of pack sexualities, I begin to account for Ackerley’s development of several bitches through these texts—respectively named Tulip, Evie, and Queenie—and his continued resistance to interpretive reductions of the individual bitch to a metaphorical representation of a “real,” individual animal.

Ackerley’s pack sexualities underscore the way in which a mongrel, by forming a transitional, hybrid triangle with a gay man and a bitch, destabilizes the couple and queers the heterosexual life narrative by collapsing its animal margins on its all-too-human center.<sup>10</sup> More than merely a synecdochical human and canine figure denoting successful evasions of socially ascribed identities, the mongrel irrevocably alters the terms of identity, operating in Ackerley’s narratives as what Judith Roof calls a “transitive term,” connecting the human to the canine or, rather, replacing the oppositional with the substitutive. As a transitive term, the mongrel’s involvement confounds the structures of oppositional difference by “incarnat[ing] the dissolution of rigid lines of distinction.”<sup>11</sup> With their indiscriminating patterns of sexuality and pedigree, mongrels complicate textual reproductions of sodomite identities by occupying (and thereby betraying) the spaces between identities and publics. An invariably male image of the social limits of hybridity, Ackerley’s mongrel “hyphen” both enables and suspends interspecific (or cross-species) sodomite identity in these narratives.<sup>12</sup>

Whether human or canine, the mongrel’s significance lies in his momentary sexual engagements with the gay man or his bitch as well as his consequent disappearance. Man and bitch observe each other’s couplings with their respective mongrel partners and remain with each other after the mongrel’s inevitably permanent departure; the persistence of the cross-species relationship complements the elusive intraspecific sexual

9. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1987), pp. 26–38, 232–309.

10. Ackerley’s preferences for realist style and the memoir genre lead his critics to conclude that his narrators are all autobiographical animals. See for instance W. H. Auden, “Papa Was a Wise Old Sly-Boots,” review of *My Father and Myself*, by Ackerley, *Forewords and Afterwords*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York, 1973), who, although praising Ackerley’s writing otherwise, concludes that Ackerley “could not create imaginary characters and situations” (p. 450).

11. Judith Roof, “We Want Viagra,” *Post Identity* 2 (Winter 1999): 19, 17.

12. Elspeth Probyn develops the concept of “hyphens” as a way of accounting for the potential in becomings-animal for animals to extend and thereby defer the concept of “my body,” such that cross-species intimacies become queer points of departure for concepts of agency that need not coincide with bodily inscription. See Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (New York, 1996), esp. p. 54.

moment with a sustained disruption of the heteronormative privatization of sex between the two. Through this triangulated or pack structure, an image of a sodomite counterpublic, centered not on identities related to sex acts so much as on sodomite situated knowledges, begins to take shape across these texts.<sup>13</sup> To demonstrate first how dogs become an integral part of Ackerley's articulations of the problems of sodomite identity, I turn now to the queer life narrative that caps Ackerley's writing career.

### *Phantom Triangle: My Father, Myself, and My Bitch*

Midway through his last memoir, *My Father and Myself*, Ackerley remarks that his Alsatian (or German Shepherd) bitch Queenie, "about whom I have written two books, has no place in this one."<sup>14</sup> Openly defying his critics, in this passage Ackerley characterizes *My Dog Tulip* and *We Think the World of You* not as two volumes in his own autobiography (or in the biography of his dog) but as "books" that are "about" his bitch. This terse claim begins to explain not only why he keeps Queenie on a short leash, so to speak, in his family-focused history of queer England but also why he took nearly a half-century to write this book. *My Father and Myself* is fueled by the allure for the son of the posthumous revelation about his father Roger Ackerley's "undisclosed and ultimately irretrievable" sexual secrets, the knowledge of which abruptly "threw [the younger Ackerley's] own awareness of male sexuality into disarray" (*EE*, p. 149). In part to present this internal conflict more vividly and immediately to his readers, Ackerley holds Queenie in check through this narrative, disabling the bitchy vehicle through which his other narrators resolve conflicts between sexual identities and acts.

While Queenie is overtly marginalized, several dogs of indiscriminate breed creep through this text, encroaching on privatized identities in ways that clarify the tenuous relationship between sodomite counterpublics and queer family histories. An anonymous "shaggy dog," who "eavesdrop[s]" on the bisexual "secrets" that were only partly revealed to Ackerley after his father's death, is the focus of one of the text's few photographs (*MF*, pp. 28–29). Seated on a lion-skin rug next to the young Roger, the shaggy dog is being fondled by the man who for no documented reason bought Roger's freedom from service as a guardsman twenty years before his son was born. Lamenting his inability to learn the exact terms of the men's relationship, J. R. Ackerley casts the animal in the position that he comes to covet, that of being near enough to learn

13. On the centrality of dogs in formulating situated knowledges, see Donna J. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, 1991), p. 190.

14. Ackerley, *My Father and Myself* (New York, 1968), p. 110; hereafter abbreviated *MF*.

whether the patron “picked [Roger] up, as I had picked guardsmen up” (*MF*, p. 199). That is, the dog unlike the son could know whether the father had been the sort of prostitute with whom Ackerley, as a “compulsive cruiser,”<sup>15</sup> spent most of his time and money as a young man.

Ackerley casts the shaggy dog as a crucial component of this lost world, yet he carefully stops short of claiming that the shaggy dog actually knew anything about the human relationships structuring this scene. Whereas in the photograph the dog augments the landscape as part of the furnishings, in the narrative the dog takes the bitch’s part in marking the distance between Ackerley’s father’s likely sexual relationship with the older man and the son’s biographical attempt to extrapolate from these circumstances a queer identity for his father, in other words, “to drag [Roger] captive into the homosexual fold” (*MF*, p. 201). The shaggy dog marks the elusive entry point into the not yet outlaw homosexual world of which Ackerley wishes his father to be a part; but the dog also stakes out an oppositional limit to Ackerley’s knowledge of his father’s sexual relationships with men.<sup>16</sup> The long-gone dog enacts a transference in this story from the son’s fascination with reconstructing his father’s sexual identity to J. R. Ackerley’s desire to document the queer counterpublic as he grows into it.

If the shaggy dog’s presence signals an opportunity lost, so too do the leavings of the dog’s kind. Ackerley’s account of a typical missed opportunity for direct and “interesting talk” with his father focuses on a random “dog’s large turd, . . . which lay in the middle of the path in front of us,” one afternoon in the Bois du Boulogne. Chatting about “which of the people passing along would be the first to tread on it,” father and son together skip this chance for frank discussion and instead fill their conversation here as ever with “trivialities” (*MF*, p. 109). Writing this narrative later in his own life, Ackerley materializes in dog shit the profound contradiction between his comfort with his own sexuality—“By the time I reached, with my father, the dog’s turd in the Bois du Boulogne I was well into my predatory stride” (*MF*, p. 123)—and his inability then to

15. Auden, “Papa Was a Wise Old Sly-Boots,” p. 452.

16. In this sense, the shaggy dog occupies a parallel position to that of the dog Bobby, who both defines and defers definition of the human, in Emmanuel Levinas’s controversial essay, “The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights,” *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore, 1990), pp. 151–53. John Llewelyn, in his essay “Am I Obsessed by Bobby? (Humanism of the Other Animal),” *Re-reading Levinas*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (Bloomington, Ind., 1991), pp. 234–45, takes issue with Levinas’s use of the dog as an oppositional limit of the human. Jacques Derrida further interrogates the binary terms of Levinas’s argument, demonstrating that these terms (and not Bobby’s actions) defer the possibility of nonhuman animal culture in his “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject,” trans. Peter Connor and Avital Ronell, *Points . . . : Interviews 1974–1994*, trans. Peggy Kamuf et al., ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford, Calif., 1995), pp. 255–89. Sandor Goodhart earns thanks for bringing these essays to my attention.

imagine his father as sexually, let alone homosexually, active. This random dog's bowel movement concretize what the father's mongrel movements among professional, classed, and sexual identities leave behind for the son piecing together queer fragments of family history.

But as the younger Ackerley comes to reflect on the special intimacy shared by his nonbreed boyhood dog Ginger and Roger, he lays the canine foundation for the father's transformation from suspected sexual outlaw to confoundedly queer progenitor. Ginger alone accompanied Roger on frequent trips out of the family house that Ackerley later learned were visits to Roger's "secret orchard" or surreptitiously kept second family. Again the dog, unlike the narrator, is privy to the comings and goings of the principals yet not exactly a witness to the affair. Ackerley's account underscores the dog's active role in this ambiguous scene: Ginger, "since he was *our* dog, was also therefore another conspirator in my father's affairs, had he but known it" (*MF*, p. 161). In this complicated situation, the problems of claiming ownership of Ginger mirror those of owning Roger as a father; the dog's presumed ignorance prevents him from being culpable, but his constant travels to the secret orchard make him an integral part of the transgression. This mongrel dog is not simply a metaphor for Roger but more importantly a secret sharer of familial illegitimacy. In Ackerley's story, Ginger points the way for the son from despairing of Roger's utterly confused sexuality to a new appreciation for the self-marginalization of lives spent in queer counterpublics.

Whereas the mongrel dog defines and defers definition of the mongrel father in this story, a breed bitch arrives at the end to help the son complete the narrative extrapolation of sodomite culture from a queer sum of sexual acts. The nameless bitch who "has no place" in this narrative takes over at the end. Arguably, *My Father and Myself* is most remarkable for this happy ending, in which Ackerley explains that the fifteen years with his bitch were, as he writes, "the happiest of my life" (*MF*, p. 217).<sup>17</sup> Her anonymous appearance, otherwise brief and puzzling, in my reading becomes the catalyst for the narrative conversion of the father from the queer progenitor-center to its mongrel "negative identity," that is, the marker of the space "between persons and collective identities" that resists analogizing and instead sustains the contradictions among various modes of identification.<sup>18</sup>

Concluding this sexual genealogy with an appendix largely devoted to detailing his own physical dysfunctions (premature ejaculation and, later, impotence), Ackerley makes surprisingly overt connections between

17. While Ackerley chose to dedicate this book "To Tulip," the bitch discussed in this text goes unnamed.

18. Berlant, writing with Elizabeth Freeman, develops the notion of "negative identity" in her essay "Queer Nationality," *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*, Durham, N.C., 1997), p. 169.

his sense of his waning sexual activity with men and growing absorption with his bitch:

In this context it is not she herself but her effect upon me that I find interesting. . . . From the moment she established herself in my heart and home, my obsession with sex fell wholly away from me. . . . I never prowled the London streets again, nor had the slightest inclination to do so. . . . It was as though I had never wanted sex at all, and that this extraordinary long journey of mine which had seemed a pursuit of it had really been an attempt to escape from it. [*MF*, p. 217]<sup>19</sup>

While this passage anticipates only to dismiss questions of a bestial sodomite relationship between the two, it also ventures a more startling insight into the operations of the gay man and his bitch's sexual relationships with mongrels and, more broadly, the interspecific and triangulated terms of identity through which Ackerley comes to conceptualize pack sexualities. Assuming his readers' familiarity with his previous books and assuring them that he continued to enjoy sex more fully if less often with his bitch in his life, Ackerley's appendix wraps up both this volume's search for hereditary sodomite identity in heteronormative culture (which ends with the failure of unrecoverable history) and Ackerley's three-volume narrative production of sodomite culture.

That is, the concept of a sodomite counterpublic grows from Ackerley's treatment of the problems of translating sexual action to the terms of agency developed in his two previous books, the novel *We Think the World of You* and the memoir *My Dog Tulip*. Against the critical tradition of reading the novel autobiographically through *My Father and Myself* in order to position the bitch as a foil for the gay narrator's manly love-interest,<sup>20</sup> the bitch serves as a mediator of the narrator's sense of himself as a sexual failure, enabling the profound narrative shift between individualized identity and triangulated agency-forms. The novel's narrative interest in elaborating the social milieu of sexual frustration grows from (rather than emerges from behind the screen of) the gay man's involvement with his bitch's sexual activity, thus providing a context for understanding the centrality of this pack structure of sexuality in the still earlier memoir *My Dog Tulip*.

19. Concluding otherwise that "Ackerley's sex life was repellent, not only because of its promiscuity and coarseness, but also because of the mild exhibitionism which inclined him to gloat over it," J. G. Links cites this account of Queenie as "perhaps the most interesting pages of *My Father and Myself*" (J. G. Links, "A Talent Unfulfilled? Attitudes to Ackerley," review of *Ackerley*, by Parker, *Encounter* 74 [Apr. 1990]: 56).

20. Bristow's reading is in this respect typical: "In the . . . novel, it is only too clear that the beloved dog becomes a figuration for an idealized sexual partner that Ackerley [never] found" (*EE*, p. 149). Garber critiques the "'substitution' theory" implicit in such readings of human-canine relationships, noting how this mode of critique directs "pity or contempt . . . , more often than not, toward women and gay men" (*DL*, p. 135).

*Pink Triangle: Myself, My Mongrel, and His Bitch*

*We Think the World of You* offers a singular glimpse into the circumstances that lead a reluctant gay man to share his life with a bitch and consequently change his ideas about sex and sexuality. In this novel, Ackerley's narrator, the white-collar gay man Frank, gets over a frustrated love affair with his working-class boyfriend Johnny by taking over Johnny's dog, an abused and subsequently grateful bitch who is aptly named Evie.<sup>21</sup> As the novel opens, Frank's frustrations with his on-again, off-again relationship with his boyfriend become compounded when the latter is jailed for robbery. With Johnny's imprisonment, Frank's communications with him become more clearly dependent on the cooperation of Johnny's family, particularly Johnny's pregnant wife Megan. Frank hates Megan, referring to her alternately as "that disgusting woman," "that tart," "the treacherous little Welsh runt."<sup>22</sup> This invective outlines in nationalist, sexist, and gendered terms parallels between Megan and Johnny's dog, terms that eventually define the negative identity by which Frank comes to read this scene differently, gaining respect for Megan while getting over his infatuation with Johnny.

Textual identification of women with animals generally impedes more often than it elicits sympathy for either, and the problematic terms clouding Ackerley's use of this narrative device sharply limit the degree to which Megan becomes connected to Frank through the mongrel hyphen Johnny. David Bergman's reading of Ackerley's oeuvre suggests that Frank's open hostility toward Megan derives from Ackerley's own sense of losing in a "competition between heterosexual women and homosexual men over the pool" of bisexual (and, to Ackerley's pre-Stonewall sensibilities, properly masculine) men like Johnny.<sup>23</sup> But the canine terms on which Frank overcomes this sense of loss indicate that more is at stake than a simple rivalry between the (homosexual) boys and the (heterosexual) girls. In this novel Ackerley interlaces Frank's progressive disillusionment with Johnny, his limited development of sympathy for Megan, and his growing passion for Evie, such that increasing involvement with the dog marks clear breaks between frustration with bipolar sexual identification and acceptance of pack sexualities.

To gain critical distance from Bergman's rivalry model, which reflects what Bristow terms the "rigid and conceptually restrictive hetero/homo

21. John M. Clum notes that, in this respect, the novel "gives the lie to the working-class fantasy celebrated by many British gay writers" (John M. Clum, "'Myself of Course': J. R. Ackerley and Self-Dramatization," *Theater* 24, no. 2 [1993]: 85). On the class status of Ackerley's particular relation to space/sexuality, see p. 86, as well as *EE*, pp. 149–50.

22. Ackerley, *We Think the World of You* (London, 1960), pp. 8, 11, 157; hereafter abbreviated *W*.

23. See David Bergman, "J. R. Ackerley and the Ideal Friend," *Fictions of Masculinity: Crossing Cultures, Crossing Sexuality*, ed. Peter F. Murphy (New York, 1994), pp. 263, 257.

binary,” I develop the difference that Evie makes in Frank’s conceptualization of the relational structures of agency (*EE*, p. 136). Reading the novel in terms of triangulation rather than simple coupling foregrounds the fact that Megan’s change in Frank’s estimation from a romantic rival to a model heroine derives from his increasing involvement with Evie, specifically, from observing Evie act like Megan. An integral part of Frank’s reevaluation and abandonment of his interests in Johnny, the parallel positioning of Evie and Megan enables Frank to abandon his self-sustaining dependence on sexual coupling with Johnny. In this light, Frank sees Johnny instead as a mongrel hyphen staking out a common ground for Frank and his bitch in a queer counterpublic that, much as Frank may wish to define it as separate, emerges as integrally if subordinately linked to the heteronormative sphere for which Megan stands.

Ackerley underscores the subordinate but no less necessary role of sodomite culture in the psychoanalytic regimes of identity as he describes this novel in a letter to his publisher: “Homosexuality and bestiality mixed, and largely recorded in dialogue: the figure of Freud suspended gleefully above” (*A*, p. 315). As this description indicates, the novel is carefully constructed to complicate sodomite intimacies by drawing out their connections to heteronormative models of intimacy. In the conversation with Johnny that opens the novel, Frank immediately confuses Evie with Megan, demonstrating, in spite of the fact that Frank’s alignment of Evie and Megan comes as a late revelation for him, that the novel constructs Johnny’s dog and wife as parallel “breeders” from the start. Johnny’s championing of Megan against Frank’s typically hostile dismissals leads Frank to the mistaken conclusion that Johnny insults him, claiming to love Megan best:

“I think the world of ’er,” muttered Johnny.  
 “Yes,” I said acidly. “I noticed you’d changed your mind.”  
 “No, Evie,” said he, “Anyway, Megan don’t want ’er.”  
 “Nor do I, Johnny.”  
 He gnawed at his nails.  
 “I don’t know what to do for the best.” After a moment he added, “She’s expectin’.”  
 “But I thought she was only a puppy?”  
 “No, Megan.” [*W*. p. 11]

While the mix-up works to lighten the ponderous image of Johnny’s poverty and imprisonment as it rapidly unfolds, the confusion both relies on and reinforces a direct correspondence between the wife’s and dog’s similar relationships with Johnny through their gendered reproductive capacities. Either one could be the “’er” of whom Johnny thinks the world and either one could be pregnant.

While it becomes immediately clear that Evie is the one and Megan the other, the emphasis that this conversation puts on their shared poten-

tial both to receive Johnny's love and to share responsibility with him in making offspring aligns them initially in heteronormative opposition to Frank. But, through the course of the narrative, Johnny's bitch and his wife do not work together to block out the men's mutual bond, as Frank fears. Rather, Evie and Megan occupy parallel positions in different, but similarly triangulated, relationships with these men and thus pivotally stake out the difference between the substitutive "rivalry" of dimorphic sexuality and the inclusive triangulation of pack sexualities. Mixing up possible mappings of competing couples, the dog-wife conflation in this opening conversation adumbrates the novel's claim that triangulated coupling changes the stakes of sexual agency, in turn fostering a sense of sodomite culture as a queer counterpublic intimately subordinated to heteronormative culture in intrahuman contexts.

Bitch and wife may occupy similar positions in relation to the men as a couple, but the novel insists that crossing species lines through dog love alters the "erotics of dominance"; as Frank falls out of love with Johnny, the dog in turn becomes incorporated in a different position in another of what Garber terms the novel's "erotic triangles" (*DL*, pp. 125, 134). Retrospectively, Frank notices that Megan serves as "a female of heroic stature, as ruthless, uncompromising and incorruptible as Evie" in her love for her man (*W*, p. 157). The actions of wife and bitch both police the couple forming within the triangle as well as clarify how the couple relies on the triangle structure for definition. In other words, the "heroic" status of each as defender of the other (her better?) half simultaneously derives from and becomes destabilized by the couple's engagement with a third party. Frank's reading of them in parallel lines, however, does not account for the ways in which the one encourages Frank's alienation, loneliness, and frustration while the other alleviates it.

One of the ways in which the bitch alters the terms of coupling is by acting as Megan to Frank's Johnny, putting Frank in the privileged position, pivotally altering the gay man's sense of himself as the inevitable underdog, so to speak, in the triangular structure. Frank reflects:

I perceived that the intolerable situation from which I had escaped in Johnny's house was being reproduced in my own, though with a difference. The difference, of course, . . . was that I was now the subject instead of the object of jealousy. Poor Margaret [the kennel-maid] was the latter, and it did not fail to secure for her both my sympathy for her sufferings and my respect for her valour to note that she occupied the odious position I had occupied before. [*W*, p. 157]

Coming at the end of the novel, this passage marks the rapid distance Frank gains from his relationship with Johnny. But it also inscribes Frank's involvement with the bitch as crucial to his break with Johnny, suggesting that Evie helped him not simply out of a bad relationship but

also (and more importantly) out of an “odious” pattern of self-positioning and self-conceptualization. Seeing Evie treat him as Megan treats Johnny, Frank gains a sense of his isolation as circumstantially produced and not as the inherent fate of the gay man.

As does the unnamed dog in the ensuing memoir, Evie enables the narrator to recognize and to appreciate the mongrel for his critical contribution to pack sexualities, to abandon the ideal of “dragging him captive into the [exclusively] homosexual fold,” and to construct instead an image of sodomite and heteronormative cultures as connected by rovers like Johnny. Moving between heterosexual-father and homosexual-boytoy roles, between Welsh and English national identities, and across states of indigence, imprisonment, and employment, Johnny emerges as the novel’s seminal figure of mongrel movement. More clearly even than Roger in the next narrative, Johnny brings the gay narrator to the canine bitch as an embodied hyphen between their otherwise isolated selves and thus produces a new sense of “outside belonging.”<sup>24</sup>

This function is at first unclear to Frank, who imagines a more lasting relationship with Johnny by describing Evie as the primary point of connection between him and Johnny: “I saw that she loved us both and that, whatever image lay uppermost, we were closely connected in her heart as we had lately been connected in her eyes; like a camera . . . she contained us together, clasped in each other’s arms; she was a stronger, a living bond between us” (*W*, p. 137). The image of Evie as a “camera,” recording, processing, and ultimately capturing Johnny coupled with Frank mechanizes and therefore downplays the bitch’s participation in constructing this scene. But, by positioning her as a mediating device, Frank betrays the fragility of his claims on Johnny; outlining the group dynamics of pack sexualities, Frank’s narration brings the men together as a couple only through Evie’s vision of them as “connected.”

While Frank and Johnny’s sexual relationship resumes under the bitch’s gaze, their different visions of her sexuality secure the eventual parting of their ways. In this way, the two men and the bitch form the novel’s most complex erotic triangle, for the end of the men’s affair is signaled by their different attitudes toward the bitch’s “failure” to couple. Unlike Megan, who strikes Frank as perpetually “pupping” new babies, Evie fails to produce pups for Johnny (*W*, p. 120). Moreover, Frank recoils at Johnny’s aspirations to breed Evie for profit and “the rot set[s] in” the men’s relationship when Evie fails Johnny as a “prospective goldmine.” Frank observes, “in two successive heats the matings she submitted to did not take and she began to be suspected, in the phrase of a breeder, of being ‘a barren bitch’” (*W*, p. 145). Frank seems willing to have Evie bred as an end in itself, but Johnny requires that it result in the production of pups. By this point in the story, Johnny is gainfully employed, so more is

24. See Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, p. 12.

at stake in Evie's breeding than the potential revenue from selling her pups. Johnny's primary investment in his bitch's reproductive capacity suggests that his comfort with his own bisexuality derives from his assurance that his bitch (and, by extension, his wife) proves heterosexually "loyal" to him.

With the suggestion that Evie cannot reproduce, Johnny abandons interest in her. On this point, the differences between the men (signaled throughout by contrasting, classed speech patterns) become unfathomable, and Frank's belief that Evie deserves better makes him lose respect for Johnny. Buying his way out of Johnny's and into Evie's life for good, Frank concludes the narrative with the following image of his mixed success in newfound dog ownership: "I have lost all of my old friends, they fear [Evie] and look at me with pity or contempt. We live entirely alone. . . . Not that I am complaining, oh no." Contrasting "the freedom and independence" of his formerly human-centered sexual identity with the seeming servitude and forced isolation (from other humans) of his newfound sense of self in constant canine companionship, Frank describes a sense of pack agency in which he and his bitch have become at once multiple and singular: "*We live entirely alone*" (*W*, p. 158; italics mine). Man and bitch are not a couple, in the heteronormative sense, but rather partners in constructing a nonstandard intimacy that bolsters a more inclusive social sphere outside (yet still within the range of the pity and contempt of) their former situation.

As the only nonhuman animal in the narrative, Evie's special positioning raises the question of how the interspecific condition of their relationship effects this transition from "me" to "we" in nonhuman cultural contexts. While it is clear that this cross-species intimacy helps the gay man to shed his despair of coupling on the heteronormative model, the novel does not resolve the problem of Evie's failure to couple with another dog. Does the distinction between ideas of sexual success, which leads Frank and Johnny to opposing ideas of Evie's value, lead the one to prevent her from having sex with other dogs just as it leads the other to require that she do so? Ackerley treats these questions directly in his first "dog" book, in which he first develops pack sexualities through canine cultures.

### *Fuzzy Triangle: My Bitch, Her Mongrel, and Myself*

The legal vetting required of *My Dog Tulip* prior to publication—"perhaps the first time that such a step had been taken over an 'animal book'"—provides a glimpse of an imagined synthesis of bestiality and anal sex within the category of sodomy in English law at mid-twentieth-century. Ostensibly an evaluation of the text's suitability for print (that is, its likelihood for inspiring prosecution for obscene libel), the solicitor

Thurston Hogarth's formal response to the manuscript also underscores the primary concern with "sodomy" at the core of this text: "I have, of course, not the slightest doubt that there would be broad sections of the pekinese owning public who would be shocked to the core by the detailed description of a bitch and her love life, but this can hardly constitute an invitation to sodomy, even for the most depraved'" (*A*, p. 320).<sup>25</sup> This verdict assumes agreement that the manuscript stops short of inviting yet certainly describes bestial sodomy, but it also raises questions about the degree to which the text also, if much more subtly, advocates intrahuman sodomy as well. While Hogarth's evaluation makes it easier to understand how Ackerley was not required "to cut out *every* dirty joke, every reference to vulvas, vaseline and penises'" by his publisher (*A*, p. 319), it does not anticipate the fact that objections by the printers would lead the publisher ultimately "to geld" the first edition of the text.<sup>26</sup> In spite of these adjustments to its phrasings, the linkage of human-canine bestial and intrahuman anal sex persists, setting up Ackerley's subsequent translation of the dog-breeding terms of pack sexualities to human sodomite cultures.

In this respect, the memoir's central fiction, namely, the focus on the fictional Tulip and not the actual Queenie, gains significance. Parker speculates that it was at the point of final, mandatory revisions to the manuscript that the photographs with which Ackerley intended to illustrate the text—"snapshots he had taken of Queenie flirting with local mongrels and fouling assorted Putney footpaths"—fell by the wayside (*A*, p. 322). Parker's inclusion of some of these images in his biography begins to rectify this historic occlusion, yet, in bringing these images to light, Parker underscores the fact that Ackerley entertained only to reject the idea of making images of the actual bitch part of his narrative. Thus distinguished from the photogenic and photographed Queenie (fixing a "real" canine identity) and Evie the canine "camera" (deconstructing individuated agency), the fictional Tulip belongs to a prior narrative project of creating distance between sexual acts and identities. This bitch is also sexually active, preferring sex with mongrels, and her rupture of the "breed" aesthetic central to heteronormative culture reflects and requires the erasure of her specific identity in the propagation of pack sexualities. This structural movement from one to several bitches ("The Two Tulips"

25. In the same year that Ackerley's book was published, veterinarian A. Barton addresses his clinical denial of canine pack sexualities to a similarly popular audience. In "The Sex Life of a Dog," in *Your Dog's Health Book*, ed. Jack Denton Scott (New York, 1956), Barton argues "that the dog does not have a sex life at all," on the grounds that, even among stray or free-roving dogs, "there is no conscious anticipation or planning of sexual activity" (p. 160). Curiously, unlike Ackerley's book, Barton's essay concludes with the affirmation that "some homosexual tendencies exist in most normal dogs" (p. 164).

26. Walter Kendrick, "Heavy Petting: J. R. Ackerley Goes to the Dogs," rev. of *Ackerley*, by Parker, *Village Voice Literary Supplement* 25 (Oct. 1990): 14.

is the title of the first chapter of *My Dog Tulip*) I therefore read as necessary to Ackerley's construction of a narrative pack that ultimately takes the problems of the individual to a wider reaching critique of its problematic social construction through sexual acts.

*My Dog Tulip* begins in the situation in which *We Think the World of You* ends: the narrator has acquired an unruly Alsatian bitch who is suspected of being barren. But this suspicion does not color his desire to breed her to another dog: "Soon after" Tulip comes into the narrator's sole possession, he "set[s] about finding a husband for her." Contrary to the novel's Johnny, who breeds his bitch in the hopes of producing salable pups, this narrator wishes to breed his bitch in order to amend her "lonely and frustrated life hitherto," to give her instead "a full one," which he believes "naturally include[s] the pleasures of sex and maternity." From the narrator's perspective, puppies are only part of the object of finding a "husband" for Tulip. With "no profit-making interest in the matter," the narrator sees her puppies instead as posing a "serious problem" to life in his small apartment—as, he cavalierly notes, "a matter to which I would give my attention later" (*MDT*, pp. 56, 57). Initially eliding sex and motherhood, he conceives of breeding his bitch as an altruistic act, without thinking through the larger cultural consequences of restricting her sexual life to productive "breed" coupling.

His disdain for turning Tulip into a puppy-factory does not prevent him from requiring that his bitch mate with another purebred. Unquestioningly embracing the dog-breeder's projection of heteronormative values through canine bodies, the narrator at first insists that breed equals beauty, that is, that her pups should share the bitch's beauty (which is as "necessary" to mention in this text as it is in *My Father and Myself*) (*MDT*, p. 11; see *MF*, p. 216). Insisting that "so beautiful a creature as Tulip should certainly have children as pretty as herself," the narrator concludes that "desirable suitors" must be other Alsatis (not "stray dogs of other breeds, or of no breed at all"), without reflecting on how he makes this choice his own (*MDT*, p. 57). While their motives appear to be different, the desired result—the production of pedigree dogs—is the same as if the narrator, like Johnny, were planning to breed her for financial profit.

The delicate distinction between sold and controlled bodies comes later through the narrator's dissection of dog love, which leads directly to the reformation of individuated as pack sexualities. In an internal dialogue near the end, the narrator interrogates his own linkage of Tulip's beauty and his desire to breed her:

"But please explain: what has her prettiness to do with it?"

"It will be lost."

"What is that to you? Or to her? Unless, as I suspect, you want one of her babies for yourself to carry on when she is dead?"

"Oh, no!" [*MDT*, pp. 143–44]

This imagined discussion arises in a chapter devoted to elaborating how the bitch's three-week heat compounds human sexual responsibilities in canine contexts. Notably absent from this discussion is the simplest conclusion, that is, spaying the bitch. Instead, the narrator's rejection of spaying as a solution reveals his self-consciousness about how his control over her access to sexual partners already alters his bitch: "How can I tamper with so beautiful a beast? Yet I *am* tampering with her. I am frustrating her." He claims responsibility for controlling the bitch's frustrating sexual conditions, but his overwhelming inability to console her underscores the larger social restrictions conditioning his imposition of sexual frustration. Far from seeing himself as alone in exerting this control, the narrator later aligns himself with his "fellow bitch-owners" in a "human conspiracy" against self-selected canine sex (*MDT*, pp. 139, 149).

This is not so clear in the beginning of the memoir, where "the only question" for the narrator as he sets out to "marry" Tulip is "the choice of a suitable mate—the question, in fact, that confronts us all, but simplified in the case of bitches by the availability of a stud system of dogs for the hiring" (*MDT*, p. 57). Assumed in this plan is the system of humans who will help him to breed his bitch, and the bulk of the narrative unravels this system's shortcomings and excesses. Simple as dog breeding initially seems, the narrator further complicates the process, "partly out of thrift," by deciding that "hiring a husband" is wasteful "when there were quantities of good-looking Alsatians about who might be borrowed for nothing if one got to know their owners" (*MDT*, p. 57). What emerges from this plan is the problem that Tulip's sexual encounters with breed dogs become strictly structured by human relationships, a plan that initially fails to take into account how the man's role in selecting canine mates structures the scene of canine copulation in terms of cross-species triangulation.

Consequently, the narrator's inability to conceptualize these mediating conditions sets up the breed-dog breeding project for failure from the start. In choosing mates for his bitch, he naturalizes the human aesthetics of breed, conveniently forgetting that breed dogs are human inventions that require interspecific social interventions. In the canine world, the "quantities of [neighborhood] mongrels" who take an interest in Tulip when she comes in heat have no way of knowing why they must be discouraged persistently. While the narrator feels "extremely sympathetic" toward these canine "courtiers," his breeding choice leads him soon to enlist his bitch's help in repelling all members of this "miscellaneous crew" (*MDT*, pp. 88, 91).

In the human world, the task becomes even stranger as the narrator forges odd intimacies with the randomly encountered human owners of potential Alsatian mates for Tulip. The only common ground of these human interactions is the shared desire for their dogs to have sex, a queerness played up in the narrator's characterization of all of these rela-

tionships as short-term, embarrassing for all human parties, and futile for sex among the canines. In deciding to avoid the breeders' system, the narrator fails to reckon with the pet status of the good-looking stud dogs he sees; they are not only the property of human owners but also engaged in long-term relationships with these humans. While this interspecific complication becomes manifest in canine sexual frustration, the cross-species bonds at the core of the narrative prove the greatest obstacle to breed-dog production. As with the human-human-dog triangles at the center of Ackerley's ensuing narratives, the dog-dog-human triangles become subordinated to those coupling relationships that structure heteronormative culture.

Before the breeding project even gets under way, the narrative sets up the complications of the man-dog coupling to include the problem of Tulip's being "in love with" the narrator; a veterinarian has diagnosed dog love as the root of Tulip's generally unsociable behavior (*MDT*, p. 21). The love is reciprocated (like his narrative brethren in Ackerley's oeuvre, this narrator particularly revels in being in his bitch's thrall), most obviously when he describes her in season: "My burning bitch, burning in her beauty and her heat. . . . How enchanting she is, the coquettish little bitch, putting forth all her bitchiness" (*MDT*, p. 141). Her beauty, her sexual capacity, and her sexual interest are caught up alike in the quality of "bitchiness," which strikes a chord with him once it becomes clearly frustrated. In these revelatory moments in the text, the narrator develops the ways in which his dog love circumscribes Tulip's sexual identity with her "breed" body, setting an impossible goal of sexual compatibility in coupling that parallels the fruitless narrative search for the human Ideal Friend in Ackerley's last memoir.<sup>27</sup>

The diagnosis of her love for him encourages the narrator mistakenly to think that Tulip's emotional attachment to him precludes her sexual interest in other dogs. Recording her behavior after a typically failed mating attempt, he complains that "as soon as we [returned] home she attempted to bestow upon my leg and overcoat all the love that the pusillanimous [if "desirable" canine suitor] had been denied" (*MDT*, p. 67). But he fails to consider how Tulip's actions suggest as well that, while the narrator has tricked himself into thinking that he chooses her suitors, she reasserts her decision-making power by rejecting them in favor of him. Where he thinks he has superintended her choice of mates only to have her perversely reject them all, she behaves as though she perceives two choices each time, namely, the familiar, loving man or the strange, nervous dog. Tulip acts as if these other Alsatians are threatening and conse-

27. For an anthropocentric reading of this narrative parallel, see Clum, "Myself of Course," p. 87, who reads the similarity as proof of "Ackerley's own transference of [object-choice in] his quest for the Ideal Friend from working-class man to female canine." More in keeping with Ackerley's texts, Parker focuses on Queenie as he speculates "that, like her master, she preferred the local strays" (*A*, p. 281).

quently rejects them with great vehemence, so that breed-dog mating on the human-centered model becomes a series of stilted rendezvous stifled by canine and human ignorance of and insensitivity to canine sexual agency.

As breeding attempts, these arrangements prove unproductive, but, as attempts to arrange fulfilling sex for Tulip, they prove disastrous. Tulip's attachment to her human companion opens the narrator's eyes to his own contributions to Tulip's initial failure to enjoy sex with dogs. Garber asserts that this description of "seeking a 'husband' for his beloved Alsatian bitch, and of supervising her various attempts at 'marriage'" ultimately critiques, rather than promotes, the human sexual-cultural source of the dog-breeding metaphors to which Ackerley constantly returns (*DL*, p. 133). Although I agree that human marriage customs bear part of the brunt of this critique, I assert that this large-scale choreographed failure also emblemizes a more widespread rupture of heteronormative culture in this text. The breed-dog "marriage" institution comes to stand as an excessive and ritualized violation of sexual desire by reducing it to the terms of coupling.

Rather than simply commenting on the follies of the human-marriage structure as a queer outsider, the narrator implicates himself in this regulation of sexual desire. Where the narrator eventually appreciates the necessity for "organiz[ing] a large pack of pedigree Alsatis to pursue and fight for" Tulip in order to achieve satisfying results all around, he wishes instead for the unlikely "'fate'" of "'romance'" in the form of "'an Alsatian dog as handsome as [Tulip], alone and palely loitering in the woods'" (*MDT*, pp. 87, 141). Along the way he stumbles across some ugly truths about the production of breed dogs: "breeding was a profitable business, so bitches had to be bred from whether they liked it or not; if they weren't willing they were helped, if they wouldn't be helped they were forced, and many a time . . . muzzled and put into a sling to prevent them from resisting" (*MDT*, p. 83). His "breed" loyalty not only makes him complicitous with this business but also leads him more actively to engage in it. In spite of recognizing that it is not "right," the narrator opts to have his "virgin bitch . . . ravished, . . . without spontaneity, without desire," and with the help of a veterinarian (*MDT*, p. 86).<sup>28</sup> Tulip resists, in body if not mind, and never produces breed pups.

Successful breeding results in this narrative from canine, not human, selection of mates and inspires the narrator's reevaluation of the aesthetic that requires him to reject Tulip's beloved mongrel suitors and enforces heteronormative values that lead to restrictive regulation of human sex as well. Initiating Ackerley's later narrative uses of mongrels, this turn in

28. D. Edward Jones and Joan O. Joshua, *Reproductive Clinical Problems in the Dog* (Boston, 1982) inadvertently underscore the continuing problems of conceptualizing canine sexual agency as they use negative constructions and passive voice to note that, "whilst some bitches and most dogs are promiscuous, in many instances the selected pair are not mutually attracted and mating does not occur unassisted" (p. 49).

this narrative positions pack sexualities as a reaction against the arrangement of marriages, connecting the adverse consequences of these institutions to the lives of humans and canines together. For the narrator does not simply acknowledge defeat and grant Tulip the ability to choose her mate; he follows her choice, observes the results, and shares the responsibilities of its consequences.

After the failed efforts to produce breed pups, Tulip's only successful mating, which proves that she is "not a barren bitch," is to "a disreputable, dirty mongrel, named Dusty" (*MDT*, pp. 107, 104). Underscoring the continuities of mongrels across species lines, the account of this random sexual act parallels the narrator's description of pursuing working-class men for homosexual encounters in *My Father and Myself*. The elaborate arrangements the one narrator makes for the selection and ablution of his own disreputable, dirty paramours, like the similarly tedious lengths to which the other goes to try to produce a suitably attractive Alsatian "husband" for Tulip, frustrate rather than foster the flashing up of sexual desire. In contrast, sexual satisfaction involves reckless and spontaneous intimacy with ill-kempt mongrel bodies. And, as in the novel, this moment of sexual coupling involves cross-species triangulation through animal vision:

I returned the stare of the disconcertingly dissimilar eyes, one brown, one pale blue, of this ragamuffin with whom it had always amused Tulip to play, and knew that my intervention was at an end. I smiled at him.

"Well, there you are, old girl," I said. "Take it or leave it. It's up to you."

She at once went to greet him. [*MDT*, p. 104]

Holding the couple together like Evie in the "camera" image of the next book, the narrator describes the dogs' sex act as beautiful for a few moments but ultimately horrifying because Tulip becomes restless before detumescence occurs. Tulip struggles to break free, dragging Dusty around in increasingly awkward positions, and half an hour passes before they uncouple and flee from one another. The narrator strikes a pose between permissive parent and voyeur, witness and feature of the landscape, and his singular authority becomes displaced across several bodies in the fleeting canine sex act.

As Ackerley's ensuing narratives suggest, the pack structures of this moment of sodomite intimacy threaten the self-centered order of heteronormative culture, which depends on the coupling patterns of "breed" marriages. Here the projection of human agency through canine bodies in dog breeding backfires as the narrator withholds his ability to interfere with Tulip's and Dusty's sexual interest in each other; when Tulip consequently becomes pregnant with mutt pups, he learns that random sex

acts prove no less problematic for constructing canine identities than human ones. Sharing responsibility for the long-term consequences of this canine affair, the narrator resigns himself to mongrel transience as the inevitable outcome of this breeding story. Tulip has a litter of nonbreed pups by Dusty and quickly grows “bored” with her whelp (*MDT*, p. 116). Disabused of his fantasies of motherhood, the narrator becomes aware that Tulip is not alone in shunning her ill-conceived pups when he finds it impossible to place the pups in comparable middle-class homes. Tulip apparently outlives all of her pups, most of whom die young due to human ignorance and abuse. What is worse, the narrator’s observations of their short lives suggest that the pups’ miserable stories are typical of mongrels, who in pointed contrast to their breed mother experience unequivocal social prejudice. Although he comes to see their individually rotten conditions as derivative of the identification of their bodies with self-selected canine breeding and, more broadly, pack sexualities, the narrator also finds in these structures a potent means of connecting the sexually active gay man and his mongrel-breeding bitch.

Taking an active role in the breeding of mutt puppies, the narrator gains an acute awareness of the ways in which the social sanctioning of sex depends on the subordination of sexual acts and actors to a larger cultural project of “breeding.” Breed marriages come to stand for the sanctity of pedigree in the individual human self, whereas mongrel sex acts serve as synecdoches for a rival concept of pack sexualities, which in turn figure a counterpublic. Toward the end of the narrative he points to the singularity of the situation that he, Tulip, and Dusty have created: “In all my questionings about the sexual lives of dogs, I have never met anyone else who deliberately threw, as I did, a pedigree bitch to a mongrel—though I have met a few pedigree bitches who managed to throw themselves to mongrels and got families thereby.” His complicity, his pronounced sense of enabling without quite creating this mongrel sex act, becomes the key cross-species component of a pack structure of sex that locally resists the idea that his breed bitch is “ruined” by her random lover and, in relation to the later narratives, frames Ackerley’s interspecific sexual trouble with forms of identity (*MDT*, p. 153).

Through the story of how pedigree beauty comes to breed mongrels, Ackerley quietly argues that mongrel outlaws, otherwise incomprehensible in relation to the regulation of sexuality through identity, become significantly visible as they bring gay men and canine bitches together in sustained relationships that flesh out a queer counterpublic. Not just aligned as violators of the rules of cultural order, these outlaw figures interact and, en masse, define a social space in resistance to the forms of regulation.<sup>29</sup> Where the tension between homosexual acts and identities

29. Parker, citing a 1953 entry in Ackerley’s diary, suggests “gradually he began to regard park rules [limiting canine freedom] as part of a general infringement of liberty,

clearly becomes the site of this resistance in the later text *My Father and Myself*, Ackerley figures this hybrid space more literally in *My Dog Tulip*.

In a cryptic passage describing Wimbledon Common, the park where the narrator brings Tulip when she comes in heat to roam free from the attentions of would-be sires, he positions himself in the liminal space of the homosexual man. Connecting polluted aspects of the landscape, Tulip's sexual frustration, and events in his memory, the narrator arrives at a striking figure of "inconsiderable, anguished deed[s]" as he lists places in the park where gay men have committed suicide. Emotionally charged and trivialized, unthinkable and unmarked, these places ground "lost" figures (*MDT*, p. 147) who, as Ackerley later noted, "'made a strong mark upon my young crusading homosexual mind'" and were "'part of the true furniture of Wimbledon Common'" (*A*, p. 323).<sup>30</sup> But the narrator drops these musings with an abrupt gap in the narrative so that, in content as well as form, Ackerley frames the gay man and his bitch's shared sexual problems in terms of ruptures between identity and action. Because the narrator of this text says little otherwise of his own sexuality, these stray thoughts fill in what might otherwise pass as gaps between the mongrel-breeding bitch's and the homosexual man's reciprocal "frustrations" within the text.

This open-endedness marks the crucial move that *My Dog Tulip* makes as part of a larger project of mapping cross-species relationships in sodomite cultures. Instead of closed, interiorized selves with fixed identity assignments, Ackerley's late narratives work as a whole to build pack sexualities through triangulated agency structures, using the mongrel sex acts of gay men, bitches, and human/canine mongrels to trace the social roots and shoots of sodomite sexual frustrations. From Ackerley's schizophrenic splitting of his dog from one to two at the start of *My Dog Tulip* to his expressions of deep gratitude to her for helping him to come to terms with the failure of sexual genealogy in *My Father and Myself*, his narrative transformation of one (biographical) to several (fictional) bitches enables his critique of the singularity of sodomite identity and the interspecific counterpublics of pack sexualities. As integral parts of Ackerley's interrogation of the relationships between identity and sexuality, these human-canine intimacies prove key means by which Ackerley models the mongrel movements between heteronormative modern British culture and its queer counterpublics.

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imposed by the same sort of people who declared homosexual acts illegal. . . . Ackerley believed that life should be led off the leash by humans and animals alike" (*A*, pp. 268–69).

30. Parker notes other pieces of the park's "furniture" that Ackerley regularly enjoyed viewing: "men bathing naked," p. 274. Lars Eighner, in his contemporary American gay-man-and-his-bitch narrative *Travels with Lizbeth: Three Years on the Road and on the Streets* (New York, 1993), documents the safe-sex campaigning advantages to the park as "a traditional place that men met to have sex" (p. 138).