

The Dog

by [Jeffrey Burghauer](#) (April 2024)



High Life –by Edwin Landseer, 1829

Or let my lamp at midnight hour

Be seen in some high lonely tower...

*...Where more is meant than meets the ear. –John Milton,
Il Penseroso*

*Books are a load of crap. –Philip Larkin, A Study of
Reading Habits*

*If you see Herb and Dorothy [Vogel] in action, they
look. He comes in, and he points at the art like a
hound. He's like those dogs that dig underneath for
truffles or the treasure they're looking for. And his
eyes become intense. –Lucio Pozzi, in Herb and Dorothy
(2008), dir. Megumi Sasaki*

I leash the dog. As thick, revolver-blue
Steam numbly rises from behind a heap
Of rotting railroad ties, we wander through
A frosted neighborhood that's still asleep.

A dog experiences life through smell.

The sundry scents they leave and those they sniff
Are like the letters that we use to spell:

"Each turd must constitute a hieroglyph."

His chestnut-colored face grows Saturnine

As some appliance in his body plaits
The feces; arching his elastic spine,
My canine squire calmly defecates.

If there's another doggie in the group,

A kindred temperament, it sniffs with bliss
And riveted attention as the poop
Emerges from the pooper's orifice.

The pooper's poop—the sniffer's stern Amen—

The shared, conflicted ardor, half-berserk:

Where *have* I seen it? Ah! I've seen it when
A poet shows another one his work.

And since I hate to see a poem wrecked
(Regardless if it be upon the ground
Or on a notebook page), I don't collect
His crap—at least when nobody's around.

And if I fear a doorbell cam is primed
For digital surveillance of the spot,
I'll briefly bend my body in a mimed
Facsimile of Doing-What-I-Ought.

Where churches worship in a major key
And an un-soil-able vinyl fence
Surrounds most yards, my insolence must be
The closest thing there is to Decadence.

My dog is also decadent (...that mad
Intelligence distinguishing the mood
Those eyes disclose!), but never at the sad
Expense of scholarly exactitude.

Engaging nose, along with tongue & ears,
The dog's attentions passionately grip
The cultivated verses of his peers
And those of his own able authorship.

Whenever crossing grass, his head is bent
As if he's following a piece of prose;
But when he crosses blacktop or cement,
He lifts his suddenly-inactive nose.

Is pavement blank?—no more so than the doors
And corkboard-covered walls (“Sign Up for Free
Assistance With...”; “Do You Love Dinosaurs?”)
Of our local Public Library,

Attired in those printed symbols that
My very literacy overlooks,
Reducing all the letters to a flat
Design I pass enroute to Proper Books.

"Or let my lamp at midnight," Milton wrote,
"Be seen in some high, lonely tower," caught
Within the sympathy of that remote,
Momentous coziness of Higher Thought,

A sphere of ivory, a bourbon rose,
Whose atmosphere becalms, inviting us
"Where more is meant than meets the ear." Or nose.
The Midnight Oil is conspicuous.

My giddy dog is a professor: his
Condition indicates a dire split,
An ultimatum: either feces is
Poetical, or poetry is shit.

[Table of Contents](#)

Jeffrey Burghauer is a teacher in Columbus, Ohio. He was educated at SUNY-Buffalo and the University of Leeds. He currently studies the five-string banjo with a focus on pre-WWII picking styles. A former artist-in-residence at the Arad Arts Project (Israel), his poems have appeared (or are forthcoming) in *Appalachian Journal*, *Fearsome Critters*, *Iceview*, *Lehrhaus*, and *New English Review*. Jeffrey's book-length collections are available on [Amazon](#), and his website is www.jeffreyburghauer.com.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)