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English 767
9 December 2009

Animalia Anomalia: Regarding the Interruption of "Real" Animal Life in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

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"The future is beginning to look a little lonely."
George Monbiot[1]

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A veritable surfeit of critical academic literature exists on Philip K. Dick's seminal science fiction novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* While most of these studies make important interventions about humans and the non-ethical treatment of androids that figure in the novel, thus far, too few studies have devoted specific attention to the *other* non-human characters in the novel, namely, the animals. Indeed, for those who are only familiar with the book through Ridley Scott's 1982 film noir *Blade Runner*, animals figure too little to be of any consequence at all. Yet Dick's original novel is markedly different in its approach to animal life.[2] In what follows, I take up the question of the *other* non-human in Dick's original novel, and ask, what does it mean to dwell with the animal? More pointedly and poignantly, what does it mean to be practically unable to dwell with the animal?

I engage with this novel, not from a desire to cheapen the discourse of animal studies in any way, but rather, to explore what Cary Wolfe has described as an 'horizontal' approach to animal studies, using the 'vertical' lens of the complex theoretical oeuvres on animality (xiii). I seek, following the exemplar of Alice A. Kuzniar's *Melancholia's Dog: Reflections on our Animal Kinship,* to explore how we imagine that we dwell with (or without) animals in postmodern fiction. As Matthew Calarco has argued, "animal ethicists rarely make recourse to poetic, literary, or artistic descriptions of animals—descriptions that might help us to see animals otherwise" (127). Similarly, Barbara Smuts notes, in her critique of Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*, that none of the characters actually speak of an encounter with an animal (107). Part of my impetus in approaching this work academically is to broaden the reach of animal studies—a discourse that is often accused of being inaccessible. If the work of a so-called 'pulp-fiction Kafka' like Philip K. Dick can increase the public discourse on animal studies, I feel compelled—*driven*—to undertake the challenge.

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[1] Monbiot, George. "Natural Aesthetes." In *Bring on the Apocalypse: Essays on Self Destruction*. Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2008. 53.

[2] It is no surprise, then, that Dick was appalled by the screenplay (and subsequent film)—though he somehow managed to disavow his displeasure when it became clear the movie would net him a tidy sum.

I argue that with Levinasian and Derridean resonance, Philip K. Dick "is calling into question the dominant avenues through which one might seek to effect change" regarding animals (Calarco 115). If, as Kuzniar suggests, to dwell with animals as pets causes melancholy for the owner who can never fully understand or communicate with her/his pet, what would it mean to not be able to dwell with pets at all? What happens when pets and pests are all endangered or virtually extinct species, and as a result, are (literally) cast as machines for human companionship? Following the work of David L. Clark, I read this novel "*symptomatically* the site of (dis)avowed and haunted desires, of repressions and displacements that register the ways in which the *anthropos* is inconceivable both with *and* without a conception of animality" (Towards 8, emphasis in original). This, then, is a consideration of Philip K. Dick's dystopian novel as a narrative of the interruption of melancholic trauma as a consequence of the loss of animal life in his post-apocalyptic World War Terminus environment. I argue that the death of character Rick Deckard's "real" sheep is an event of such consequence that he is unable to emotionally recover from its loss. It is only through his negotiation with other forms of non-human life, and decisively, his rapprochement with a new configuration of animality, that he is able to come to an understanding of what it might mean to "re-humanify" himself.

In what follows, I will provide a close reading of the loss of Deckard's sheep and his ensuing near-manic[3] drive to 'retire' androids so that he can purchase another animal. He learns, much to his astonishment, that one simply cannot replace another; animals are more than simply material objects of fetishist commodity capital to be bought and sold or collected. Only by working through the loss of his genuine, non-machinic animal, and concomitantly gaining an appreciation and empathetic resolve towards other forms of non-human life, will Rick Deckard able to shake off his melancholy—a task, I argue, that he is ultimately unable to fully resolve as the novel ends. The interruption of the death and suffering of *this* animal—and, as Derrida would insist, this *particular* animal—is akin to the connection that Levinas feels to Bobby's barking. For Deckard, the death of his sheep becomes a testimonial call to commit the unspeakable (as Kuzniar might argue) process of melancholy and mourning for the loss of his animal, and of the disappearance of animal life from his world. I will argue, similarly, that a similar Bobby-like interruption of animals occurs in the lives of other characters in the novel: of alleged "chickenhead"[4] John Isidore, who experiences an interruptive visitation by a spider, and Ed Pilsen's loss of Horace the cat as secondary sites of melancholia in the text.

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[3] Interestingly, Derrida notes in *Spectres of Marx* that acting in a "jubilatory [or] manic fashion" is "a necessary phase of unsuccessful mourning work, according to Freud" (85).
[4] "Chickenheads" are among the Earth-bound people considered "specials" in Dick's novel. A "chickenhead" is a "subnormal" person (30) who has "distorted genes" and has "failed to pass the minimum mental faculties test" (19).

Unlike our contemporary concerns over global environmental issues, "where our concerns about biodiversity [are made to] seem effete and self-indulgent" (Monbiot 54), in Deckard's post-World War Terminus apocalypse, people think of nothing else. His (albeit fictional) contemporaries have nothing to do but dwell on the fact that they have elided the responsibility of providing sustainable living conditions to themselves and to other animals. Judith Butler has argued in *Frames of War* that "our obligations emerge from the insight that there can be no sustained life without … sustaining conditions, and that those conditions are both our political responsibility and the matter of our most vexed ethical decisions" (23). For the inhabitants of Dick's fictional future Earth, the avowal of an assertion approximating Butler's comes too late. In their initial attempts to dissimulate the seriousness of their condition, people have even forgotten "why the war had come about or who, if anyone, had won" (Dick 15). They laugh off the singular peculiarity of "fat, fluffy" owls falling from the sky as a result of the radioactive fallout from the war, the inadvertent genocide and annihilation not just of "certain species" but most—if not all (Dick 16). This soon gives way to a quiet anxiety as people recognize the severity of the loss of animals, and eventually, as we see reflected in Deckard's countenance, abject mournfulness over the loss of individual, personally kept animals (i.e., 'pets' and 'pests'[5]).

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[5] Because of the sheer scarcity of animals in Dick's world, the lines between what counts as a loveable "pet" and what is an eradicable "pest" have been greatly redrawn. There is no single instance in the book where a "real" animal of any sort would not be considered pet-keeping worthy. For instance, Deckard is amazed by the Rosen corporation's pet raccoon, Bill, and contemplates buying an ostrich, a goat; there is mention of spiders, crickets, mice making affordable pets.

Julia Kristeva defines [human] melancholy as “an abyss of sorrow, an uncommunicable grief … having us lose all interest in words, actions, and even life itself” (180). She adds that “the disenchantment that I experience here and now … appears, under scrutiny, to awaken echoes of old traumas, to which I realize I have never been able to resign myself. I can thus discover antecedents to my current breakdown in a loss, death, or grief over someone or something that I once loved” (181). Is this the experience that Deckard is having? How do we *define* mourning, particularly over the loss of a pet? Such a loss is often considered unspeakably improper, though as Alice A. Kuzniar has shown, it is not without foundation. She writes that “although the dog [or in this case, the sheep] belongs to another species, as a pet that is thoroughly integrated in the daily human life and companion to one’s quietest moments, it fills one’s psychic space” (Kuzniar 7). Further, she argues that the taboo against public exhibitions of feeling for one’s pet only serves to aggravate or intensify the owner’s feeling of abjection and loss: “the absence of social mourning … exacerbates the melancholic … unsymbolizable attachment” (Kuzniar 139). In Dick’s world, it is considered a social transgression to have contributed, through act or negligence, to the death of an animal, and so citizens are compelled to conceal the deaths, as Deckard does, by procuring an ersatz sheep “double.” In so doing, he is unable to properly mourn the loss of his sheep. With respect to this mourning animal life, David L. Clark might argue that “what we are … witnessing here is a form of unacknowledged attachment *to* animality, an underlying and interminable *anthropological melancholia*” (Towards 8, emphasis in original). As Judith Butler suggests, to be able to do so, we would be required to “reconceive life itself as a set of largely unwilled interdependencies” (75).

As the novel opens, it is clear that Deckard and his wife Iran are experiencing some sort of marital discord, appearing to have a relationship that could be most generously described as confrontational. Scarcely four pages into the text, the reason becomes clear. Deckard berates her for spending his earnings "Instead of saving … so [they] could buy a *real* sheep, to replace that fake electric one upstairs" (Dick 4, my emphasis). We learn, over the next few pages, that the Deckards owned a "real" sheep. Confessing to his neighbour Barbour, Deckard shares that his wife's father "gave it to [them] outright when he emigrated" off-planet, to escape the radioactive fallout of the world war (Dick 12). A year prior to the time that the novel begins, we learn, the sheep died of tetanus, from a piece of wire inadvertently left in its hay bale. As Judith Butler notes, "no amount of will or wealth can eliminate the possibilities of illness or accident for a living body, although both can be mobilized in the service of such an illusion" (30). When an animal's body physically dies, there is no resurrection—unless by means of artificial duplication or substitution.

In their respective explorations of animality in Dick's novel, both Jill Galvan and Sherryl Vint claim that Deckard's mourning over his loss of sheep is from the social approbation that comes with owning an animal, attributable to the industrialized care of animals mandated by Mercerism, the only remaining, state-sanctioned religion. Among the highest tenets of Mercerism, animals are absolutely sacred—in what Derrida might term a "theologizing fetishization" (Marx 51), and as a result, they have become revered in society more generally. Owning and caring for animals has become a sign of both social and economic status, as well as a mark of an individual's empathy (Vint 112). There is certainly ample evidence to support the creation of what Nicole Shukin has called a "semiotic and material closed loop [between animal and capital], such that the meaning and matter of the one feeds seamlessly back into the meaning and matter of the other" (16). While I find these interesting engagements with Dick's text, and I am not entirely unsympathetic with the substantiations puts forth by either scholar, I think they disserve Dick's ethical imperative regarding animals by eliding the evidence supporting Deckard's deeper connection to both this sheep in particular, and to a his quest for a more genuine empathy with non-human life more generally.

Deckard's captivation at seeing live animals is palpable, and, I argue, not simply from a capitalist consumer perspective. When he visits the Rosen Association to test his empathy scale, his focus on the task at hand is at once interrupted by the presence of animals. In marked contrast to the despair he has exhibited during the mo(u)rning routine of feeding his mechanical sheep, Deckard's focus is not only on the Rosen animal collection, as grand as it must have been, but the sights and smells of animalia (Dick 40). He marvels over Bill the raccoon, something he "never in his life had … personally seen" (40). When he decides that the Rosen owl, Scratchy, must be artificial, "his disappointment welled up keen and intense" (Dick 41). These are not the marks of a man who is after the possession of animals for prestige alone. This is a man who is haunted by the spectral presence—or lack of presence—of an animal life. His despair turns to anger, as he broods over "his need for a *real* animal; within him an actual hatred once more manifested itself toward his electric sheep, which he had to tend … as if it lived" (Dick 42, my emphasis). Turning his focus back to his own life's lack, he fumes angrily about the "tyranny" of the object-ersatz-sheep that "doesn't know [Deckard] exist[s]" (Dick 42). I would argue that Deckard's hatred for this electronic sheep is a sublimation of his melancholy for the loss of his original sheep. As Kristeva has argued,

> depression, like mourning, conceals an aggressiveness toward the lost object, thus revealing the ambivalence of the depressed person with respect to the object of mourning. 'I love that object,' is what that person seems to say about the lost object, 'but even more so I hate it; because I love it, and in order not to lose it, I imbed it in myself. (185-6)

That Deckard's "real" sheep had a name—Groucho—indeed, another "exotic name" as one bequeaths a "cherished" pet (Levinas 153) is significant here. Despite its ironic association to the (ostensibly) humorous Marx Brothers, it is more important to note that Deckard neither names, nor renames Groucho's ersatz replacement, referring to it as "that fake electric one" (4). In his loss of Groucho, Deckard is inconsolable.

What is it about this animal—this singular sheep—that touches Deckard s deeply? Certainly, as Kuzniar suggests, "the constant presence and care of the pet cause the attachment to be inadvertently close" (138). But I think there is more at work here than that. I suggest, following the work of Derrida, it is, in part, because Deckard has grown accustomed to falling under the gaze of his sheep: "from the vantage point of being-there-before-me it can allow itself to be looked at, no doubt, but also—something that philosophy perhaps forgets…—it can look at me. It has the point of view of regarding me" (Derrida Animal Therefore 11). As part of his daily routine, Deckard tends his sheep in his apartment-rooftop pasture, before heading off to work as a bounty-hunter—a job that arguably robs him of a little bit (or a lot!) of his humanity every time he euphemistically "retires" an android.

Indeed, one of Deckard's few criteria for being able to slaughter androids is that they "had no regard for animals"—something which he is at a complete loss to understand

(Dick 32). Akin to Levinas' Bobby, Deckard's sheep Groucho is an improbable—if not incredible—quotidian redeemer of his humanity. Like Bobby, who, Clark tells us, "breaks the binding force" of the Nazi animalization of Jewish POWs, Groucho bears unwitting witness to the individual man forced to commit abominably unethical inhumanities in the name of earning his daily bread (On Being 49). In the routine of caring for the daily needs of this little sheep, Deckard is perhaps reminded of his role as the ostensible "happy shepherd" alluded to in the epigraph of the story, borrowed from William Butler Yeats' poem "The Song of the Happy Shepherd." David Holdeman argues that despite the cheerfully optimistic evocation of the title of Yeats' poem, the shepherd's alleged happiness is belied:

> the shepherd laments the death of … age-old traditions, extinguished in a world that has exchanged nourishing dreams for the "painted toy" of "Grey Truth" (presumably, the spiritless truth of scientific materialism). To a world made "sick" by this situation, he defiantly announces that of all the "changing things" constituting temporal, material experience, "Words alone are certain good." (Holdeman n. pag.)

So while on one hand, caring for Groucho provides Deckard comfort and a remembrance of his humanity, like that "happy" shepherd in Yeats' poem, he is concurrently already mourning the loss of his sheep. For in the very act of naming Groucho, Deckard has to acknowledge his sheep's eventual (and unfortunately for all concerned, untimely) death. Derrida says, following Benjamin, that naming constitutes a "foreshadowing of mourning because … naming involves announcing a death to come" (Derrida Animal Therefore 20). The loss of any endangered species is certainly reason enough for melancholic grief, but to lose one's personal companion renders the loss that much more acute—perhaps in part, because one has unwittingly contributed to the event of the forthcoming death by committing the pet to a name.

Here, I think it is important to contrast Deckard's close relationship with his sheep, with Ed Pilsen's relationship with his cat, Horace. Like Deckard's original sheep, Groucho, Horace is a "real" cat. Sadly, in a case of 'mistaken identity,' (i.e., Isidore thought it must be a fake cat—albeit a "really good fake"), Horace dies en route to an "animal hospital" for fake animals.[6] The veterinary hospital employees (among whom is John Isidore) telephone the owner's home to let him know about the death of the cat, and Mrs. Pilsen answers. While she is apologetically offered "replacement value" for the cat, she opts to "commission an electric replacement of Horace, but without Ed ever knowing" (Dick 81). The owner of the shop warns her against such action, arguing that "the owner of the animal is never fooled" by the 'up-close' appearance of an ersatz pet replacement (Dick 81). Curiously, Mrs. Pilsen replies,

> *Ed never got physically close to Horace, even though he loved him*; I was the one who took care of all Horace's personal needs such as his sandbox. I think I would like to try a false animal, and if it didn't work then you could find us a real cat to replace Horace. I just don't want my husband to know; I don't think he could live through it. *That's why he never got close to Horace; he was afraid to*. And when Horace got sick…Ed got panic-stricken and just wouldn't face it. That's why we waited so long to call you. (Dick 81-2, my emphasis)

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[6] In the book, ersatz animal repair shops euphemistically refer to themselves as "pet hospitals", so it is no surprise that sooner or later, a "real" animal is inadvertently brought to their shop for repair. When such a slip-up occurs, the animal repair shops phone "a real animal vet" to take over for them (Dick 77).

Like Deckard, despite—or perhaps because of—his deeply melancholic longing for Horace, Mr. Pilsen is unable to come to terms with the potential (and eventually unavoidable) death of his pet. Unlike Deckard, however, Pilsen never really engages with the animal at all, leaving, I would argue, the true task of bereaving to his wife, the cat's primary caregiver. By avoiding/eliding the gaze of his little cat, Pilsen will never know what it would have been to dwell under its gaze; to be seen *seen* by the animal.

The sight of a genuine animal also affects John Isidore, an alleged "special" or "chickenhead." The designation of "chickenhead" itself is rather curious. In Deckard's world, it denotes a certain lack of intelligence; "chickenheads" are practically non-people in their society, judged on the basis of an intelligence test and found lacking, they are themselves reduced to a near-state of animality. Isidore expresses anxiety about his potential disposability as a result of his chickenhead status: "he, a special, wasn't wanted. Had no use. Could not, even if he wanted, emigrate" (21). Strangely (or perhaps not, given our predilection for exceptional braininess), he admires the androids that have gone into hiding in his apartment for their superior intellect, and wishes that he were similarly equipped: "'You're intellectual,' Isidore said … 'You think abstractly … I wish I had an IQ like you have; then I could pass the test, I wouldn't be a chickenhead. I think you're very superior. I could learn a lot from you" (Dick 164).

In this semi-abandoned apartment building (for all apartment buildings are largely unoccupied in this world), Isidore encounters "[a] spider, undistinguished but alive" (205). Breathlessly, he scoops it into a medicine bottle "which, like everyone else, he carried for just this" (205)—implying, I gather, that people are always on the 'lookout' for animal life—and rushes to share his discovery with his android friends. Unlike Isidore, the androids are perplexed, wondering “Why… it need[s] so many legs?” (205). Despite Isidore’s protestations that “That’s the way spiders are,” the androids are determined to prove, with Cartesian zeal, that the spider *doesn’t need* all eight legs. While some have pointed to this scene as the one that determines, finally, that androids are inferior to humans because of their lack of calculable empathy to the spider, or, indeed of Isidore’s horror at the cutting of the spider’s legs,

> Another way of reading this scene … is as disinterested experiment … mirroring the technique of [human] scientists who were (and often still are) able to perform painful experiments on living creatures without any concern. Thus android subjectivity is similar to the Cartesian model of subjectivity, used to justify the exploitation of animals because of their mechanical nature and lack of a soul (Vint 113).

The androids are more perfectly ‘human’ than imperfect humans like Isidore are judged to be. The significance of identifying this monstrosity as essentially human cannot be more stridently underscored—in that it identifies characteristics of *humanness*, as distinct from *humanity*.[7] As Butler says, “The norm continues to produce the nearly impossible paradox of a human who is no human, or of the human who effaces the human as it is otherwise known. Wherever there is the human, there is the inhuman; … ‘humanness’ is a shifting prerogative” (76). Here, I argue, that ‘humanity’ is equally a shifting dispensation, and so too, perhaps, animality along with it. What I hope resonates for the reader is that Isidore’s adoration and appreciation of the spider stems not from any potential for pecuniary benefit, but rather, from its anomalic[8] presence and aesthetic beauty—for its *uselessness*, a position of precarity with which Isidore can readily identify. As Isidore releases the injured, now four-legged (and probably dying) spider outside his apartment building, he meets Deckard, who is on his way to "retire" Isidore's android acquaintances. Despite the onerous nature of his forthcoming task, Deckard cannot help but marvel at Isidore's discovery: "I could go back and get that spider, he reflected. I've never found a live, wild animal. It must be a fantastic experience to look down and see something living scuttling along. Maybe it'll happen someday to me like it did him" (220). Again, the importance of his violent task is mitigated by the significant interruption of a live animal being. This foreshadows Deckard's desert encounter with the toad in the final chapter of the novel.

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[7] While this may amount to no more than a semantic gesture, I distinguish ‘humanity’ from ‘humanness’ thusly: where I use the word ‘humanity’, I am referring to the qualities of compassion and benevolence; where I refer to ‘humanness’, I am referring to the physiological characteristics of the human being. These are the same concepts I wanted to address in my response paper on the works of Levinas and Clark, 12 October 2009.

A curious thing has happened over the course of the novel: in the course of "retiring" so many androids, Deckard has begun to feel empathy toward them. Somewhat despondent after killing the androids in Isidore's building, Deckard feels compelled to be alone and drives out to the desert. There, he experiences what he thinks is something of a messianic event[9] as he finds what he thinks is a real toad:

> An animal, he said to himself. And his heart lugged under the excessive load, the shock of recognition. I know what it is, he realized; I've never seen one before but I

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[8] Is this even a word? There I go, stretching the boundaries of acceptable academi language again. By 'anomalic,' I mean to provide an adjectivial form of "anomaly," defined as "something that deviates from what is standard, normal, or expected."

[9] In referring to the event of messianic, I am thinking of the messianic through Derrida's notion of the "experience of the emancipatory promise; … a structural messianism, a messianism without religion, even a messianic without messianism, an idea of justice. … which cannot happen without transformation" (Marx 74).

> know it from the old nature films they show on Government TV.[10] They're extinct! He said to himself … Like the chickenhead Isidore and his spider; what happened to him is happening to me (237-8)

Deckard's euphoria is not a result, as others have argued, of the potential monetary benefits of such a discovery (though these thoughts can't help but pass Deckard's mind), but rather, the singular *being* of *beingness* that he thinks he has encountered [recall the images he captures of the owl's chest rising and falling, naturally; Isidore's image of the cat's laboured breathing and dying; the image of spider in its tiny, pre-mutilated perfection]. He says "It's like being a kid again" and feels that "all the weight had left him, the monumental and oppressive fatigue" that has plagued him throughout the text (238).

Rushing home, in marked contrast to the tenuous relationship with Iran throughout the novel, he now greets her with his toad in a box, his eyes "round with awe… like those of a little boy" (239). Regrettably, he soon learns that the toad is no more real than his electric sheep: "Crestfallen, he gazed mutely at the false animal." While he claims that "it doesn't matter. The electric things have their lives, too," Deckard's returning melancholic funk is palpable. Disconsolate, he crawls into bed, falling into a deep (I would argue melancholic) sleep, as Iran orders ersatz flies as feeding supplies for their new electric pet toad.[11] His admission that there is no difference between real and ersatz animals signals to me something of a final surrender. While he may have won the battle against the androids—

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[10] Lippit argues that in the early twentieth century, "Technology … began to serve as virtual shelters for displaced animals. In this manner, technology … came to determine a vast mausoleum for animal being" (187).

[11] Interestingly, she notes the seeming uselessness of the toad's legs; cf. the androids' deciding that spiders' legs were also useless.

and this is a contestable assertion, given his newly found empathy for them—he has lost the war with himself, and his need for Groucho's animal companionship.

Sherryl Vint has argued that ultimately, it doesn't matter whether the animals are real or simulated, "but rather how we ethically treat each other" (123). I disagree. Vint's position seems, to me, in direct opposition to Derrida's, who would insist on the intensification, the *complexification* of unitary, singular borders between animal and human lives. Further, by collapsing the difference between real and non-real animals, Vint disavows the importance of the gaze of the animal—that *specific* animal, Groucho the sheep—and all this loss has come to mean to Deckard. (Should the collapsing of difference not be reinscribed as différance? As the multiplication and complication of borders?) A While "the end of the novel suggests he might continue in his care for his useless toad" (Vint 124), he will only be going through the same mechanical motions he has gone through with the electric sheep—and there is no satisfaction for him there, for the electric sheep is an inert, commodifiable object which, he grumbles, doesn't even know he exists. Only by coming to terms with, and acknowledging by offering "hospitality without reserve"—rather than disavowing his feelings of loss over the sheep—will Deckard be able to achieve any genuine sense of peace or closure … rather than having to "dial it in" on an electronic mood regulator (Derrida, Marx 81).

As Tom Bailey has argued, "Melancholy is a feeling that can be wallowed in, or it can be overcome … everyone is mourning in expectation of loss, because sadness in the twenty-first century is such a seductively simple emotion. It is a challenge and an art to think one's way out of it" (n. pag.) I recall, here, Alice Kuzniar's apt description of Dürer's Melencolia I. She says "Melencolia's propped up head can signify not just tiredness over the *taedium vita* but also its opposite, creative intensity. … melancholy has been associated with the genius, who is said to translate loss into gain" (Kuzniar 16). Both of these writers point to the fruitful labour of melancholy, but it is not an easy emotional undertaking. Indeed, the work (and the unwork—the désoeuvrement) of mourning is hardly an abrogation of responsibility; it is its very beginning—an inheritance, if you will. As Derrida reminds us, "Inheritance is never a *given*, it is always a task" (Marx 67). The task set before Deckard, then, is mourn the loss of his little sheep, and in the productive inheritance of mourning, to transform his inconsolable grief into something more productive still—perhaps *refusing* to disavow the importance that the life of his sheep Groucho has meant to him. If the title asks us about androids and electric sheep, Deckard should certainly dwell with the remembrance of his own sheep: it is important, I argue, that he refuse to disavow its loss. While Deckard (nor, truly, the reader) may ever wholly understand his affective responses to the unforeseeable death of his sheep, the challenge is to undertake a more capacious understanding of melancholy as an emotional place that is not entirely without benefit.

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