

BROWN

Well, we have cats, as you know, and we have squirrels. Dogs are fine. I love playing with them and seeing them on the beach. But we don't actually have a dog.

Allegory is such an interesting idea. Historically, when you tell an allegory, it's because you can't say something directly, like, let's go have sex. So many of the Christian allegories are about penetrating the rose garden with your lance and your spear. Highly imaginative literature is about opening things up for us. I wasn't exactly sure what the dogs were. Is it me fighting with God? Is it me hating God and God hating me? Is it living with depression? I've lived with severe clinical depression, and it's like, you're in or you're out of it. Is it that? There's part of the book that's clearly about being a female with a female body in a male world—you know, a woman is a bitch, a dog, and then how does that relate to men being wolves? All of that, the religious side of it, the medical side of it—what is it? It's the sum of all those things.

In my experience in my apartment, it wasn't a psychotic break. It was just like, oh shit. I wasn't crazy. I knew something bad was going on in my head, I was aware something was fucked. But I wondered, why was it this big, black dog? Then dogs kept going in my imagination. I wasn't actually seeing things, but I *felt like* I was seeing things. The mystics actually write really well about modes of perception, seeing bodily, seeing spiritually; they understood it.

Churchill was also a depressive, and he saw black dogs—that's what he called his depression, black dogs—and, um, Kafka had black dogs and mice, and in the Catholic church there's an order of preachers started by and named after Saint Dominic, also known as the *domini canes*; i.e., the Dogs of God.

The thing about allegory is that it can be read so many different ways. That complexity really appeals to me. People have different views of it, and that's great. Even if they're completely off the ledge with it, I'm like, whatever.