Throughout recorded history humans have watched non-humans and lived in close proximity with them. This observation has been the root on which the cultural reproduction of animals has been grafted and without this no non-human would have become the subject or object of any aesthetic representation. The methods by which non-humans have become the material of cultural reproduction are manifold and the following chapters will explore three of them: the use of animals as symbols; anthropomorphism; and narratives of transformation. All other modes of representation are variants on these three main techniques. The three categories are by no means hermetically sealed and it may well be that readers will think that some of the examples I give do not fit into the category in which I wish to place them particularly well. This does not worry me as what I am attempting to do here is not to produce a rigorously worked out poetics or narratology of the non-human. I want instead to provide examples of the ways in which animals are depicted in western culture and to comment on the significance of this depiction for the human relationship with the non-human. In fact, I would be very pleased if what I have to say engages any reader sufficiently to make him or her wish to contest and reorganise my arguments.

The method I will be adopting in the ensuing chapters will be to provide a linked but non-sequential series of readings of a range of literary texts drawn from different periods and having varying canonical status. My aim is not to create a new canon, but rather to explore what parts of a canon might look like if the corpus of literature were to be approached from a point of view that is sympathetic to the rights of animals. The texts will be of reasonable familiarity and will not include (with one exception) the range of fairly recent popular narratives that
seek to construct fictive worlds entirely from the perspective of animals. Thus there will be no mystical rabbits, warring moles, magic bears or delinquent laboratory dogs. What I will be attempting to demonstrate is the presence of the non-human and the effect of that presence on the act of cultural reproduction.

There is an important distinction implicit in the previous sentence and it should be made explicit. When I speak of cultural reproduction I mean the ways in which aesthetic texts and artefacts are made the vehicle for the exposition, description and analysis of human society and the human experience. I will also speak of representation. By this I mean the tropes and images through which cultural reproduction comes into being and which are the characteristic marks of the aesthetic experience. My readings are based on the proposition that the non-human experience cannot be reproduced but only represented. It is not possible for humans to reproduce the non-human as reproduction is only possible through the iteration (if in highly distorted form) of the core experience of the producer and consumer. If animals could read I might think differently but, as they cannot, I am logically impelled to argue that their experience is necessarily incapable of reproduction. In other words, no human is capable of sufficient understanding of the non-human to act as its reproducer.

This may come down to the question of language or the lack of language. The distinction I am making depends on an assent to the proposition that the most important difference between human and non-human animals is the ability to use complex language and to communicate complex abstract ideas thereby. This is not to say that non-humans do not communicate one with another (although I am sceptical of talking chimpanzees and bonobos) but that the nature of human language is qualitatively different from the cries and gestures of animals to a degree that makes the two phenomena incomparable.\footnote{1} Human experience resides in language as it is only knowable through communication. As non-humans are, in this sense, silent, we cannot know of their experience and therefore we cannot meaningfully reproduce it. We can, however, imagine non-human experience and sympathetically engage with it by comparing it with our own. This gives us the ability to represent it.

This is why the idea of presence is so important. The act of representation literally makes that which was once present (or is now absent) present again. It enables something of which we are conscious to be represented to consciousness in another form. On the other hand, to live as a human is to produce the experience of being a human; to