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'The creature … was … a MAN!': Psychoanalysis, Freud, and Animals

NICHOLAS RAY

Over the last twenty years or so, the field of Animal Studies has become established as one of the most exciting areas of research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Cutting across disciplinary frontiers, it seeks to historicise, challenge, and reimagine the ways that human beings relate to the myriad forms of animate life around us. Animal Studies concerns itself as much with how we think about nonhuman animals (from children's fiction to philosophy) as with our conduct towards them in the material world (from pet keeping to factory farming). It interrogates the assumptions that organise our attitudes to other species as well as the ingrained mechanisms through which *human* animals tend to position themselves as being 'exceptional' – somehow ontologically distinct from, and superior to, the creatures with whom we share the planet. At stake in much of its work is a double imperative to grasp the modes of kinship linking human and nonhuman beings, and to develop a renewed understanding of and respect for the alterities of different lifeforms.

So, what might come of an encounter between Psychoanalysis and Animal Studies? More, certainly, than can be covered in a short chapter. As can be seen from the 'Recommended Reading' that follows, important interventions have been made in this area. But even this work has not exhausted the topic. A thoroughgoing examination of the question of the animal in Freud's thought alone would have to reckon with a formidable range of material: his overt propositions about the delimitation between human and nonhuman life; his expository deployments of ethology, zoology, protistology, even animal mythology; his interpretations of animal symbolism; his account of flesh-eating and dietary taboos in human prehistory; his rhetorical embedding of animal metaphors, typologies etc. The place of animals and animality could also be examined in psychoanalytic thinkers since Freud (exemplary work has been done on language and the human/animal relation in Jacques Lacan (Derrida 2009: 97 –135), but the potential canon is more extensive). And a swarm of questions could be formulated to ask how the conceptual resources of Psychoanalysis – calibrated to grasp the enigmas of mastery, cruelty, and the 'oral incorporation' of others, to name some obviously relevant themes – might help us understand, and perhaps rethink, our treatment of nonhuman beings.

This chapter, then, presents an indicative rather than a comprehensive account of Psychoanalysis and animals. Focusing on Freud, it will distinguish in his work two very different lines of approach apropos of animals and the human relation to them. I shall call the first line of approach one of *hermeneutic suspicion*. It plays a major part in Freud's thinking, emerging most emphatically in the interpretation of patient discourse (dreams, symptoms, fantasies etc) where animals are seen take the place of some other – repressed – psychic content. For reasons to be outlined, from the point of view of Animal Studies its limitations are sufficiently marked that it may be considered as much a retreat from as an approach to the question of animals and the human/animal relation. The second line of approach, which I shall refer to as *speculative*, arises from a conjecture Freud proposes about human bipedality and the consequences of our adoption of the upright carriage for

our relationship to ourselves and the nonhuman world. As we'll see, despite the theory's marginality in his work this second line of approach has much greater potentiality than the first and opens up a critical view of the 'exceptional' status of the human. I refer to this Freud-focused account as 'indicative' because although Psychoanalysis is not reducible only to Freud, it is his thought that laid the foundations for the discipline. Moreover, the two contrasting aspects of his work I shall address have a kind of exemplary significance: the 'hermeneutic' approach has exerted a strong influence in psychoanalytic thinking *since* Freud, while the 'speculative' approach, though underdeveloped and exerting little influence today, remains one of the most interesting attempts within Psychoanalysis to think the human/animal relation.

In the chapter's final part I turn to literature, offering a short illustrative discussion of the horror tale 'The Beast in the Cave' by H.P. Lovecraft. It's from this text that the quotation in my title derives. Lovecraft's fiction is notable for its exploration of the encounter between fhuman and nonhuman life, and one aspect of a recent upsurge of interest in his writing has focused on what Mayer (2016: 117) calls the 'implicit challenge to human exceptionalism' these encounters entail, their effect of 'displac[ing] humanity from its self-proclaimed position of privilege'. Though Lovecraft was sceptical of Freud's work – particularly its hermeneutic dimension – the counter-exceptionalism in his fiction, I suggest, bears striking affinities with the other, 'speculative' component of Freud's thought. Nowhere is this more the case than in 'Beast', where a confrontation with a mysterious quadruped becomes the occasion for an unsettling of the tendentious frontier separating 'human' from 'animal'.

I. Hermeneutic suspicion: animals everywhere… and nowhere

One area of Freud's work where animals show up with striking insistency is his clinical writing. Of his four major analytic case histories, 'Dora' is the only one in which animals do not play a significant part in the symptomatology.[1] The case of the 'Rat Man' centres on a patient with obsessional thoughts coalescing around a gruesome fantasy of rats; 'Little Hans' centres on a young boy with a phobia of horses and an ambivalent fascination with a variety of animals encountered at the Vienna Zoo (elephants, giraffes, lions, pelicans, sheep); and the 'Wolf Man' features a central animal phobia as well as fantasies, memories and associations relating to an extraordinary range of other creatures: birds, beetles, butterflies, caterpillars, flies, foxes, goats, horses, pigs, sheep, sheepdogs, snails, snakes, and wasps. In short, animals seem to be virtually everywhere in the case histories, and a superficial glance at the texts might lead one to suppose that relationships between human and non-human beings occupy a prominent place in Freud's clinical thinking. But what does Freud *do*, confronted with the animal figures that infest the symptomatologies and associations of his patients?

As a rule, he looks past them. That is, he regards them as dissimulations, as manifest representations standing in for, and disguising, something else – other ideas that are struck out of consciousness by repression and which it is the business of analysis to bring to light. In the case of Little Hans, for example, the young patient is plagued by a fear that a horse in the street might fall down and bite him. But in Freud's view, Hans's fear of horses is not really a fear of *horses* at all. He argues that behind the acknowledged animal phobia there lies concealed from consciousness a determining complex of ideas and impulses that in fact relate to the boy's parents. Unconsciously, Hans is, Freud

proposes, ‘a little Oedipus’ with strong libidinal attachments to his mother and a correlative wish for his father to be ‘out of the way’ (*SE* 10: 111). The phobia is thus interpreted as an encrypted manifestation of Oedipal anxiety: the figure of the horse is a substitute for the father (a connection supposedly made possible by the noseband and blinkers on certain horses resembling the father’s spectacles and moustache); its falling down is an expression of Hans’s death-wish against him; its bite is the punishment he fears in return for the wish. Similarly, in the ‘Wolf Man’ case, what the patient experiences as fear of a wolf – or, specifically, of a picture-book image of a wolf walking upright – is really no such thing. The wolf is a substitute for the father at whose hands the patient unconsciously fears castration as a corollary of a latent wish to be penetrated by him.

What is important to notice about these illustrations is that Freud does not take the animals to be significant qua animals but only insofar as they take the place of *human* referents. In this respect they are exemplary. In both cases here the creature in the symptom is really a disguised man – specifically the father, as is ‘most often’ the case in animal phobias (‘A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis’, *SE* 19: 87). But Freud also, and repeatedly, discovers different human referents lurking behind other animals. For instance, when Hans fantasises about a tall and a ‘crumpled’ giraffe, Freud (*SE* 10: 37) regards them as dissimulations of the boy’s father and mother respectively; when the Wolf Man recounts the ‘uncanny’ feeling he had on seeing a butterfly, Freud (*SE* 14: 90) detects behind the animal the arousing figure of the patient’s old nursery maid, and so on.

Of course, animals are also frequently more than just substitutes for this or that human being: they can be overdetermined. However, the supplementary determinations remain unequivocally rooted in the human world. The Rat Man supplies a striking illustration. After an army captain tells him of a form of torture in which a pot of rats is held upside down against the victim’s buttocks until the creatures bore into the anus, he becomes obsessed with thoughts of this being done to the lady he loves and his (dead) father. First and foremost, Freud sees the rats as a substitute for the patient himself, who in a formative childhood scene bit his nurse, possibly on an intimate part of her body: the fantasies of torture which so horrify him are thus interpreted as veiled instantiations of his own unconscious hostility to the lady and the father. But rats take on further significance as the point of convergence of a network of highly charged mental preoccupations: for instance, their reputation as carriers of disease disposes them to become, in addition, imbued with the patient’s dread of syphilitic infection, while the very signifier ‘rat’ (German: *Ratte*) creates bridges between the idea of the animals and such disparate matters as the patient’s need to make certain payments (*Raten*: instalments), his father’s history as a gambler (*Spielratte*), and his dilemma over whom to marry (*heiraten*). It is not so much the actuality or alterity of rats in themselves that is clinically meaningful; the rats are a symbolic repository for displaced affects and ideas whose ‘proper’ points of reference are human.

There are occasions when animals are seen to stand-in for generic rather than particular human referents, such as the small animals the Wolf Man tortures as a boy which Freud views as ‘representatives of small children’ (*SE* 14: 109). At still other moments, animals figure not as substitutes for human beings at all but as relatively neutral screens onto which human concerns are safely transposed. For instance, behind the Wolf Man’s fascination with ‘the different names by which by horses are distinguished according to whether their sexual organs are intact’, Freud sees a covert preoccupation with the differences between men and women, and the classic psychoanalytic theme of ‘castration’ (25). But what these various instances all attest to is that in Freud’s account

what possesses aetiological significance is not this or that creature so much as the anthropic objects and preoccupations displaced onto it.

By naming the approach I have been illustrating one of 'hermeneutic suspicion' I'm loosely recalling Paul Ricoeur's classic work *Freud and Philosophy* ([1965] 1970). For Ricoeur Freud exemplifies a mode of 'suspicious' interpretation that regards the manifest text as something that masks the truth and misdirects understanding, a dissemblance that must be dispersed for the truth to emerge. (It is an approach Ricoeur contrasts with an older 'hermeneutics of faith', where the full meaning of a text may not be transparent but is nonetheless thought to be immanent and gives itself to be understood). My intention in borrowing Ricoeur's terminology is not to revive his general account of Freud but to underline the specific observation that when animals arise in the case histories, they tend to do so as masks to be torn away, as placeholders deceptively imbued with significances that are not inherent to them and that lack an essential connection to animals or animality. In Freud's clinical writing, nonhuman animals are always so to speak red herrings, and it is the task of the 'suspicious' analyst to disclose the human grounds they supposedly conceal.

I indicated at the beginning that this posture of suspicion may be considered as much a retreat from as an approach to animals and the human/animal relation. This is in part because it tends to foreclose the possibility that an animal might be just… an animal: that a wolf might be a wolf rather than a father, that giraffes might be giraffes, that the patient's experience of certain creatures might really be an experience of the alterity of other species. This foreclosure has been given considerable emphasis by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, albeit within the framework of a more encompassing critique of psychoanalysis, which I shan't attempt to detail here. Discussing Little Hans, for instance, Deleuze says bluntly that Freud's attempt to see the phobic object of the horse as an image of the father is 'a fucking joke' (Sub-Til Productions 2020). The case history reports that Hans is terrified by drivers beating their horses in the street and that his illness began immediately after he witnessed a bus-horse collapse and thrash about, apparently in its death agony. Such spectacles, Deleuze claims, are 'disturbing to the core' (Sub-Til Productions 2020), yet Freud proceeds as though 'seeing a horse fall under a whip and struggling back up with clattering hooves and sparks has no affective importance!' (Deleuze, Guattari, et. al. [1977] 2006: 96). Propelled by the assumption that affective importance is attributable exclusively to human relations – and, as Deleuze and Guattari see it, specifically familial or 'Oedipal' relations – Freud evacuates substance and meaning from the patient's experience of the horses *as* horses and as objects of a cruelty that can be inflicted with impunity *because* they are horses. A similar emptying-out occurs each time a patient confronts Freud with reference to actual or fantasised encounters with other species (rats, wolves, butterflies…) which he interprets as a disguise for something anthropic. Depleted of all but referential value, animals and human/animal relations as such are never really permitted to become objects of the analysis at all.

Nor is there any accommodation of the question of species difference itself as an enigma confronting the human subject. 'Little Hans' and the 'Wolf Man' circle back repeatedly to the discovery of the difference between men and women and thus to castration anxiety. But human/animal differences are never substantively thematised, even when, as some commentators observe, they appear to be anxiogenic for the patient. Barbara Creed's (2005: 117) provocative reading of the 'Wolf Man' case, for instance, argues that the patient's illness has at least as much to do with species as with sex, and that where Freud identifies the patient's fear of losing the male member, he ought to

identify a fear of the loss of human specificity and of 'becoming animal'. It is notable that Freud often claimed – including in his clinical work (*SE* 14: 98) – that young children feel a commonality with animals which undergoes an 'estrange[ment]' ('A Difficulty in the Path', *SE* 17: 140) caused by the subsequent apprehension of a 'frightful gulf' (*Introductory Lectures*, *SE* 15: 209) between human and nonhuman beings – though when and in what terms the apprehension occurs is never addressed. In his *Introductory Lectures*, he describes this in the same breath as he describes the child's original attribution of 'the same conformation of the genitals' to men and women, only to be disabused by the subsequent apprehension of sexual difference (209). But in contrast to male/female difference, the possibility that species difference or the prospect of indifferentiation ('becoming animal') might play a part in pathogenesis is never entertained.

So, although animals are in one sense everywhere in the clinical writing, in another sense they are nowhere, tending to evaporate under hermeneutic scrutiny and to be emptied of relational and aetiological significance for the patient. It is not the creatures but what they conceal that counts.

II. Speculation: turning up our noses

The second – very different – line of approach derives from Freud's speculative hypothesis on the deep psychic consequences of bipedality in the human species. It first shows up in a private letter to his friend Wilhelm Fliess in the 1890s (Freud 1985: 278ff) and receives its fullest expression in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930). However, it is never systematically elaborated or integrated into the doctrine: one would search in vain in Freud's synthetic overviews of his own thought for any reference to it, and while it makes several discrete appearances in his work between the letter and *Civilization*[2] its implications are never permitted to interfere with the larger theory. Even the account in *Civilization* is relegated to a pair of dense, lengthy footnotes separated by a few pages, aspects of which are partly in tension with the book's main thesis – to the point that, in Leo Bersani's (1986: 18) view, they play the role of the 'unconscious' of the work itself. It is, in a word, a curiously sequestered hypothesis. It is also somewhat sweeping and extravagant. Here, I make no case for its objective veracity. My purpose is simply to show that it sketches a challenge to the notion of human 'exceptionalism', the pervasive assumption that we are ontologically distinct from and superior to other animate lifeforms and, in contrast to the hermeneutics of the clinical writing, introduces into Freud's thought a perspective from which the human/animal relation might be addressed directly.

Freud's hypothesis is that in the course of evolution our sexuality was transformed by our adoption of the upright posture. On the one hand, the shift in humans from horizontal to vertical locomotion, and the consequent lifting of the nose from the ground, caused what he generally refers to as an 'organic repression' (*organischen Verdrängung*) of libidinal excitements linked to the olfactory sense. Whereas smell remains 'the principal sense in [quadrupedal] animals' (1985: 223), our vertical elevation led to a relative depreciation of its function in us. Libidinal pleasures derived by our quadrupedal ancestors from corporeal odours – genital and especially anal/excremental – became subject to disgust: they were in every sense now 'beneath' us. On the other hand – and this is something that only comes to the fore in later iterations – since the upright posture exposed human bodies to sight in new ways, the libidinal organisation of human beings became refocused around visual stimuli, though this very exposure also created the

conditions for 'feelings of shame' (*Civilization*, *SE* 21: 99n1). From the earliest iterations of this theory, Freud argues that the psychical mechanism of repression is nothing less than a legacy of the organic repression laid down in human prehistory: 'in the same manner as we turn away our sense organ (the head and nose) in disgust, the preconscious and the sense of consciousness turn away from [certain] memory [traces]. This is *repression*' (1985: 280). By the time of its final iteration, in 1930, Freud's vision for the theory is still more encompassing. Here, here argues that the whole of human civilization is rooted in the adoption of the upright gait: the depreciation of smell freed us from sexual periodicity and therefore created the conditions for continuous companionship that facilitate family life, and the emergence of shame and disgust paved the way for imperatives of cleanliness and instinctual renunciation that facilitate all other 'developmental advances' (*SE* 21: 100n1).

The most germane implications of this hypothesis – its counter-exceptionalist intuition and its opening of a critical viewpoint on the human/animal relation – are clearest in the iteration that appears in the footnotes of *Civilization*, so I shall draw on this most extensively in what follows. I shall limit myself to addressing two overlapping aspects of the exposition, focusing on remarks in the first and second notes respectively.

The first aspect concerns our relationship to the olfactory sense and to those other animals still deemed to embody it, though Freud's privileged example is the dog. It emerges in the first note (*SE* 21: 99–100n1). To explain the point, it is helpful to mention a remark about Freud's hypothesis by Animal Studies scholar Cary Wolfe (2010). Wolfe is critical of what he calls 'humanist' modes of thought which accord ontological privilege to the human being owing to its supposedly unique (i.e. 'exceptional') possession of qualities that elevate it 'above' animal life. One trope of such humanism is a valorisation of 'vision': that is, both an insistence that vision is 'the human sensory apparatus par excellence' (162) and the assumption that it not simply the 'the equal' of, say, 'the dog's sense of smell or the horse's sense of touch' (134), but something distinct and superior, which is linked to our supposedly unique capacity for 'reason' (162) and for 'survey[ing], organiz[ing] and master[ing] space' (130). Citing *Civilization* – albeit briefly – Wolfe asserts that Freud's hypothesis is a 'canonical' example of this humanist trope: a tale of man's liberation from the low sensory apparatus of the quadruped and his embrace of 'visual prowess' (130).

There is some merit in Wolfe's claim; Freud certainly sees the shift in our libidinal organisation from olfactory to visual as being foundational for the 'advances' of what is called civilization. But to give Freud his due, we can make some further observations. Firstly, his notorious ambivalence towards civilization – his acknowledgement of both its achievements and its capacity to make us sick (Phillips 2014: 39–40) – is nowhere more in evidence than in this text; and it inheres even in the account of the olfaction hypothesis: on the one hand, Freud insists that the depreciation of smell is a *loss* of sensory capacity, placing a repression and impairment at the heart of our erotic lives; on the other, the subsequent dominance of visual stimulation, whatever else it may give us, also lumbers us with shame. In short, the shift from the olfactory to the visual is not, as Freud presents it, an unqualified advance. Secondly, and more significantly, it is important to notice that Freud's discussion in the first footnote differentiates between the '*diminution* of […] olfactory stimuli' caused by our bipedality and the '*devaluation* of olfactory stimuli' correlative with it (*SE* 21: 99n1; emphases added). The italicized words in these phrases translate respectively two German terms that mustn't be confused: *Zurücktreten* and *Entwertung*. The '*Zurücktreten* of olfactory stimuli' describes the quantitative physiological

decline in the human's capacity for smell, caused by locomotive elevation. The '*Entwertung* of olfactory stimuli', however, shifts to the qualitative valuation of olfaction as such insofar as it is affected by the physiological decline. In other words, Freud distinguishes between, on the one hand, an objective reduction in the functional significance of smell in human beings, and, on the other, the resulting effort on the part of human beings to devalue olfactory excitation per se. Having lost the delights of osmic libidinal stimulation when we first walked upright, that is, we devalue them in an effort to convince ourselves that what we lost wasn't worth having anyway: we don't reject the olfactory pleasures of quadrupeds *because* they are inferior; we dismiss them *as* inferior because we have already had to leave them behind. In this respect, Freud's hypothesis is not an unconditional valorisation of the 'visual prowess' of the human that supervenes once our sexuality is no longer centred on smell; it's an acknowledgement of the factitiousness of our *de*valorisation the olfactory sense.

Significant also – particularly given Wolfe's remark about the humanist privileging of vision above the canine sense of smell – are Freud's remarks towards the end of the note where he addresses our ambivalent relationship with dogs. 'It would be incomprehensible', he says,

> that man should use the name of his most faithful friend in the animal world – the dog – as a term of abuse if that creature had not incurred his contempt through two characteristics: that it is an animal whose dominant sense is that of smell and one which has no horror of excrement, and that it is not ashamed of its sexual functions. (100n1).

In question here is the relative inferiority of dogs within the material and symbolic universe of human beings. On the one hand, they have long served as objects of actual hostility owing to their exemption from civilized shame and disgust: one thinks, for example, of the influential scriptural traditions, such as those in the New and Old Testaments, that associate dogs with behavioural depravity and routinely designate them, and other highly olfactory animals such as pigs, as unclean (Breier 2017). On the other, their very name is a dysphemism used to designate a perceived lack of morality, decorum or other civilized standards among human beings ('dirty dog', 'dog-eat-dog', 'gone to the dogs' etc).[3] But Freud's point is precisely that this inferiorisation is tendentious: the dog is derogated as an object of contempt and a figure 'uncivilised' human behaviour, he insists, only as a function of our more fundamental derogation of the sensory organization that dogs happen still to embody. Their demeaned status is collateral damage in the human effort to abjure the exquisite value of what we lost when we stood up. Far from articulating a 'humanist' account of man's ontological superiority, what Freud actually suggests is that a certain *illusion* of superiority or exceptionality is sustained only by the contingent devaluation of other lifeforms and – correlatively – by the metaphorical animalization of those human beings who are deemed not conform to the standards of so-called 'human' conduct.

The second aspect comes into focus in the next footnote (105–7n3). It is not so much a fresh argument as a deepening, albeit rather terse, of the implications of claims made in the first note. After a discussion of bisexuality in human and some nonhuman animals, Freud returns to the theme of the upright posture. Amplifying his previous claims about shame and disgust, he avers that bipedality impaired 'the whole of [human] sexuality' (106n3) by marking it with a constitutive repugnance, aspects of which are writ

large in some psychosexual pathologies. He then offers this compressed but fascinating claim:

> [T]he deepest root of the sexual repression which advances along with civilization is the organic defence of the new form of life achieved with man's erect gait against his earlier animal existence. This result of scientific research coincides in a remarkable way with commonplace prejudices that have often made themselves heard. (106n3)

Notice that Freud has substituted the phrase 'organic defence' (*organische Abwehr*) for 'organic repression' (*organischen Verdrängung*) used in the previous footnote, and in earlier iterations of the olfaction hypothesis. He gives no explanation, but the shift can be read in light of a terminological clarification introduced a few years earlier in *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety*: 'repression', strictly speaking, refers to the exclusion of something from the ego and its deposit in the id; 'defence', however, can be used generically to refer to any operation involving the 'protection of the ego against instinctual demands', including operations that might have existed 'before [the] sharp cleavage [of the mental apparatus] into an ego and an id' (*SE* 20: 164). Freud's substitution in the note, however abrupt, indicates that the repudiation of olfactory stimulation caused by our vertical locomotion was not a repression in the strict sense. What we now recognise as repression ('…the sexual repression [*Sexualverdrängung*] which advances along with civilization…') grew out of this elementary, but still obscure, defence that took place in the immemorial history of the species as we were beginning to differentiate ourselves from other creatures. In tandem with this terminological nuance, Freud also now outlines a bolder framing of the implications of the first organic defence. Where previously he has described it in terms of particular examples – the devaluation of olfaction and the attendant devaluation of 'olfactory' species such as dogs – he now presents a consolidated characterization of its action: the foundational defence of the upright life-form – and the 'root' of all other defences the latter might evolve, including the sexual repression of civilization itself – is nothing less than a defence against 'animality', against being-'animal'.

Unfortunately, Freud doesn't elaborate on this claim here or elsewhere. However, one contextual point is worth underlining by way of clarification. In his preceding remarks about the impairment of 'the whole of [human] sexuality', he stresses a tension between our capacity for disgust and the reality of our anatomy. In regard to the latter, he cites the Latin phrase *inter urinas et faeces nascimur* ('we are born between urine and faeces'). That's to say that despite their locomotive elevation our bodies stubbornly retain the intimate connection between the sexual and the excremental we pride ourselves on having apparently relinquished. As Freud puts it in an earlier iteration of the theory, an aspect of our sexuality is essentially repugnant to us because 'our bodies have remained animal [*tierisch*]' ('On the Universal', *SE* 11: 189). The particular value of this claim is its clarification that the human 'defence' against an 'earlier animal existence' should not be understood only 'historically', as a once-and-for-all repudiation of our prehuman ancestors in the past; it is also an action that bears correlatively on our material selves in the present. Freud suggests, in a word, that by virtue of being upright human beings are constitutively defended against the idea of their *own* animality, marked by an impulse to abnegate something of their ineradicable kinship to prehuman and contemporary nonhuman lifeforms. They are not ontologically exceptional vis-à-vis other animals;

rather, a determined *misrecognition* of their exceptionality – of being something irreducibly other than 'merely' animal – lies at the very core of human inner life.

We appear to be a long way from the approach to nonhuman beings that emerges in the clinical writing. There, we noted, animals and the human/animal relation are never really objects of analysis; their presence in symptoms, dreams and associations is only a by-product of repressions that bear exclusively on human objects and preoccupations, and the question of species difference is never thematised. Yet the olfaction hypothesis posits a certain tendentious reflexiveness about our own speciation at the very basis of being human. In doing so, it effectively reframes the work of the case histories within a diachronic perspective that inverts the priority of the terms in question: here the capacity for repression *tout court* is itself a by-product of a more elementary defence against animality. Moreover, by proposing that the psychic organisation of the human being is evolutionarily marked in such a way, the hypothesis also introduces the possibility that our relationships to other animate lifeforms in the present – experienced by an individual patient or perhaps articulated in more 'commonplace prejudices' such as those against dogs, pigs, horses, or other creatures – might themselves be the objects of conflict and defence and might therefore be susceptible of analysis as such. In other words, if the case histories suggest that psychoanalysis has nothing to say about animals except insofar as they are disguises for other things, the olfaction hypothesis, wayward and as questionable as it is, begins to suggest otherwise.

I say only 'begins' because Freud himself is not concerned with following up those ramifications of the hypothesis which might be of more direct interest to scholars in the field of contemporary Animal Studies. There's no thoroughgoing exploration, for instance, of the obvious correlation between the routine violence and exploitation to which nonhuman animals are subjected with impunity (such as the horses beaten in the Vienna streets before the eyes of little boys) and the exceptionalism that the hypothesis seeks to challenge; nor is there any sustained reflection on the ethical responsibilities towards nonhuman animals that this challenge might imply, or on the possibility of comprehending other ontologies in which the germinal defence of human speciation might be deactivated and the human abnegation of its own animality be surpassed.

But as inchoate as it is, the olfaction hypothesis embeds in Freud's work, and thus Psychoanalysis, a distinctive opening towards these complex questions. If it leaves them insufficiently thought through, it nonetheless indicates that they need not be considered heterogenous to psychoanalytic reflection. On the contrary, it suggests that Psychoanalysis can and should be interested in our experience of other creatures; in our capacity to derogate, exploit, and harm them, and to abjure forms of kinship with them; in how our relations to them might be more ethically calibrated; and in what it might mean for human beings to embrace rather than repudiate their own animal nature. It is reasonable to suppose that other sources of impetus to engage such questions, and important conceptual resources to address them, might yet be located elsewhere in Freud and psychoanalytic theory since Freud.

III. 'The Beast in the Cave'

I want to conclude with a brief discussion Lovecraft's 'The Beast in the Cave' ([1905] 2017). As I indicated at the outset, Lovecraft himself was wary of psychoanalysis and especially of what one of his characters refers to as Freud's 'puerile symbolism' (Lovecraft

[1919] 2017: 71),[4] which we may take to refer in part to the kind of suspicious interpretation outlined earlier. 'Beast', however, is a tale that suggests an affinity with the other aspect of Freud we've outlined, one which Lovecraft was most likely unaware of, since there is no evidence that he was familiar with the olfaction hypothesis. This short tale is an exploration of the tension between the categories of 'animal' and 'man', the ostensible differentiation between them being marked in terms of locomotory orientation (horizontal/vertical) – a theme the story recurs insistently – and olfactory sensitivity. An early work, 'Beast' has the distinction of being the story where Lovecraft 'found his idiom' (Joshi 2013: 116); in particular it's the first in a string of texts where an encounter with some kind of living alterity destabilises the 'supposedly sovereign human self' (Mayer 2016: 119). Subsequent iterations will take on more 'cosmic' dimensions and will be energised by an increasingly pernicious political reactionism, for which Freud would have little sympathy. But for our purposes the value of 'Beast' in its own right lies in its thematic resonance with the terrestrial preoccupations of the olfaction hypothesis and its vivid fleshing out of the theoretical concerns we've identified in it. Whatever the disparities between Freud and Lovecraft, their critical attitudes to human exceptionalism show a marked commonality.

The story's narrator recounts being lost in Kentucky's Mammoth Cave, having strayed from his touring party. Standing upright and shouting for help, he inadvertently attracts the attention of some living 'visitor' (Lovecraft [1905] 2017: 20). He is sure it is an animal, the sound of its approaching steps indicating that it is predominantly a 'quadruped', walking mainly 'on *four* instead of *two* feet', and its ability to find him in the dark indicating that it tracks his 'scent' (19–20). In mounting fear that its approach is 'hostil[e]', he wounds the thing by throwing a rock (20). Shortly after, the tour-guide locates him, and the narrator prostrates himself at his feet. They then investigate the dying creature by torchlight. It seems initially to be some 'anthropoid ape' (23) with unusual characteristics. Then, just before expiring, it utters sounds – presumably words – which freeze the pair in horrified realisation, expressed in the tale's final sentence: 'The creature I had killed, the strange beast of the unfathomed cave was, or had at one time been, a MAN!!!' (25).

The creature is of course a figure of atavistic 'reversion' of a kind that crops up frequently in post-Darwinian Gothic (Hurley 1996: 63): someone lost in the cave for so long that his body has somehow retrogressed in evolutionary terms, resuming the characteristics of prehuman ancestors and simian contemporaries. The concluding revelation thus retrospectively reconfigures the entire encounter. At one level, the beast is, as the narrator says, an 'unnatural monster' (Lovecraft [1905] 2017: 23), a horrifying aberration. But what it uncannily figures forth is an evolutionary past – quadrupedal, olfactive, 'animal' – shared by the narrator himself. The effect of the final sentence, then, is to reframe his antipathy toward the beast qua beast – his repulsion from it, wish to 'defend' (20) himself against it, and readiness to kill it – as manifesting a more fundamental antipathy towards a dimension of his *own* being.

Significantly, the text makes it clear – and does so behind the narrator's back, so to speak – that this dimension doesn't simply belong in the prehistoric past but is immanent to him (such immanence being also of course the condition of possibility for the creature's own retrogression). The man appears not to realise, for instance that when, at its first approach he refers to the beast as a 'visitor', he speaks as though he himself – by default, the host – somehow *belonged* in the cave. Nor does he acknowledge that when the guide arrives and he abandons his upright position to '[lie] upon the ground at [his]

feet […] gibbering' (23), his own horizontality mirrors for a moment that of the beast, his articulation tellingly inhuman. At these moments the narrative betrays the existence of an unacknowledged kinship between the narrator and the creature in precisely the latter's nonhuman aspect. As a result, by the time the narrator delivers his lurid revelation that the beast is, or was, a man, the reader has already understood fully the more significant revelation which the man (the narrator) apparently has not: *that he is himself a beast*.

Critical here are the differential perspectives from which we witness this double revelation, that is, the fact that on one hand we share with the narrator the perception of a former humanity in the creature, and, on the other, we perceive the narrator failing to perceive the indications of his own kinship with the creature *as* creature. The affinity between the two figures – the fact they are both 'the beast in the cave' – is patent to the reader, even as the man turns up his nose in revulsion at the beast's supposed monstrosity. The effect of this differential is to leave us in little doubt that the story is as much concerned with the essential animality of the man as it is with the man's (or perhaps simply: 'man's'?) incorrigible tendency to abnegate his own animality. Estranged correlatively from the animal he encounters without and the animal he is within, Lovecraft's narrator emerges as a kind of emblem of the defended human subject of Freud's speculation – an everyman captured in a misrecognition of his own exceptional being.

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[1] For reasons of space, I limit these remarks to Freud’s four ‘canonical’ case histories. A discussion of Freud’s earlier clinical work in the *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) co-authored with Breuer is found in Ellmann (2014).

[2] See *Three Essays, SE* 7: 198; ‘Rat Man’, *SE* 10: 248; ‘On the Universal Tendency to Debasement’, *SE* 11: 189–90; ‘Preface’, *SE* 12; Nunberg & Federn 1967: 323.

[3] Pigs, again, are tarred with a similar brush: consider, for instance, Little Hans’s mother telling him that touching himself is ‘piggish’ (*Schweinerei*) because it is ‘not proper’ (*SE* 10: 19).

[4] That Lovecraft sympathised with this view is attested in a letter to Robert Bloch where he rejects what he sees as the Freudian approach to the interpretation of dreams (Lovecraft 1933). His remarks suggest limited knowledge of Freud’s work. On aspects of Freud’s interpretative method irreducible to hermeneutics or ‘symbolism’, see Laplanche (1996).