Victorian Literature and Culture (2017), **45**, 821–837.
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doi:10.1017/S1060150317000237

KIPLING'S BESTIARY

By Parama Roy

On Empire and the Nonhuman

THE ANIMAL TURN IN STUDIES of nineteenth-century imperialism has been a long time in coming. Scholars seeking to yoke together questions of nonhuman life and the domain of the colony have come to acknowledge, at long last, that the imperial landscape was not a purely human one. Only now, suggests John Miller, has the considerable scholarship on empire and the natural world made an impress upon Victorian literary studies (479). The animal turn, however, is not new in the scholarship on Rudyard Kipling. For Kipling, empire never was simply an affair of human beings; more perhaps than any other writer of the colonial experience, he saw imperialism as encompassing plural and multiply scaled orders of animate life. Henry James, an early admirer of Kipling's work, took disgusted note in 1897 of what seemed to him the simultaneous multitudinousness and diminution of the younger writer's fictional world: "My view of his prose future has much shrunken in light of one's increasingly observing how little life he can make use of.... In his earliest time I thought he perhaps contained the seeds of an English Balzac; but I have given that up in proportion as he has come down steadily from the simple in subject to the more simple–from the Anglo-Indians to the natives, from the natives to the Tommies, from the Tommies to the quadrupeds, from the quadrupeds to the fish, and from the fish to the engines and screws" (Page 49).

Other readers of Kipling have endeavoured to redeem Kipling's turn to the nonhuman, often by turning to the *Jungle Books*. These beast fables are widely acknowledged as superb and pointed allegories of human community, collaboration, and sovereignty under colonial conditions – "tract[s] in wolf's clothing," according to A. E. Housman (Seymour-Smith 82). Such a reading of the allegorical form of the *Jungle Books* – a reading, that is, of the animal's pedagogical function as at least an image if not a mirror of the human – is compelling to a seductive degree and in many instances authorised by Kipling himself. Indeed, he is at some pains to clarify the *human* moral of some at least of the tales in an unequivocally didactic fashion. The management of animals is continuous with the management of men, as an Indian officer explains in prodigal detail to an admiring Afghan chief in "Servants of the Queen": "They [the working animals of the army] obey, as the men do. Mule, horse, elephant, or bullock, he obeys his driver, and the driver his sergeant, and the sergeant his lieutenant, and the lieutenant his captain, and the captain his major, and the major his colonel, and the colonel his brigadier commanding three regiments, and the brigadier the

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general, who obeys the Viceroy, who is the servant of the Empress. Thus it is done" (R. Kipling, "Servants" 166–67). Labour, training, sacrifice, discipline, hierarchical division, and domestication link mule and horse ultimately to the Viceroy; there is but a single law of obedience that ensures the passage from animal life to political subjecthood, whether for human or for nonhuman animals. From this it is a short step to say that running an empire is a form of animal husbandry. Indeed, Anand Pandian, developing Foucault's metaphorics of the pastoral care of the biopolitical order suggests that "a close examination of the government of animals *by* humans is vital for an anthropology of biopolitics: for an understanding, that is, of the many ways in which humans have been governed themselves *as* animals in modern times." He draws attention to the ways in which idioms of grazing and domestication have been used from the colonial period onwards to describe modes of managing certain humans (specifically, members of so-called criminal castes and tribes in the subcontinent) as "animal objects of government" (86).

This is a superbly useful model for the analysis of texts such as the *Jungle Books*. But I would suggest that surely we miss the scope of nonhuman life in Kipling's work if we read it solely in terms of *human* animality, or in term of human biopower alone; the forms of life that inhabit his worlds encompass more orders of the animate than the human. Such a profusion of nonhuman existence, moreover, is not isolated within the *Jungle Books* and the *Just So Stories* but pervades the fiction and the journalistic prose. To enter Kipling's landscapes is to enter a teeming environment bursting with energy, perhaps even with agency; they are lively with animal, vegetal, and sometimes machinic life, not to mention the sheer unarguable power of hostile topographies and climates. Both everyday as well as fantastical beings people the fictions; a census of the beings that dwell therein would be more akin to that of a medieval bestiary, with its concatenation of real and imagined creatures (including humans), than to a textbook of natural history of more recent centuries. They are on occasion figures of that for which no referential authentication is possible – *l'animot* before the word was invented. (As is well known by now, Derrida has deployed the neologism "l'animot," an impossible or "chimerical word" or homonym that puns upon singular and plural forms, "animal" and "animaux," in order to proffer a critique of the ways in which the multiplicity of animal being is subsumed under a single name – animal – that would encompass all non-human animals. If *animot* is for Derrida "neither a species, nor a genre, nor an individual... [but] an irreducible living multiplicity of mortals," it is also, as the *mot* lodged in it suggests, a creature of language, of naming, and of fable [Derrida, "The Animal" 65]).

The nonhuman is everywhere in Kipling's work. One explanation for this refers us to the plenitude of animal life in the India of Kipling's youth; at the end of the nineteenth century the war upon game waged so ferociously by Anglo-Indian sportsmen and Indian maharajahs had not yet decisively decimated the numbers and kinds of fauna in existence (Rangarajan 22–45). But the nonhuman must be reckoned with even and perhaps especially in instances where the animal is not obviously on view. A case in point is the entity that Kipling famously described as his Daemon, the supernatural force or tutelary spirit that made its first appearance at a moment of crisis in Kipling's young adulthood in Lahore. It made the young writer the medium of some of his best work and, according to his own reckoning, kept him from errors of aesthetic judgement. To the dictates of this entity he was, as he notes in his autobiography, ever biddable: "When your Daemon is in charge, do not try to think consciously. Drift, wait, and obey" (R. Kipling, *Something* 121–34). In a sharply perceptive reading of this entity Kaori Nagai notes that while in some of the stories this irresistible

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force is gender-neutral, in the autobiography it is denominated by the masculine pronoun; this suggests that "this is another form of feminine writing, which transforms Kipling into 'a woman', a passive and receptive instrument for higher messages" (76). This is usefully supplemented with what classicists have told us about the daemon's relation to "the animal code" in Greek drama and poetry: "Animal and [the] hold-all concept 'daemon' belong together in a fifth-century world.... Any animal, at any moment, might be alive with daimon. A god might be manifest in an animal in the woodshed or kitchen. Animal epiphanies were a normal part of imaginative and lived experience" (Padel 147–48, 141–42).[1]

That animals were a conduit to the visionary and epiphanic – even when not muses, as in the case of the Daemon – is obvious in other places in Kipling's fiction. Sometimes they provide a temporary passage into the normally unseen nonhuman, inhuman, or ahuman worlds that abut human ones; hence the engineer Findlayson, under the spell of opium, has a dream of a conference of the Hindu gods in their animal forms in "The Bridge-Builders" and thereby learns about the cosmic stakes of his work. But Kipling is also characteristically capable of deploying a more knowing and sardonic (but nonetheless jaunty) register about the animal inspiration so often at the core of the tall tale that forms a key part of his fictions. Speaking with a profligacy of invention about horses is one of the commonest forms that male camaraderie assumes, from messages about the "pedigree of a white stallion" in *Kim* to the bravura displays of exaggeration known as "talking 'horse'" in some of the stories and sketches, especially those featuring the legend known as "The Biggest Liar in Asia." This is in fact "the oldest theme in the world"; indeed, the narrator in the sketch suggests that lying about horses belongs to a primeval history of invention or telling tall tales, since "the Primitive Man saw the Three-Toed Horse, and attempted feebly to fabricate his first untruth" (R. Kipling, "Biggest Liar" 280).

Ambreen Hai notes aptly that in Kipling's work lying is contiguous with invention and as such can be an indirect mode of truth-telling, especially under conditions of vulnerability (Hai 600–01). The jape or the tall tale cannot necessarily be disambiguated from more sober forms of revelation. If this is indeed the case, then "The Mark of the Beast" (1890), one of his virtuoso exercises in gothic horror that is also a tall tale (and written under the sign of animal invention), must surely qualify as an indispensable meditation on empire's intimacy with the nonhuman and on the imagination's animal vectors. This tale presents us with a diorama of nonhuman forms that inhabit and haunt the colony, including its human inhabitants. As in the instance of a bestiary the story features a large and mixed cast of beings; these can be categorised roughly as zoological animals, beasts (which are hybrids, distinct from zoological animals), creatures (distinct in turn from animals and beasts), and gods (some of whom are theriomorphic and thus may be beasts), in addition to animalised and normative humans. The enforced cohabitation of these varied animate forms can induce some confusion or anxiety about the sometimes involuntary traffic across lines of species (and other categories of being not encompassed by species). Kipling's melange of source materials (encompassing the Judeo-Christian, the Hindu, and the medieval European) for the nonhuman invests it with non-synchronous and sometimes competing entailments; it also underscores the ways in which the meetings, clashes, and amalgamations of cultures in the colony occur in nonhuman as well as in human theatres.

One of the crises of empire involves some uncertainty about what a human is, including what a human body is, with respect to its morphology, its appetites and sensory apparatus, and its exposure to creaturely transformation. This is because the colony seems peculiarly

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hospitable to a proliferation of creaturely life and forms of permeability and possession that lead to a breakdown between human and creaturely or beastly forms of life. Figures of peripheral or equivocal morphology and ontological status come to subject human (that is to say, Anglo-Indian and masculine) autonomy to a good deal of stress. Self-possession is not necessarily assured under these conditions, and nonhuman beings of many kinds find their way into the contingent and heteronomous life that living "east of Suez" entails for humans. Imperial rule thus involves crises of speciation and even the scandal of human-nonhuman inter-animation, as humans discover that they are not alone in their world-making. But it can also encompass relationships with the nonhuman that can be described as companionate, often as prosthetic, even parasitic. Kipling makes the human-nonhuman contact zone the *mise-en-scene* for thinking about the limits, sometimes but not invariably uneasy, of their proximity and co-habitation. Thus the lesson to be learned in the colony, albeit with great difficulty, is how to distinguish occasions for domination of nonhuman life from occasions for dependence on it or for maintaining an uncompromising distance from it. The story proceeds to stage these questions and dilemmas in a variety of configurations; within the ambit of a single story, these configurations enact – though without necessarily resolving – a number of distinct perspectives on the question of nonhuman being. Almost more than in any other story in his oeuvre, "The Mark of the Beast" tells us that in Kipling the nonhuman is not one; not every form of the nonhuman being coincides materially and symbolically with the others. Human relationship to it is not of one exclusive kind and, in any event, the human is itself a differential category, unthinkable without its self-division through gender, race, caste, and so on.

Metamorphosis

THE PLOT OF "MARK" goes like this: There are three major Anglo-Indian characters in this tale – the unnamed narrator, worldly wise and anthropologically fluent, a journalist or writer by profession; Strickland, a policeman who has a preternatural familiarity with local ways; and Fleete, a newcomer to India. Fleete becomes outrageously drunk at a New Year's Eve party at the Anglo-Indian club. In this state, he stumbles upon a temple dedicated to the simian deity Hanuman, and desecrates the image by grinding out his cigar on the forehead of the deity's image, claiming to have made upon it the "mark of the beast." Thereupon a "Silver Man," a leper in a state of nakedness, emerges from behind the image and abruptly embraces Fleete. The next day Fleete has developed a mark on his chest that is similar to a rosette on a leopard's hide. He also develops a keen sense of smell and a tremendous appetite for raw or undercooked meat and he takes to grovelling on the earth in the garden. The horses react to him with terror and flee from him. By dusk he has lost all power of speech and begun to howl like a wolf, and his friends have to bind him to keep him from escaping into the dark. Strickland concludes that this transformation is the result of the Silver Man's curse and, when the latter shows up in the garden at night, the narrator and he capture him and bring him into the house. He is tortured all night with heated gun barrels; at dawn, he succumbs to this violent persuasion and touches Fleete again, this time to remove the curse. When Strickland visits the temple to offer restitution he is told that no incident of desecration ever occurred. Fleete himself wakes up with no memory of his metamorphoses, but notices the smell of animal faeces and urine in the dining room, which he construes as a lapse in the house training of Strickland's dogs. At this his friends break into hysterics, thinking of the

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way in which they have disgraced themselves as Englishmen in their conduct towards the Silver Man, but tell him nothing.

Now for the story itself. The title calls our attention to the thirteenth chapter of Revelations, which sees the emergence of two agents of Satan, in the form of a beast from the sea and a beast from the land. It is the first of these, often identified as the Antichrist, that bears what is famously known as the mark of the beast, and it commands the worship of all people. These two beings are denominated not as animals, beings that belong to the order of created and mortal life forms, but as *beasts* that bear the marks of multitudinousness: the first, for instance, is a composite of leopard, bear, and lion, with seven heads and ten crowned horns. From the beast named in the title we move to another order of being in the so-called native proverb that constitutes the epigraph: "Your Gods and my Gods – do you or I know which are the stronger?" (R. Kipling, "Mark" 178). A third step, in the opening sentence of the story, introduces humans – or at least Man – as the third term in the circuit of the theo-anthropo-zoological: "East of Suez, some hold, the direct control of Providence ceases; Man being there handed over to the power of the Gods and Devils of Asia, and the Church of England Providence only exercising an occasional and modified supervision in the case of Englishmen" (178). Together these appositions present the colony as a place where different forms of animate being exercise competing sovereignties.

In her account of the ways in which the Book of Revelation came to be understood and put to work in early Christianity, Elaine Pagels notes its genesis and deployment as "wartime literature" (7). Enemies of the godly, whether in the form of persecuting Roman emperors (and self-styled divinities) like Nero or Domitian, or other tyrannous rulers like Nebuchadnezzar, were routinely spoken of as beasts. For Hebrew poets and prophets beasts such as dragons, Leviathan, or Behemoth were "images of the forces of disintegration and death that lurk in the background of our world and threaten its stability" (27). Such a polemological understanding of the Beast or Antichrist was embraced by many constituencies of varying political persuasions in subsequent eras. Millenarian thought among radical British Dissenters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for instance, identified London as Babylon; the Beast, for them, was to be found among the rulers, the wealthy, and false prophets of their day. Perhaps most notably, E. P. Thompson has described how profoundly this form of religio-political radicalism structured Blake's apocalyptic vision in "London" (179-83, 189–92). It is well to remember that Kipling too was heir to this tradition, even if he nominally had, like his parents, abjured the faith of his forebears. "Three generations of Wesleyan ministers... lie behind me," he conceded at one point. We know too that as a result of the Evangelical punishments meted out to him in his boyhood years at Southsea he had committed the Collects and much of the Bible to memory, though characteristically he had managed to convert what had been a source of torment into a resonant creative archive (Ricketts 27). To the end of his days this knowledge – whether in the form of imagery, idioms, or allusions – came to saturate all his writing, which is remarkably rich in biblical citation and adaptation. "The Mark of the Beast" is but one notable instance of the ways in which Kipling reprises – but also, as we see, defamiliarises – his biblical originals through novel inflections of beastliness, humanness, and everything in between.

The theo-anthropo-zoological setting of the title, epigraph, and opening sentence constitutes the first of the story's two frames. The second frame introduces Strickland, a figure of knowledge as well as of licensed pursuit. Here he is matched with one who functions spectacularly as his opposite number: the ironically named Fleete, a newcomer

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to India and in every way unsuited for residence there: "He was a big, heavy, genial, and inoffensive man. His knowledge of natives was, of course, limited, and he complained of the difficulties of the language" (178). Fleete spends New Year's Eve at the club drinking colossally and renders himself unfit to ride, as the narrator notes with a faint note of censure: "He was very angry with his horse for coughing, and tried to leapfrog into the saddle. The horse broke away and went to his stables; so Strickland and I formed a Guard of Dishonour to take Fleete home" (196).

Fleete's incapacity to mount his horse successfully means that he has to suffer the humiliation and the hazard of being a riderless white man in the native town – a place with a stratified yet volatile morphology that is shot through with the threat of unforeseen violence. Outside and beneath the protected and vigilantly patrolled enclave of Anglo-India, the terrain is marked by a promiscuous overflow of native life; when Fleete desecrates the image of Hanuman, the temple starts "filling and filling with folk who seemed to spring from the earth" (197). The sheer uncountable, swarming excess of native life, underlined in the repetition of "filling and filling" suggests something about the character of zooanthropic life that inhabits, nay overruns, a colonial earth; something like a familiar racialisation of a human/animal divide appears to be at work here.[2] Describing Adam's relationship in Genesis to the nonhuman creatures with which he shares an environment Avivah Zornberg notes that "all animal life on earth... is described as crawling (*romesset*)." This animal world is associated with swarming – restless, unwilled, irrational movement in hordes – as well as with numerousness; animals multiply while Adam is still solitary. Height is also a trait that comes to attach to all animal life on land; they are "not higher than the earth" (*sheretz*). "It is as though Man is conceived as towering physically over all animal life," Zornberg concludes; his God-given dominion over the animals is thus spatially configured by "an image of *verticality*" (8). Man's paradox, Zornberg goes on to say, is that he must inhabit horizontal and vertical planes at once; he must propagate and fill the emptiness of the world, *and* he must rule over the world (10).

Anglo-India is effectively a single-sex world; the story mentions marriage towards the beginning and the end as part of men's tribulations, not as what redeems their loneliness. Increase through heterosexual reproduction is either impossible or thoroughly inadequate in the face of the animal populousness of the indigenes. The greater the necessity, then, to sustain the verticality that is proper to man, separate from the earth that is the zone of teeming life; to be reduced to walking is a fall from that exalted position.

Recently Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Susan Crane have encouraged an attention to the etymology and the cross-species disciplines, both bodily and affective, of medieval chivalry; what they have to say about the relation between knights and horses in this world may find some resonance in the quasi-feudal ethos of the Anglo-Indian context. The horse, observes Crane, made possible not only the knight's mobility and prowess in battle but also the authority that elevated him above the servile condition of a mere walker; as such it was a valuable object as well as a prized possession (Crane 140–41). Both interpret chivalry in the context of the developmental or pedagogical relationship between a knight and his steed, which they describe as involving a transition from unhorsed boyhood or squiredom to the maturity of knighthood inseparable from the use and possession of horses. In the medieval texts affection, loyalty and dependence bind the knight and his stallion in loving companionship. Drawing upon Donna Haraway's conceptualisation of the cyborg they imagine chivalry as an amalgamation, both somatic and sentimental, of human and

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nonhuman elements that "did not necessarily fold ineluctably into predetermined contours" (Cohen 47).

As in the case of the medieval chivalric world, Anglo-India required this centaur-like body as a prophylactic against the terrors of gravity. Life in India was inconceivable without ownership of horses; tale after tale of Anglo-Indian life describes young civil servants and subalterns going into debt for the purchase of horses, which were among their most prized possessions, sometimes almost their only ones. Competence on horseback (and in some instances in the handling of firearms) was a requirement for many official positions, and Anglo-Indians were fond of pointing out that many Indian aspirants found it difficult to clear the practical examination in horsemanship for the civil service, no matter how well they had fared in the academic portion of the test.

In Kipling's story Fleete's horse spurns its customary apotropaic function and refuses to recognise him as a rider. It is worth recalling at this point what Agamben says about the place of recognition, especially self-recognition, in what he names (after Heidegger) "the anthropological machine," which is the mechanism by which human and animal are produced as distinct from one another. Turning to Linneaus's great work of eighteenth-century taxonomy, he underlines the naturalist's pointed reflexiveness about the difficulty of identifying the species difference between anthropoid apes and humans. In early editions of the *Systema naturae* he does not record, notes Agamben, species-specific characteristics for *Homo* as he does for other species. Lacking specific characteristics, *Homo* is deemed as a member of the *Anthropomorpha*, the "manlike" animals (30). When *Homo* becomes *Homo sapiens* eventually in the tenth edition of the *Systema*, the descriptor functions as a distillation of the philosophical adage: *nosce te ipsum* (know thyself). It follows then that for Linneaus "man has no specific identity other than the *ability* to recognize himself. Yet to define the human not through any *nota characteristica*, but rather through his self-knowledge, means that man is the being that recognizes itself as such, that *man is the animal that must recognize itself as human to be human*" (Agamben 26). To be a man is to respond to a command to be a man. But self-recognition can only happen once it passes through the animal. The "optical machine" that defines the anthropological requires that man recognise himself in an animal mirror. Only by seeing the features of an ape in the mirror – features out of which he must cut away his human ipseity – can he be certain of his human status. At the same time the animal reflection comes uncomfortably close to mimicking the human visage from which it is supposed to be distinguished: "man, looking at himself, sees his own image always already deformed in the features of an ape" (Agamben 26–27).

"The Mark of the Beast" stages something like an ironic variant upon this drama of human recognition, in the horse's turn away from obedience to flight. Humans may define themselves through distinction from and mastery over animals. But human status is just as importantly dependent upon recognition *by* animals and in this story it is the horses that know before all others when someone has lapsed from the requirement of Anglo-Indian dignity or has been wrenched from human status itself. This is in keeping with a certain hallowed notion of the animal as possessed of an innate capacity, analogous to instinct, that permits them to discern what is beyond the ken of humans.[3] Here, in imperial India, horses can scent or read the hieroglyphs of human transformation, and function as witnesses to its compromise or dissolution. They infer Fleete's new status as a nonhuman or, more properly, inhuman carnivore and predator, and react to his presence with an extremity of terror. The narrator underlines both the superiority of an equine forensics as well as human distance from

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this animal knowledge and from something that we might call animal language: "Outrage [Strickland's horse] was dumb, and could only cuddle up to his master and blow out his nostrils, as is the custom of horses when they wish to explain things but can't" (199). The detective's trail is first set in motion by these animal clues, by the evidence of animal unrest. In this as in some other stories, the human policeman/detective's work must be brought to fruition by an animal – an animal that is not just an adjutant but that rather approaches the status of the friend (R. Kipling, "Imray"). Horse and dog are in these stories constitute companion species, but they are also more than that. They sustain humanity, often literally; (Anglo-Indian) man is effectively parasitic upon them.

Unhorsed and drunk, Fleete rushes uninvited into the temple and brands the monkey god Hanuman with the mark of the beast, in an act reminiscent of the familiar Christian dismissal (as in Revelation) of theriomorphic heathen gods.[4] It is important to note though that this distaste for zoolatry is not the narrator's way of thinking, at least not at this point. He is at pains to maintain that "all gods have good points" and that Hanuman is "a leading divinity worthy of respect" (R. Kipling, "Mark"196). The description of the temple and the hymns sung therein are free from the note of antipathy and distaste that often attends Kipling's description of Hindu sacred spaces and ritual acts. Moreover, the narrator says in what must be read as a pointed rebuke to Fleete's wanton disrespect for animals and animal gods: "Personally, I attach much importance to Hanuman, and am kind to his people – the great grey apes of the hills. One never knows when one may want a friend" (R. Kipling, "Mark" 196). Hanuman is one of the most significant deities of a Hindu pantheon and is widely regarded as an appealing and approachable divinity. As the primary devotee and animal lieutenant of the god Rama in the *Ramayana* he is famous for feats of valour, labour, and devotion. He appears in others of Kipling's fictions, most importantly in "The Bridge-Builders," where, as the engineer of the land-bridge to the island kingdom of Lanka to rescue Rama's abducted wife Sita, he functions as something to a mythical analogue to the British bridge-builders of the nineteenth century. He is also the instrument of Rama's vengeance against the *rakshasa* (demon) ruler Ravana, who has breached the sanctity of the god's dwelling in the forest. Hence he is identified in the Hindu religious tradition as a "friend" and often is a protected animal, especially in temple precincts. In *Beast and Man in India* (1891) Lockwood Kipling (Rudyard's father) notes that some Hindus believed the British were descended from the simian hero, and others that the British nation came from Hanuman's "monkey army" (J. L. Kipling 56–57). The narrator in "Beast" regards the great grey apes of the hills as potential friends, worthy of kindness and perhaps – in light of the information the elder Kipling provides – even kinship. In a story that enacts above all the peremptory demands of masculine friendship – even to the exclusion of other moral laws – this is not an innocuous statement. Fleete on the other hand refuses to recognise potential animal friends in horses or nonhuman primates; he repudiates them with emphatic violence.

This is an act that Derrida would align with *betise*. *Betise* is, as we know from reading *The Beast and the Sovereign*, notoriously difficult of translation, not just from French into another language but within the French language itself. While *bete* can be translated into English as beast or animal, it can also be translated as stupid, and Derrida gives us a vertiginous set of examples to illustrate some of the many ways in which the word may be used idiomatically in French. If *bete* is recalcitrant to translation, *betise* is even more so; it is usually translated as stupidity though "inanity" and "asininity" are at least as apt, says Derrida. In idiomatic usage there is an abyss between *betise* and the animal or beast; the term is seen as the peculiar

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property of the human rather than of the animal. Both Lacan and Deleuze render idiomatic usages of beast-terms into a question of ontology by insisting that *betise* and bestiality are not qualities attached to the animal; insofar as these terms for stupidity and cruelty are associated with sovereignty, freedom, and thought, they are the characteristics or forms of behaviour proper to the human alone. This exemption of animals from the burden of stupidity and evil is not necessarily a laudable one, given philosophy's tendency to turn putative lack into a sign of human freedom and human election. Against this conception of the relation between the animal and *betise* (and bestiality), Derrida suggests that we should understand this insistence on drawing a distinction between human and animal as a compelling example of *betise*. The categorical human claim to absolute knowledge, and the belief that this knowledge alone constitutes sovereign reason, is *betise*. Precipitate judgement about what is proper to *anthropos* constitutes *betise* and as such is characteristic of some strains of philosophy, particularly the Cartesian one (Derrida, *Beast* 63–186 passim).

Fleete's function, as he sees it, is to draw a decisive and violent distinction between himself as human and a bestial (because zooanthropic) other, perhaps the more strongly for the rumoured kinship between Englishmen and Hanuman. He does this by quarrelling with his horse and by identifying Hanuman as a beast of the apocalypse, an enemy to man, open to violation. "When he calls the brand the 'mark of the beast' and then emphasizes 'I made it,'" says Paul Battles, "Fleete stresses his agency (and thus Hanuman's passivity) and his superiority to the god and his worshipers.... if the statue (and, by extension, Hanuman himself) can be marked, he is its master; if it is a beast, he is a man" (Battles 335). But in marking the alien god as beast Fleete is cast out of the protection, however notional and wavering, of his own god. He ends up being a mark himself; he is marked in a fashion that both renders him a beast and makes manifest his *betise*.

Hanuman's vengeful deputy is, in the narrator's recitation, some kind of theriomorph himself, lacking a face, hands, clothing, and human speech – attributes commonly considered uniquely human – but possessing other traits: "[The] Silver Man... was perfectly naked in that bitter, bitter cold, and his body shone like frosted silver, for he was what the Bible calls 'a leper as white as snow'. Also, he had no face, because he was a leper of some years' standing, and his disease was heavy upon him" (197). He clasps Fleete around the body, "nuzzling" against his breast and mewing like an otter. In his notes on the story John McGivering indicates that "in certain forms of leprosy the affected area becomes perfectly white, nodules may form in the mouth and larynx, [and] there is also destruction of tissue which would explain his inability to speak" (McGivering). The loss of sensation in the skin may account for his imperviousness to the cold (though, as we shall see, it does not make him impervious to pain). But his being proof against the cold, combined with his complete nakedness, may suggest too that as one transformed by leprosy he is not human, or not entirely human. He does not need the prosthesis of clothing as humans do since he is, like nonhuman animals, self-sufficient ("perfect") and even dazzling in his nakedness. His body has something akin to a laminated surface – his skin shines "like frosted silver" – and he seems almost to be artifactual and auratic in the way that the Hanuman statue is. In comparison with this resplendent and well-provisioned body – which is well-provisioned precisely in its absence of clothing – the bodies of the Anglo-Indians, lacking sacred auras, protective hides, and the support of equine friends, are less generously endowed.

These attributes are unsurprising in light of leprosy's contiguity with animal morphology in writings about it. In the medieval period medical and hagiographical accounts took special

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note of the way the faces of those afflicted with leprosy came to resemble lions, elephants, and satyrs (Orlemanski 148). The zoomorphic quality of leprous physiognomy continued to be emphasised through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[5] "There is a sense of the disease," says Rod Edmond, "as breaking down the division between human and animal worlds" (38). Appropriately, a great part of the terror of leprosy was its character as a "devouring" disease. Given the abjection that attended the disease and those afflicted with it, medieval saints such as Catherine of Siena and Francis of Assisi often gave evidence of their unusual holiness by kissing patients of leprosy and ministering to them.

But certainly there were instances, at least in the nineteenth century, of the opposite experience or fantasy – that of being kissed by a person with leprosy. What kind of a kiss is the leper's kiss? In keeping with his zooanthropic character, his action is described as a "nuzzling" – a word from the Middle English *noselen* which means to bring the nose toward the ground – and which is often used to describe an animal action. Nuzzling is an action that generally bypasses the face and here, the Silver Man's embrace of Fleete is not face to face or mouth to mouth but much lower on the torso, mouth or nose to breast. It is notable too that the leper has no face though he does have a mouth, quite likely one with teeth. In any event Fleete wakes up the following morning claiming to have been "bitten to pieces" (198) and with a mark on his skin like a leopard's rosette to show for it. This underlines the partial homonym that connects leper to leopard, and is a nod no doubt to the first beast of the apocalypse. But it also seems consistent with the lycanthropic character of the leper (at once feline and lupine) and with the "wolfish," devouring character of leprosy itself. As many writers, including Derrida, have noted, the wolf has been seen in the Hellenic and Judeo-Christian imagination as emblematic of the dangerous and threatening qualities of the wild, and condemned in superordinate terms as voracious, deceitful, cruel, and criminal. He notes that therefore when we speak of the wolf we are often speaking of "a spoken word, a fable, a fable-wolf, a fabulous animal, or even a fantasy" (Derrida, *Beast* 5).

Wolves have dangerous appetites, a more than natural hunger; in this sense they are not animals but beasts, larger than natural life. They are all mouth; "what big teeth you have, granny," says Red Riding Hood to the wolf in a grandmother's guise. Admittedly, Fleete has some of these qualities before his transformation, as we see in his prodigious appetite for drink and his taste for the most rebarbatively unyielding parts of animal bodies, such as bones, which would require very strong teeth and jaws to masticate. This alimentary excess seems obversely related to another aspect of his orality, which is a deficiency in human speech. We hear from the narrator that he complains about the difficulties of the local language; and the first words we hear him utter are the boastful slurrings of one who enforces the violent division between human and animal by defacing an image of their commingling in a Hindu deity. The morning after the encounter with the Silver Man he "bolts" three chops in what the narrator calls "a most offensive manner," snapping at the meat and using his right grinders in a prominent fashion. He is also in a state of perpetual famine; throughout the day he keeps up his demand for chops, "lots of 'em and underdone – bloody ones with gristle" (201). In this Biblically inflected tale the beastly mouth reveals itself as such by violating the prohibition against hematophagy in the Noachide Laws. (The biblically observant human, like Levi-Strauss's many centuries later, is one who cooks, practises self-denial, and offers sacrifice.[6]) This mouth may be thought in terms of that orificial opening that Sara Guyer, following Jean-Luc Nancy's lead in *Ego Sum*, has identified as *bucca*. This opening is distinct from *os*, which is the vector of discourse. As an "*underdeveloped* or faceless cavity," it breaches

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the boundaries between human and animal since it is not defined primarily by speech but is characterised by eating, breathing, expectoration, vomiting, belching, laughter, vociferation of all kinds, and so on. The mouth is primitive in that its functions precede speech; we eat before we speak, before in fact we exit the womb and before we draw breath. The difference between *os* and *bucca* is, as Guyer explains it, "between the face as metonymy of the mouth (a mouth that belongs to someone, to a subject who speaks) and the mouth that belongs to no one, that becomes a mouth in the opening of one who – opened, disfigured – has no face" (77).

What does this mapping of buccality suggest for our reading of "The Mark of the Beast"? When the Silver Man claims or marks Fleete as his own, he does this through the mouth, or by endowing him with the mouth of a beast. He marks Fleete not through the kiss on the mouth which is the kiss of comradeship or good faith or trust, but through another kind of kiss, in what is recognised retrospectively as a breaching of the skin. Fleete is opened up, and opened up such that he is defined primarily by this second, orificial, ravening, buccal mouth; this "orification" (to use Guyer's term) is what permits his declension from human status to a beastly one and into a state of gendered indifference, pronominally identified as "it" rather than "he." This is an opening up of another orifice or mouth in him where his breast is. This is the affliction of another mouth, one that makes him all mouth and – what seems to be a necessary entailment – entrails. Besides, the account of Fleete's buccal eating is as important for what it does not mention as for what it does. He eats like an animal, using his jaws and teeth rather than the hands (and utensils) that mark human alimentation (and indeed, human status itself).[7] Since the work of the hand is tied to the work of the mouth (*os*) through the instrumentalities of speech and of (mediated) human eating one can think of humanity as constituted by a hand-mouth nexus. The hand may even be said to be a technology that serves to uphold human bipedalism; mediating between human mouth and food, it keeps the former from being defined entirely by the downward gravitational pull of physical appetites, and helps retain its status as *os* rather than *bucca*. Bypassing the mediation of the hand in eating is among the surest signs of retroversion into animal status.

As he gains a ravenous appetite for animal flesh Fleete also loses his already limited capacity for human speech. By the evening his speech is thick, and by night-time he is spitting, snarling, and howling like a wolf. He arouses horror and physical disgust, emitting a foul smell and presumably urinating and defecating without let or restraint; he is no more than an alimentary canal open at both ends. The copiousness and offensive character of the wastes produced seems too to have something to do with the prodigious quantities of raw meat consumed. Might Kipling have known of the claims of nineteenth-century vegetarians that carnivores produced particularly foul-smelling excreta?

The activation of the more "primitive" senses is the result and symptom of Fleete's beastly metamorphosis. An acephalous privileging of taste (and, relatedly, olfaction) is, as we have seen, one such symptom. Another is touch; skin, as the organ of touch, functions both phenomenologically to identify his new were-animal body and more fantasmatically to signal the state of his fast-depleting humanity. Dermographic inscription is crucial both in Fleete's transformation to a beast as well as in the reversal of this transformation, as effected by the Silver Man. Pollution, inferiority, or vulerability to injury is epidermalised through animal stigmata and animal sensation. When Fleete wakes after the crisis-ridden night at the temple, he is not just branded with a leopard's rosette on his skin but is also overcome by itching where he was bitten. Itching, says Steven Connor helpfully, is associated with proliferation and hence with the possibility of contagion as it leaps from the body of the host

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to its proximate others. Hence the skin, especially in a state of itching, is a place of interface and transformation. Connor also notes that working of minute or invisible germs or animals had been cited since at least the early medieval period as a cause of skin diseases. Itching thus "is continuous with a host of sensations that seem to have to do with the skin becoming host to or intimate with other lives, lives that swarm and prickle and tingle and tickle, that cause shivers, shakings, and shudders" (Connor 230, 234). Such a reading accords well with the sense in this tale of the pullulating subcontinental life that erupts out of nowhere, without warning, and takes violent possession of the Anglo-Indian male, body and soul.

Note too that when Fleete is subdued by his comrades the endeavour is shot through with the powerful sense – in his case the literal stench – of wolfish skin. The werewolf itself was associated historically with a change in skin and the shedding of clothing. The Latin term for werewolf, *versipellis*, means to change skin; in this case, a degrading second (beastly) skin replaces the first, human one. Connor remarks that of the two principal words, cutis and pellis, used in Latin to denote skin, the latter is clearly the less elevated term. "Pellis... is the dead, the flayed skin. It is the word used for animal skins, and evokes disgust, disgrace and horror. Once scoured away from the body, the human or animal skin becomes simply a hide, deader than the corpse, the corpse's remnant, the corpse of a corpse" (Connor 11). The skin of the animal or the beast is designed to be flayed from the animal body; in this capacity it carries the obtrusively literal odour of decay and mortality, all the more because traditional methods of curing pelts involved the use of urine, animal faeces, and animal brains. Once he has grown into his werewolf skin, Fleete is already on his way to becoming dead skin, a hunter's trophy. This is consistent with the terms of his transformation, which involve degradation and humiliation, without any access to the heightened physical capacities or wild freedom that were-animals typically possess. Though the narrator speaks of him as a beast, his beastliness is not necessarily isomorphic with that of the beast of the apocalypse or Hanuman. He belongs rather to the beastly order that Julia Reinhard Lupton, in her reading of Caliban, has identified as *creatures*, those that are "subject to transformation at the behest of the arbitrary commands of an Other" (1). As Lupton puts it, this becoming of the creature is inseparable from its subjection or servitude; to be a creature is to belong to another who occupies a sovereign capacity to halt or set one's mutability in train.

This condition is not susceptible to medical palliation or to legal redress; in fact Strickland's endeavour to offer legal restitution is politely but decisively rebuffed. Strickland's only chance to redeem Fleete from his new incarnation is through a practice – torture – that seems brutally excessive yet not unrelated to the regular forms of detection that he describes routinely as *shikar* (hunting) (R. Kipling, "Miss Youghal" 51). This deployment of the idiom of hunting is a not incidental detail in the colonial context, where shikar functioned as a mode of establishing sovereign authority over one's environment, human and nonhuman. In one of the stories featuring Strickland, the implements of shikar constitute the entirety of his household possessions: "his domestic equipment was limited to six rifles, three shot-guns, five saddles, and a collection of stiff-jointed *mahseer*-rods, bigger and stronger than the largest salmon-rods" (R. Kipling, "Imray" 209).[8] Hence he needs no special preparation to deal with the Silver Man; the needful apparatus of dog whips, trunk straps, fishing lines, broken walking sticks, and gun barrels is ready to hand. It is with these terrible yet banal instruments and with a certain orgiastic pleasure in brutality that the Anglo-Indian male friends go about the task of restoring the balance – and the boundaries – among the human, the animal, the otherworldly, the creaturely, and the beastly.

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Torture is commonly called dehumanising insofar as it involves a endeavour (on the part of the torturer) to instal and police the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman and in the process to monopolise a claim to human status.[9] So Strickland and the narrator mark the leper with red hot gun barrels suitable for branding. This torture compels the leper into undoing the curse; Fleete's hijacked humanity is returned to him in the form of speech, a face with human eyes, and an unmarked, unbreached human skin. The leper on the other hand abjures his mewing for human speech under the sustained chastisement of gun barrels and whips and fishing line. He also accedes to the biblical condemnation of nakedness and covers himself in the sheets he is given, the same sheets the narrator and Strickland use to protect themselves from coming into direct contact with his pollution. Thus the defeated and newly human leper must abdicate (perhaps temporarily) the powers associated with a theriomorphic divinity while simultaneously taking on the commandments of the conquering god, the one who has made man in his own image. The dehumanisation of torture overlaps here to some degree at least with the coercive imperative and abjecting violence of *humanisation* (or civilising, as it is sometimes called). Under conditions of colonial extremity, it is hard to segregate the making of humans from the making of animals through violence or degradation; the human (or at least the kind of human the leper becomes) does not differ in very many respects from the animal object of shikar. The irony is that even in this state of humiliation (what some might call the paradoxical confounding of humanisation and creatureliness or *bare life*), bearing all the polluted appurtenances of his torture, he is more dignified than the beneficiary of scapegoating violence who, even in his restoration, demonstrates no inkling of what has passed. Fleete has been changed, and then changed back, without making the experience his own; that has been outsourced to his friends, who feel the terror, the moral compromise, and the brutal pleasures of the metamorphosis. While no act of torture on the part of Fleete's friends can quite expel the phenomenological remainders of his beastly incarnation – his voracious appetites, the stench of animal excreta, the threat of vulnerability to capture and bodily harm – his all too human obliviousness and self-satisfaction remains undisturbed. The lesson he draws is exactly what we would expect from one who is all mouth: "Never mix your liquors."

Conclusion

IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY FITTING that we should have to turn to the writer who is widely understood to be the bard of the British empire in the nineteenth century to get a sense of the sheer amplitude of the empire's actors and stakeholders and of its status as a multi-species arena. Postcolonial theory has undertaken a sustained engagement with the category of the human – a category fundamental to colonialism's mapping of the world and its articulation of its own *raison d'etre* – though without sufficient consideration of other orders of life in the colony. Perhaps more ingeniously and comprehensively than any other writer of the British empire, Kipling reminds us of the degree to which the nonhuman is key to a comprehensive grasp of the imperial world, whether in terms of its imaginative circuits, its political formations, or its bodily registers. To live in the colony was, for this imperial representative, to inhabit a contact or transition zone that encompassed plural orders of the living and in which humans were not necessarily exempt from the vulnerabilities of creatureliness. This undoubtedly implied for him, at least on occasion, an imperial mode of species thinking that involved the bestialisation of subordinated groups, though the topography of animality also constitutes a

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crucial though vexed circuit through which Anglo-Indian identity comes to be established. But crucially, the nonhuman for him was not reducible to the contours of human animality alone; the nonhuman, in other words, is not an invariable proxy for the human, nor is the management of men the sole objective of empire. Hence animal bodies as well as animal signs were for him absolutely needful to make sense of the imperial project. If empire was sustained by the cultivation of animal life – that is to say, the captivity and labour of animals – it is important to note that it was equally defined, and to a degree unimaginable in the metropole, through the exercise of sovereign violence against them. Thus it is that in "The Mark of the Beast" the dynamic of enmity and friendship that defines the political theology of the colonial frontier passes almost definitionally through nonhuman vectors. Its stakes and its terrors cannot be grasped fully without understanding the millenarian vision of the beast of the apocalypse as involving an intricate weave of human, beastly, demonic, and divine domains. The human relationship with the nonhuman is not only a relationship of war, however. Cary Wolfe has denominated the human as "fundamentally a prosthetic creature that has coevolved with various forms... that are radically 'non-human' and yet have nevertheless made the human what it is" (Wolfe xxv). This echoes Kipling's sense of the nonhuman, which can accommodate a compelling sense of interspecies morality as involving some forms of dependence and even companionable possibility. This suggests something of the range of his thought on the nonhuman dimensions of empire.

It is characteristic of the tonal complexity of Kipling's short fiction that it should endeavour to encompass within a single frame the fetishisation of sovereign violence against nonhuman (or animalised human) entities with a sardonic awareness of the imbecility at the heart of human claims to exceptionalism. Neither of these elements on its own – the deployment of sovereign violence against animality or the undermining of human supremacism – is adequate as a gloss on his thinking of the relations between humans and nonhumans. If his fretfully capacious compendium of imperial human, animal, and other nonhuman friends and enemies cannot approach the zootopic status that Laurie Shannon claims characterised early modern thought before Descartes (Shannon), neither is it fully encompassed by the bestial anthropology and racist and triumphalist humanism that too many scholars have been willing to read into the space of the (post-Descartian) colony. His writing is a reminder of the ways in which we are called upon to examine the limits of our conceptualisation of life and politics in the colony, and to think of the difference that an accommodation of the nonhuman makes to the physical and moral landscape of imperial life. A "long, wide nineteenth century" (to echo the title of a recent conference on Victorian studies) can and should accommodate worlds that do not begin and end with the human.

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NOTES

1. This is a concept that has been revived most recently and to spectacular effect by Philip Pullman in the *Dark Materials* trilogy. In the trilogy a daemon, an animal-shaped body with independent powers of sensation, affect, will, thought, and speech, is a human's (and witch's) lifelong familiar in an animal form, which changes frequently during the human subject's childhood. Daemon and human are connected

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through "invisible bonds" and are bound in a companionship of support, conspiracy, chastisement, argument, and shared sensory experience.

2. See Fanon on this question: "when the colonist speaks of the colonized, he uses zoological terms. Allusion is made to the slithery movements of the yellow race, the odors from the 'native' quarters, to the hordes, the stink, the swarming, the seething, and the gesticulations" (*Wretched* 42).
3. In one of the most famous classical instances, Odysseus's dog Argos recognises him after twenty years' absence from Ithaca while his nurse has to see his scar before she realises whose feet she is washing. In an equally famous twentieth-century instance dehumanised Jewish prisoners in a Nazi prisoner-of-war camp are greeted joyfully by a stray dog, Bobby. "The last Kantian in Nazi Germany," as Levinas names him, he alone manifests the moral conscience supposedly unique to humans in rendering to the prisoners their ethical due as humans. Levinas may go on to cancel or qualify this, both in the essay and in an interview on the subject. But, as David L. Clark notes, Levinas's returns to the experience in Camp 1492, even decades later, are unthinkable for the philosopher without evoking Bobby (Clark 42).
4. In the European medieval and early modern periods zoolatry was assigned a diabolical inspiration; in the nineteenth century the evolutionary backwardness of polytheism was the more favoured explanation for the worship of such gods though the accusation of diabolism could not be overwritten entirely (Lutgendorf, *Hanuman's Tale* 14-15).
5. In a brief meditation on the animal character of some diseases, Steven Connor has speculated generatively on the connection between leprosy (the etymology of which derives ultimately from the Greek *lepra*, or scaly) and the itching, creeping, and general loathsomeness that is associated with animals that creep on their belly on the ground and are excessively proximate with their physical environment (*The Book of Skin* 246). Not only was leprous skin like that of scaly creatures; some creatures might actually be lodged at the surface of the body itself, giving rise to disease.
6. Protocols of food preparation and consumption are, from the medieval period onward, what separate humans from monsters and beasts, who are characterised by a taste for forbidden and unappetising foods or non-foods (such as raw meat, blood, or carrion) and unappetising modes of ingestion. See Steel 67–91.
7. From Aristotle to Engels to Heidegger – that is to say, for thinkers who have pondered the articulation between specific bodily organs and intellectual and moral-spiritual capabilities – the hand has functioned as a mark of human distinction (Aristotle 371-77; Engels; Heidegger). For Heidegger the human hand distinguishes the human from the order of nature because it is an organ of signing, of pointing or indicating. The human hand is thus "monstrous" both in the sense of being an anomaly in the natural world and because of its function as monstrance, as indicative or demonstrative. For him the work or function of the hand is a species of *Handwerk* or handiwork, a way of expressing thought with one's hands. The hand is thus inseparable from thought or signifying or indeed from speech. Though apes are also furnished with hands, these are not for Heidegger hands in any fundamental sense; as he famously insists, apes have prehensile "organs that can grasp" but paws, fangs, and claws should not be mistaken for hands as such (Heidegger 16).
8. Ritvo observes that hunting was thought to "[maintain] and [develop] the qualities required in colonial officers and administrators" (*Animal Estate* 271).
9. See, for instance, Cesaire on colonial torture: "the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal" (*Discourse* 5).

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