

Sigmund Freud felt that dogs, unlike humans, display no ambivalence in their emotions. “One can love an animal,” he once said to his patient, the author H.D., “with such an extraordinary intensity: affection without ambivalence, the simplicity of a life free from the almost unbearable conflicts of civilization.”¹ While there was no ambivalence about Freud’s love for his chow Yofi, there was a revealing ambiguity about her name, which is spelled differently in different sources. The word “yofi” means “beauty” in Hebrew, but writing in German, where the letter ‘y’ is rarely used, Freud spelled it with a ‘j’. Other spellings of the dog’s name found in notes and correspondence include “Jo-Fi,” “Jo-Fie,” “Jofie”, and “Yofy.” The pronunciation, however, was always the same: “yoffi.”

Freud didn’t discover he was a dog-lover until he was in his seventies, and he did so after falling in love with Wolf, the black German shepherd acquired for his daughter Anna, in 1925, to protect her on her long solitary walks. As it turned out, Wolf became not only a protector, but also a guide, a go-between, a companion, and a lot more besides. Roy R. Grinker, an American psychiatrist who was analyzed by Freud in Vienna in 1933, remembers how Wolf would start to bark as soon as the doorbell rang; when he entered the house, the dog would follow him into the waiting room and immediately start sniffing his genitals. As a result, says Grinker, he always entered Freud’s office “with a high level of castration anxiety.”² When he attended a seminar held at Freud’s home, Grinker recalls that he’d only just taken a seat when Wolf approached him with an ominous growl, prompting Anna Freud to remark that, although when he was younger he used to eviscerate sheep, Wolf was perfectly safe, and if he continued to bark, Grinker should simply pull his tail.

In 1928, three years after the arrival of Wolf, Freud finally acquired a dog of his own, a chow named Lün-Yu (again, the name is spelled differently in different sources) which was given to him by Anna’s companion Dorothy Burlingham. Although they may look like cuddly little bears, chows can in fact be bad-tempered, aggressive and territorial; owning one can actually raise the cost of homeowners

insurance, as some companies regard them as “high risk dogs.”³ Sadly, at the age of fifteen months, Lün-Yu wandered off at Salzburg railway station, and was later found dead on the tracks. Freud was reportedly heartbroken.

His grief was assuaged seven months later when Burlingham presented him with Lün-Yu’s sister (interestingly, all Freud’s dogs were females, and none were spayed). This was Yofi, who stayed by his side for the next seven years. “She is a charming creature,” he wrote of his new friend, “so interesting, in her feminine characteristics too, wild, impulsive, gentle, intelligent and yet not dependent as dogs often are.”⁴ Yofi remained in Freud’s office during analytic sessions, and Roy Grinker remembers her occasionally interrupting his analysis by getting up to scratch at the door. Whenever she did so, Freud would get up and let her out, observing that Yofi had lost interest in the conversation. This irritated Grinker, who felt that Freud often seemed more focused on his dog than his patient. Sometimes Yofi was even more disruptive. During one particular session, Grinker grew very emotional and suddenly raised his voice, causing Yofi to leap aggressively on to the couch and pin him down. Grinker, by his own report, lay quietly with eyes closed, as he’d been taught to do if attacked by a bear.

The poet H.D recalls Yofi in fonder terms, perhaps because she was herself a lifelong dog lover. In her book *Tribute to Freud*, she describes her first visit to the analyst’s consulting room in Vienna, where she went to discuss the possibility of treatment. During her interview, “[a] little lion-like creature came padding toward me—a lioness, as it happened. She had emerged from the inner sanctum or manifested from under or behind the couch; ... I bend down to greet this creature.”⁵ Freud warned her that Yofi was not always friendly to strangers; nevertheless, the dog snuggled her snout into H.D’s hand, and nuzzled against her shoulder. Yofi’s acceptance of her, felt H.D, was what persuaded Freud to accept her case.

Freud acquired his love of chows from another of his patients, Princess Marie Bonaparte, whose female chow was the subject of her light and tender book *Topsy: The Story of a Golden-Haired Chow*. In this book, Bonaparte explains that only when she learned Topsy had cancer did she feel, all of a sudden, a “passionate affection” for a dog that until that point had been but a “graceful toy” to her.⁶ She took Topsy to the Marie Curie Institute for a series of radiation treatments that proved successful, and as she wrote her book, Topsy sat once more at the princess’s feet, “proudly erect on her front paws.”⁷

Freud’s son Martin said that in his later years, his father often kept track of the time by paying attention to Yofi, who always knew when the analytic hour was up. Freud and Yofi would eat together every day; their meals were different, but Freud would often slip Yofi some of his lunch (the Professor often experienced pain when eating due to his diseased jaw⁸). He wrote to tell H.D. that on the morning of his eightieth birthday, Yofi had come into his bedroom to show him her love. “How does a little animal know,” he asked her, “when a birthday comes around?”⁹

By the following year, however, Yofi was suffering from ovarian cysts, and Freud, like Topsy, had developed cancer on the right side of his jaw. To Marie Bonaparte, he wrote, “I wish you could have seen with me what sympathy Yofi shows me during these hellish days, as if she understood everything.”¹⁰ The dog had two cysts removed early in the year, and at first it seemed as though she too, like Topsy, was going to make a full recovery. Unfortunately, Yofi died of a heart attack not long after her operation. “One cannot easily get over seven years of intimacy,”¹¹ wrote her grieving master.

Luckily, there was another chow waiting in the wings—a dog called Lün, which Dorothy Burlingham had given Freud some time earlier as a companion for Yofi. When they’d first been introduced, the dogs immediately had a clash of personalities, and Yofi, who was in heat at the time, attacked and bit her rival. After this incident, Lün was returned to the Burlingham household, where she spent the next four years, waiting like an heir to the throne for the death of the current ruler. The day

after Yofi died, Lün took her place by Freud's side, where she remained until the end. In 1938, when the Freud family fled to London to escape the Nazis, Lün went with them. The journey was far from smooth. At their first stop Marie Bonaparte's villa at Saint-Cloud, Lün got into a fight with Topsy, then, when they finally arrived in London, Lün was taken away to what Freud described as an "animal asylum,"¹² and put in quarantine for six months.

By this time, the professor's cancer had spread, and he was gravely ill; still, he managed to make regular visits to Lün (as a newspaper report put it, "[n]othing could have kept the great scientist away from his dog friend"¹³). Lün was waiting out her period of quarantine in a kennel at Ladbroke Grove, only three miles from Freud's new home in Hampstead. "I have never seen such happiness and understanding in an animal's eyes,"¹⁴ said the kennel's director, describing one of the doctor's visits to his chow. "Freud played with her, talked to her, using all sorts of little terms of endearment, for fully an hour."¹⁵ When her quarantine was over, Lün was reunited with her master in Hampstead, but her joy in Freud's company was short-lived. His cancer had become so advanced that his jaw gave off a putrid smell, and Lün avoided him, cowering in the corner of his room rather than sitting at his feet, as she did before.¹⁶ A few months later, Freud was dead.

Although Yofi isn't mentioned in Freud's case studies, dogs do appear from time to time, usually helping the author to sniff out a clue, or come to an insight. His most famous patient Anna O., under hypnosis, recalled her disgust at seeing her English governess let her dog lap water from a drinking glass, a recollection that helped Freud get to the root of her problems. In another paper, the analyst explains that he came upon his theory of sublimation after reading about a famous surgeon who, as a youth, chopped off dogs' tails. Animals of other kinds also turn up in the case studies; they play a vital role in the cases of Little Hans, the Wolf Man and the Rat Man, for example, but these papers tend to

emphasize the negative role of animals as symbols in the development of children's phobias (fears of animals, according to Freud, are among the earliest neuroses).

The love of animals is also a central concern of childhood. It's often been observed that during the first years of life, children don't seem to be able to make a clear distinction between humans and non-humans, behaving socially toward pets, talking to them and treating them as though they were members of the family. In fact, children relate to imagined feelings in animals before they relate to real feelings in other people, which is presumably why so many children's books focus on animal rather than human protagonists. With his dogs, Freud seemed to share an intimate bond, as though among these fellow creatures, the great professor could regress to the pre-linguistic understanding of early childhood.

The legacy of dog love continued in the Freud family long after the patriarch's death. Anna Freud kept chows for the rest of her life (each with the same name: Yofi). Freud's grandson Clement Freud, a writer, broadcaster and politician, was well known for his appearance in a series of dog food commercials on British television (first for Minced Morsels, then for Chunky Meat) that took advantage of his hangdog looks. Clement Freud's elder brother, the painter Lucian Freud, was also a dog lover. "I am impressed by their lack of arrogance, their ready eagerness, their animal pragmatism,"¹⁷ he remarked in an interview. Over the years, he charted the development of his whippet Pluto from birth to death. His final painting includes his last dog Eli, another whippet, and Pluto's great great-niece.

Freud's love for Yofi made it acceptable for other psychoanalysts to have dogs in their consulting rooms. Dorothy Burlingham had a grey Bedlington terrier that would sometimes emerge from under the couch during analytic sessions¹⁸. The German psychoanalyst Karen Horney was rarely seen without her cocker spaniel Butschi¹⁹, and French analyst Jacques Lacan said that his boxer Justine, named after the novel by the Marquis de Sade, was the only living being that could see him as he really was, without the veil of projections that characterize all human relationships²⁰. As adults, the former patients of child

analyst Melanie Klein had fond memories of her Pekingese, Nanki-Poo; the pioneering American psychoanalyst Harry Stack Sullivan kept five dogs in his consulting room, a mother and four pups, which would run in and out of a pet door during sessions²¹.

For a few years, I had my own therapy practice one evening a week, when I saw patients at home. At first, anxious about being taken seriously, I kept Grisby out of the office; later, when I felt more comfortable, I started asking my patients if they'd mind having my dog in the room. No one ever said no; I like to think they were all dog lovers, but perhaps they didn't feel they had a choice—after all, none of Freud's patients were brave enough to ask him to put Yofi out, though many later said they found her presence distracting. Grisby, however, was always quiet and well behaved. Before long, he learned to recognize each patient, and would express pleasure when they arrived, offering himself up for a pat or a scratch before settling down at my feet for the duration of the session. Unlike Yofi, he was no timekeeper, and usually had to be woken when the hour was up.

Some therapists who bring their dogs into the treatment claim the animals have special skills—they can calm the anxious, comfort the depressed, and help contain a crisis (some of these skills are shared by the specially-trained therapy dogs that are used in hospitals and nursing homes). While Grisby has never expressed any talents of this kind, his silent presence always encouraged what the author and dog-lover Elizabeth von Arnim called *recueillement*, the re-gathering of one's self in peace and quietude²². His presence may not have been any great help to my patients, but it always gave me tremendous comfort to sense his soft breathing, and feel his familiar warmth at my feet.

- ¹ 000 “One can...” Beck, 127.
- ² 000 “with a high...” 1979, 9.
- ³ 000 “high risk dogs”: In a study in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, out of 238 fatalities related to dog bites from 1979 to 1998, Chows were responsible for eight. See Sacks, Sinclair and Gilchrist.
- ⁴ 000 “She is a...” cit in Green, 67.
- ⁵ 000 “[a] little lion-like creature...” H.D., 98.
- ⁶ 000 “passionate...” Bonaparte, 37.
- ⁷ 000 “proudly erect...” *ibid.*, 80.
- ⁸ 000 information about Freud and Yofi’s lunch, from Green, 67.
- ⁹ 000 “How does...” H.D., 179.
- ¹⁰ 000 “I wish you could...” cit in Edmundson, 91.
- ¹¹ 000 “One cannot...” *ibid* 92.
- ¹² 000 “animal asylum,” Molnar, 252.
- ¹³ 000 “[n]othing could...” *ibid.*

¹⁴ 000 “I have never...” *ibid.*

¹⁵ 000 “Freud played...” *ibid.*

¹⁶ 000 his jaw gave off a putrid smell... Edmundson, 213-4.

¹⁷ 000 “I am impressed...” “Lucian Freud’s Whippet,” *AnOther*, accessed Sept 13, 2013 http://www.anothermag.com/current/view/2070/Lucian_Freuds_Whippet

¹⁸ 000 Dorothy Bedlingham’s terrier, H.D. 174.

¹⁹ 000 Butschi, see Hitchcock, 93.

²⁰ 000 Lacan and Justine, see Lacan, 26.

²¹ 000 Harry Stack Sullivan, see Clinebell, 82.

²² 000 *recueillement*, see Van Armin, 84.

26. Zémire