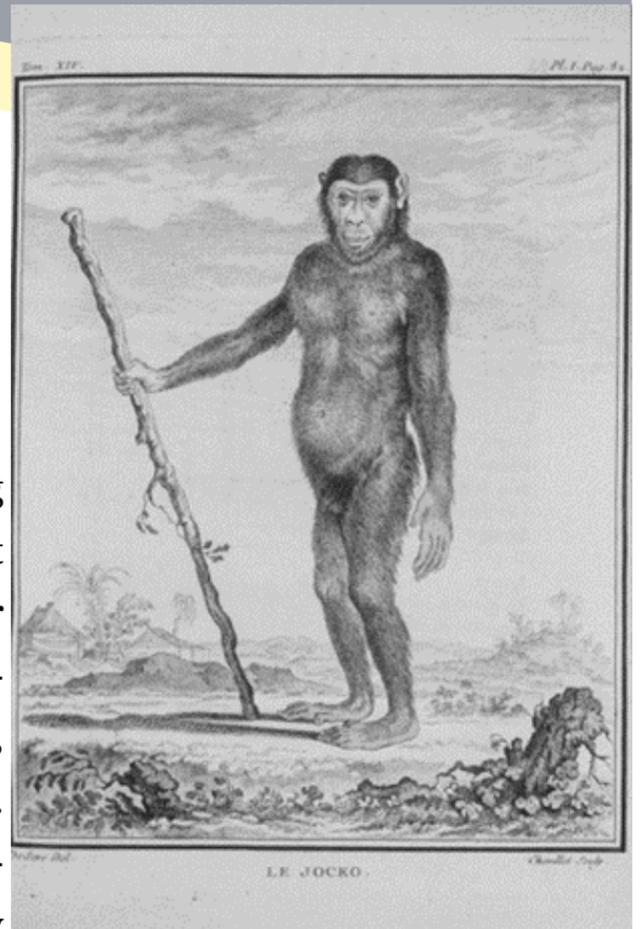


Kathryn R. Bastin
Humanity in Play:
Man Meets Monkey in *Ancien Régime* France

Tales abound throughout history of thievish apes, cradle robbing apes, devilish apes, lusty pet apes and savage ape rapists, apes that murder their owners, and apes that joust astride dogs. They clamber alluringly through ancient history, on the vellum of medieval manuscripts, through Renaissance and Old Regime lore, and even today, humankind's primordial fascination with the simian remains strong. The simian unlocks something deeply profound and holds up a mirror for humans, ultimately revealing a proximity that concurrently titillates and unnerves—and we cannot look away.



Histoire naturelle T. XIV

My dissertation explores manifestations of the monkey and ape in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French visual and literary culture. I argue that in an era when the Cartesian animal-machine is traditionally thought of taking a firm foothold, the monkey and ape point to instability and anxiety regarding the human's position in the great chain of being. Human exceptionalism is interrogated through the monkey in the mirror, and I analyze this animal-mirror through three case studies. First, I examine the seventeenth-century Aesopian animal fountains in the Labyrinth of Versailles; my close analysis shows that the six simian fountains in this hedged maze replay expropriation and broadly speaking the dangers of imitation for any courtier of the era. However, these simian fountains bear particular witness to the imitative feedback loop between Fouquet's Vaux, seized and recast, and Louis XIV's Versailles, comprised of artifacts from Vaux, and demonstrate the constitutive role of imitation for the notion of modernity. Second, a close study of Madame d'Aulnoy's late seventeenth-century fairy tale of the human-born princess-turned-monkey "Babiolle" reveals the inherent tension between ugliness, refinement and beauty, and moreover unpacks a much darker story, telling the tale of monkeys and mirrors reflecting the colonial black body, dehumanized and objectified. My third case study furthers this connection between the simian and black body by conducting a parallel reading of the eighteenth-century simian text and engravings of the *Histoire naturelle* Tome XIV, pitting Buffon's literary text, which seeks divergence with and superiority over the simian and the non-white body, against the ultimate and uncanny proximity displayed by Jacques de Sève's engravings. The simian, in its many incarnations, allows *Ancien Régime* beholders to behold themselves: the historical material presents a fragmented image of the early modern self, playing upon contemporary anxieties and deep-seated fears regarding incivility and civility, the savage and the refined, and the beast and the human.

Committee:

Hall Bjørnstad, French & Italian (Co-Chair)

Guillaume Ansart, French & Italian (Co-Chair)

Alison Calhoun, French & Italian

Giles Knox, History of Art

Matthew Senior, Oberlin College—French & Italian

10:30 a.m., July 29, 2016

Global and International Studies Building, Room 2067

Attendance by invitation only. Please contact hallbjor@indiana.edu or gansart@indiana.edu if you would like permission to attend.