

Florence Boulerie and Katalin Bartha-Kovács, eds. *Le singe aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles: Figure de l'art, personnage littéraire et curiosité scientifique*. Paris: Hermann, 2019. 516 pp. + 24 illus. 45. 00 €. Review by IVY DYCKMAN, INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR.

When most of us encounter monkeys on a screen virtually, up close at the zoo or perhaps in the wild, our first reaction is to smile or give a little laugh. We see them as creatures remarkably like us in so many respects and are generally amused and amazed by their antics and expressions. Our fascination for the larger primates can be seen in the popularity of films like *King Kong* and *Planet of the Apes* as well as in the reported sightings of mysterious humanoid beasts in the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada, commonly identified as Sasquatch or Bigfoot. Jane Goodall introduced us to the life of chimpanzees at Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania. Thanks to her groundbreaking studies of these primates in their natural habitat, we learned that chimps use and make tools, eat meat, have distinctive personalities, express emotions, and make use of verbal and non-verbal methods to communicate among themselves. Of course, we cannot speak about primates without mentioning Charles Darwin, who wrote that monkeys, apes, and humans must have a common ancestor due to their considerable similarities. As we shall soon learn, certain behaviors and physical characteristics shared by these mammals had already raised European eyebrows at least a century or more before Darwin exposed his controversial thoughts on evolution.

The attention given to *le singe* in the artistic and scientific realms towards the end of the early modern period is the theme of this volume. In the context of this review, the French term *le singe* will be used throughout to signify primates, meaning both apes and monkeys. The articles compiled by the editors, Florence Boulerie and Katalin Bartha-Kovács, originated primarily from papers presented on this topic at the international conference organized by CEREC, “Centre de Recherches sur l’Europe classique (XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles)” (8), which took place at Bordeaux in May 2015. The editors took a multidisciplinary approach in presenting and arranging the twenty-six contributions, which they classified under three major parts that were subdivided into specific sections. The first part attempts to

define *le singe* in relation to or differentiated from its human relative; the second considers the animal as an object of entertainment in the visual, theatrical, and literary arts; and the third speaks to the role of *le singe* in social, political, and ethical criticism. The methodical format simplifies the work of the researcher investigating one or more of these topics. However engaging this subject may be, reading the work in its entirety inevitably makes for a certain amount of repetition. To further assist the curious and the serious, extensive primary and secondary bibliographies, a compilation of artistic sources, indexes of proper and common nouns, and brief biographies of the contributors are included. The addition of twenty-four illustrations serves to complement their narrative counterparts. These particular images are far from amusing, though. Whether contemplating them at length or momentarily, they are at best disquieting. These representations of *le singe* display a great many of the mammal's characteristics that humans find conflicting. The following descriptions of the work's three divisions elucidate why, for example, monkeys and apes can be endearing yet frightening, even grotesque.

The first grouping of articles explores how Europeans of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries defined and depicted *le singe*, noting not only the variety of types but also the uncanny similarities between themselves and this exotic creature. It is thanks to accounts from explorers, the curiosity of scientists and philosophers, and the imagination of artists of this period that we know how this animal from distant lands impacted Europeans of all classes. Two distinguished naturalists of the eighteenth century expressed their thoughts on the classification of *le singe*. Carl Linnaeus of Sweden, often known as the "Father of Taxonomy," initially placed the *Simia* (all species of monkeys) and *Homo* (man) genera in the same class of quadrupeds. In a later edition of his *Systema naturae*, he reclassified them as members among the mammalian order Primates. In his *Histoire naturelle*, the Comte de Buffon underlined the disparity between *le singe* and Linnaeus's *Homo sapiens*. Not unsurprisingly, the Enlightenment philosopher Rousseau spoke about primates in a social context, asserting that they were savages still in their primitive state. Neither a voyager nor a naturalist, James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, was a Scottish judge and linguistic scholar who is sometimes deemed a precursor of Darwin.

He argued that the orangutan was indeed human due to its physical and behavioral similarities to man. Both he and Rousseau boldly expressed their minority views on the link between man and monkey.

The remaining articles in this section define *le singe* from a more subjective perspective. For example, some authors examine *le singe* from an esthetic standpoint. Three of them analyze paintings which either portray the animals in a visually pleasing way without regard to reality, represent them authentically and empathetically in their natural settings or lastly, show the creatures in chains as prisoners of men. Other writers deal with characteristics of monkeys and apes as described in travel logs. These impressions were often negative, with Christian morality overtones of sinful lifestyles and lewdness. One author likens their harsh treatment to that of black slaves while another addresses the religious versus scientific explanations of their origins. The last article in this first section attempts to summarize the definition of *le singe* by addressing elements of art and science. Referencing specific paintings, the author discusses the iconography of *le singe* and *le perroquet*. Their differences from man are obvious, but in certain respects, these two animals are the best imitators of humans. The former mimics man's behavior and the latter his speech. This observation encourages theoretical discourse on traits shared by animals and humans as well as on who is imitating whom.

The second part of the compilation takes a lighter approach to *le singe*. Here, we see this anthropomorphic animal as an object of decorative, theatrical, and erotic pleasures. A discussion of *singe* mania in seventeenth-century Antwerp introduces the *divertissements* theme. Peeter van der Borcht, David Teniers le Jeune, Jan Brueghel le Jeune, and Nicolaes van Veerendael counted among the Flemish painters who portrayed *les singes* as human beings in a comic fashion. In France, the *singerie* vogue inspired Jean-Antoine Watteau to decorate the ceiling of 26 rue de Condé in Paris with *les singes* wearing *commedia dell'arte* costumes, creating the illusion of ludic human behavior. This *singe* craze even had an effect on the porcelain industry. The Meissen factory near Dresden produced *l'orchestre de singes*, with particular attention given to a figurine playing the hurdy-gurdy, which was intended to satirize upper-class women. The notion of *la singerie* also found its way to the stage. In Alfredo Arias's 1986 production of Marivaux's

Le jeu de l'amour et du hasard, all of the characters were transformed into *les singes*, which reinforced the eighteenth-century playwright's critical observations of his society. Other theatrical writers utilized *le singe* as a character or the animal itself in works for both popular and elite audiences. In the modern version of Marivaux's play, *le singe* was presented as an instrument to mock the court and contemporary politics as well as to instill moral lessons through, ironically, transgressive and erotic actions. The concluding articles address sexual desire aroused by *le singe* whose licentious behavior was reportedly observed in its natural habitat by European explorers and eventually embedded in the Western imagination. The apes, in particular, were said to have violated native women who gave birth to hideous beings as a result of the forced unions. In the fairy tales of Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy as well as in those inspired by her, *le singe* was portrayed more compassionately and served as a discreet symbol of feminine desire.

Editors Boulerie and Bartha-Kovács devote the final third of the corpus to *le singe* seen as a conduit for social, moral, and political criticism. Moreover, this part functions as a summation of all that has been previously said about the fascination with *le singe* throughout Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The remaining articles echo and expand upon what we have learned up to this point in the text. For instance, it is surprising to discover that monkey madness was not just confined to France, Flanders, or Saxony but occurred in Spain, Portugal, and Poland. Empathetic attitudes towards *le singe* appear in the texts of such *Siglo de Oro* notables as Miguel de Cervantes, José de Acosta, and Vicente Espinel. In Portugal, *les singeries* depicted on tiles (*azulejos*) that decorated seventeenth-century Lisbon palaces had political implications. Their not-so-subtle purpose was to ridicule Castilian adversaries during the Portuguese Restoration War (1640-1668). Although *les singes* were less numerous in Poland than in France, Eastern and Western cultural influences there nevertheless inspired positive and negative representations of these creatures in Polish art and literature across the major art movements of *l'Europe classique*. As for France, Fénelon, Crébillon, Diderot, and Voltaire incorporated *le singe* as a literary figure into tales having moral and philosophical objectives. They used this device to satirize human behavior and question the differences between man and beast, which also

preoccupied scientists of the day. Bad-boy author Nicolas-Edme Rétif de La Bretonne invented a *singe auteur*, César de Malacca, whose *Lettre d'un singe aux êtres de son espèce* was included in his pre-Revolutionary novel *La Découverte australe* (1781). Rétif used the voice of an animal closely related to humans in order to express his controversial views directed at mankind without provoking either the censor or the police. The Anglo-Irish satirist Jonathan Swift employed a similar technique in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) when he created *hommes-singes* in the form of the Yahoos. This was a vehicle for criticizing British scientist Edward Tyson's treatise on the orangutan, a document which addressed the similarities and differences between this particular primate and the human being. In the end, though, Swift compelled his readers to ponder which species was truly degenerate. The very last contribution is well chosen since it poses philosophical questions about *le singe* based on a painting by the French artist Jean-Siméon Chardin. Aesthetic considerations aside, in *Le Singe peintre* we are asked to contemplate how the *singe artiste* would interpret his subject, *la statuette antique*: as a human being in an anthropocentric world or as another *singe* or other animal. The painting challenges man's egocentrism by acknowledging the possibility that *le singe* may be capable of perceiving the world non-anthropomorphically. Are we humans able to see our world through the eyes of *le singe*?

Gilbert Schrenck, Anne-Élisabeth Spica, and Pascale Thouvenin, eds. *Héroïsme féminin et femmes illustres (XVI^e–XVII^e Siècles): Une représentation sans fiction*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019. 420 pp. 32€. Review by BÉATRICE FLAMENBAUM, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE.

This collection of essays is an important contribution to the history of women's emancipation in sixteenth and seventeenth century French texts, including memoirs, biographies, and letters. Heroic fictional or historic women characters are portrayed as acting out of justice and dignity, claiming their rights through resistance, heroic acts, and behaviors. This collection of how twenty-five essays centers around the representation of the main archetypes of heroic femininity as the premise of modernity. It offers a timeless and universal conception of