

Research project

The Paris guild of the oiseleurs: the trade of exotic animals and the generation of zoological knowledge in early modern France

Daniel Roche, among others, has pointed out the importance of animals, particularly horses, to the functioning of ancien régime society, yet in pre-revolutionary Paris, not only beasts of burden mattered, but likewise small exotic animals.¹ Paris was one of the main centers of the trade in exotic animals in early modern Europe. Unlike in other European cities, the trade in these animals was closely regulated by the government, which means that it can be reconstructed in much greater detail than anywhere else. Since the late middle ages, the guild of the *oiseleurs* was granted the exclusive right to sell small animals such as birds (hence the name), small exotic dogs and, increasingly, monkeys in Paris in exchange for their services during royal festivities. Especially the release of hundreds of doves during royal entries into Paris afforded the oiseleurs an important role in the all-important representation of royal power in the ancien régime.

Yet the most regular customers of the oiseleurs were neither the royal household nor the aristocracy, but the burghers of Paris, who increasingly emulated the nobility in their taste for exotic pets. It was this taste for the companionship of exotic animals, not primarily the establishment of menageries at princely courts, that led to the wide distribution of simians (monkeys and apes) across Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This degree of almost everyday familiarity with simians (hard to imagine today) at the end of the eighteenth century was the precondition to the development of animal shows and ‘artistic taxidermy’, which in turn were among the most important media of the presentation of the human-animal relationship and also of the domestic representation of the colonial world in the nineteenth century. During my research stay at the l’Institut d’Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine (IHMC), I propose to take advantage of the extensive records on the trade in exotic animals carried out by the guild of the oiseleurs to retrace in detail how monkeys became an ever-more popular part of the home-life of Europeans during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, all the while the representational role of monkeys at court took on ever more elaborate forms.

Co-operation between the IHMC/ the Labex HASTEC and the Institut für Geschichtswissenschaften, Humboldt Universität, Berlin

There is a remarkable convergence in the focus of recently established research programmes on the cultural history of animals at the Faculty of Philosophy at the Humboldt University (which includes the Institute of Historical Sciences) and that of the IHMC. My work on the generation and dissemination of knowledge about simians through trading networks corresponds to the research focus on the technologies and practices of knowledge at the IHMC. The project I wish to undertake at the IHMC pursues lines of enquiry which are central to the LABEX Hastec within the *Programme Collaboratif N°6 : Culture De Science Et Technologie Des Savoirs*. Knowledge about the anatomy of newly discovered species, tips on how they were to be fed and kept alive and how they were to be best preserved after they had died were disseminated across Europe primarily through networks of trade. For instance, immediately after its discovery by Robert Boyle in ca. 1660, the technique of preserving animal bodies in alcohol was already current as a way of transporting specimen from South East Asia to Europe on ships of the major global trading companies, the effect of which was the sudden

¹ D. Roche, *Voitures, chevaux, attelages du XVIe au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 2001).

multiplication of animal species (albeit in dead form) arriving in Europe. My work examines contexts in which knowledge about simians was created and disseminated which have not been the focus of the traditional history of science, which has mainly described the changing image of simians in published works of early modern natural history. Instead, my work focuses on cultural contexts in which Europeans came into actual contact with simians, and the effects these encounters had on European culture.

At the Humboldt University, a co-operative doctoral programme (*Strukturiertes Promotionsprogramm*) on *Konstellationen von Menschen und Tieren im Kulturvergleich* ('Constellations of humans and animals in cultural comparison') between the Department of History and the Institute for Cultural History and Theory has been established under the directorship of Professors Peter Burschel, Dr. Iris Därmann and Dr. Thomas Macho. Currently, an application to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft is underway to upgrade this programme to a funded postgraduate programme (*DFG Graduiertenkolleg*) in 2015. My stay in Paris therefore promises to lead to long-term co-operation between the Humboldt University and the IHMC at the Université de Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne, where particularly Professeur Pierre Serna has led a concerted effort in examining the political history of animals in the Revolutionary period.

Contexts and scope

My project on the oiseleurs is part of a larger project, planned as a German habilitation ('second doctorate', a formal requirement for the appointment to a professorial chair in Germany) on the history of the simian (monkeys and apes) in early modern Europe.² Simians are foreigners to Europe, yet have been continuously imported to Europe since antiquity, despite the fact that, unlike other animals such as cattle, horses, dogs or cats, they do not carry out work useful to us or have become part of our diet. Previous studies have without fail dealt with early modern Europeans' attitudes to simians: scientific knowledge on apes and monkeys, monkeys as symbols in art and architecture and the institutional history of zoos and menageries. My study will instead deal with the presence of the actual animal in Europe and its effect on European culture. Fifteenth-century Europeans only knew a handful of North African species of baboon and macaque. But by the end of the eighteenth century a wide variety of species from Asia, Central Africa and America populated the cabinets of curiosities and menageries of the courts as well as the homes of burghers and – mostly in stuffed form – the studies of scholars across Europe. My study will first examine how simians were imported to Europe. Second, it will trace the spread of new species across the continent. Third, it will examine the increasing popularity of monkeys as pets, docile capuchin monkey from South America becoming especially popular by the eighteenth century. By utilising original archival research, my book will examine these changes from the perspective of international trade and the expanding contacts with South East Asia, South America and Central Africa.

Already Julius Caesar Scaliger considered the continuous discovery of new species of monkey to be a challenge to the scholarship of his day.³ Yet, despite the fundamental role the discovery of new species played in the development of the

² H. W. Janson's *Apes and ape lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London, 1952) remains a useful introduction to the monkey as a symbol in medieval and early modern art. Janson, however, devotes too little attention to the work of early modern naturalists, and does not deal with the trade in simians, thereby ignoring European relations to the animals' countries of origin.

³ 'Haec hactenus comperta genera habemus. Si quis plus nota habeat, addet ad scientiam. Nam et novae terrae sunt repertae et novum genus hominum incomperataque antehac animalia', I. C. Scaliger, *Aristorelis Historia de animalibus, Iulio Caesare Scaligero interprete. Cum eiusdem commentariis* (Toulouse, 1619), pp. 198-199. On Scaliger's interpretation of Aristotle's natural history see Perfetti, *Aristotle's zoology and its Renaissance commentators, 1521-1601* (Leuven, 2000), pp. 155-188.

disciplines of zoology and anthropology, basic facts are not yet established about the distribution of simians in early modern Europe. Previous research by Janson, Kemp, Daston, Theunissen and Corbey has explored the idea of monkeys and apes in early modern Europe: categorisations of simians in scholarly writing of the period and the symbolism of monkeys in art and literature.⁴ The traditional emphasis on menageries has obscured the spread of exotic animals through Europe not through court patronage but the increasingly popular practice of keeping them as pets.⁵ In recent years, a significant departure from older literature on menageries and the prehistory of modern zoos has occurred, integrating these into the history of collecting and international trade. Exotic birds and spectacular animals such as elephants, giraffes and rhinoceros have received excellent treatments, yet the presence of man's closest cousin in Europe has so far not been afforded a scholarly study.⁶ This lack of knowledge is surprising, since anthropological studies have shown the potential of examining the human-simian encounter. Ohnuki-Tierney has examined the tradition of theatrical performances involving live monkeys as a mirror of contemporary Japanese society.⁷ Further afield yet similarly relevant are studies of historical anthropology, which have characterised the contacts between Europeans and non-Europeans as a trigger of an intensification of European introspection.⁸ Occidental intellectuals were not only challenged by the contact with other cultures, but likewise the contact with previously unknown flora and fauna. I will argue that the arrival in Europe of new species of simian contributed significantly to a long-term cultural uncertainty which turned on its head the Galenic and Vesalian theories of the relationship between man and beast.

Methodology, sources and research plan

My research in Paris on the guild of the oiseleurs is scheduled to take place during the second year of my four-year habilitation project, and will build on the extensive archival research in German archives I have been doing this year. Since the trade in simians spanned the whole of Europe, I am focusing on three well-preserved collections of sources, each of which sheds light on a particular stage in the trade with monkeys and apes. This year, I have been tracing the distribution of simians in Europe on the basis of the records of the records of the Fugger family held in the Fuggerarchiv, Dillingen, and on the basis of the extensive records on small natural history collections held in Saxon and Thuringian archives (Waldenburg, Rudolstadt, Halle). In the year following my stay in Paris (the third year), I will illustrate the maritime trade of simians through the private correspondence of particular 'brokers' in the trade connected to the Dutch East India Company held in private collections in Haarlem, The Hague and Amsterdam.⁹ During

⁴ L. Daston and G. Mitman, *Thinking with animals. New perspectives on anthropomorphism* (New York, 2005), Corbey and Theunissen, *Ape, Man, Apeman: Changing Views since 1600* (Utrecht, 1993).

⁵ G. Loisel, *Histoire des ménageries de l'antiquité à nos jours* (3 vols, Paris, 1912); É. Baratay, E. Hardouin-Fugier, *Histoire des jardins zoologiques en Occident (xvie-xxe siècle)* (Paris, 1998).

⁶ C. G.-C. Jiménez, *Alhajas para soberanos. Los animales reales en el siglo XVIII: de las leoneras a las mascotas de cámara* (Junta de Castilla y León, 2011); L. E. Robbins, *Elephant slaves and pampered parrots. Exotic animals in eighteenth-century Paris* (Baltimore/ London, 2002); C. Plumb, *Exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain* (PhD, Manchester, 2010); B. T. Boehrer, *Parrot Culture: Our 2,500-Year-Long Fascination with the World's Most Talkative Bird* (Philadelphia, 2004).

⁷ E. Ohnuki-Tierney, *The monkey as mirror. Symbolic transformations in Japanese history and ritual* (Princeton, 1987).

⁸ Based on a close reading of costume books and travel accounts, Rublack has been able to show that depictions of Amerindians influenced subsequent portrayals of regional European customs and dress: U. Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford, 2010), in particular pp. 177-210.

⁹ For an introduction to these collections of papers, see H. Engel, P. Smit, A. P. M. Sanders, and J. P. F. v. d. Veer (eds.), *Hendrik Engel's alphabetical list of Dutch zoological cabinets and menageries* (Amsterdam, 1986).

the third year, I will also submit two articles to peer-reviewed journals to anticipate the publication of my book. In my fourth year, I will conclude the writing process of my project and submit the book to a publisher.

Outcomes

Though my research is about simians, the project has implications which will contribute directly to our understanding of early modern European identity. Thinking about real animals rather than just their image leads us without fail toward the burgeoning field of interdisciplinary animal studies.¹⁰ This relatively new field works on the assumption that animals already have an identity without humans, and that any contact between us and them redefines both of us. The arrival of the first apes in the mid-seventeenth century irreversibly challenged European intellectuals' sense of security that a firm boundary between man and beast existed. The discussion of whether the orang-utan was a primitive human or an intelligent animal became mixed up with the fascination with 'monstrous' people like the famous Gonzales family, as well as with descriptions of the native cultures of South America, South East Asia and Central Africa.¹¹ The contextualisation of this growing insecurity, which remained salient right up until and after Darwin's theory of evolution, will be the main contribution of my book. In addition to the book, the project will produce four journal articles. Taking into account my publishing record and the broad appeal of publications on historical animals, I am confident my book will attract the attention of major American and British university presses.

Selection of source-collections I wish to work on in Paris

Archives Nationales, Paris

- AD/XI/22 Textes administratifs; Commerce et industrie, ancien regime: Médecins-oiseleurs (1402-1779). Dossier E: Oiseleurs.
- AJ/15/511 Jardin du Roi: Voyages et missions (1595-1793); jardins et serres (1634-1793)
- AJ/15/512 Jardin du Roi: Cabinet et collections (1670-1712); Ménageries (1711-1793).
- AJ/15/515 Muséum: Creation et organisation, 1793-1922.
- AJ/15/742 Muséum: Correspondance arrive et depart, 1793-an VIII.
- AJ/15/836 Muséum: Collections diverses, 1793-1825.
- AJ/15/844 Muséum: Ménagerie, 1794-1901.
- O/1/106 Secrétariat de la Maison du Roi, Année 1762. Brevet d'Oiseleurs du Roy pour les Srs. Chateau père et fils, 22 avril 1762.
- O/1/126 Secrétariat de la Maison du Roi, Année 1782. Brevet d'Oiseleur du Roi pour Gérard Auguste Bastriès, 23 Mai 1782.
- O/1/128 Secrétariat de la Maison du Roi, 1786. Brevet d'Oiseleurs du Roi pour les Srs. Chateau père et fils, 27 janvier 1786.
- O/1/597 Maison du Roi. Mémoires, relations, et observations presents par divers particuliers.

¹⁰ As an indication of what these paradigm shifts can mean for historical writing, see: E. Fudge, *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures* (Chicago, 2004).

¹¹ For a study of the Gonzales Familie, see M. Wiesner-Hanks, *The Marvelous Hairy Girls — The Gonzales Sisters and Their Worlds* (New Haven/ London, 2009).

- O/1/807 Maison du Roi. Papiers du Grand-Maître; Gouvernement des Maisons Royales-Versailles: Château, parc, domaine, 1780-1787.
- Y/15295 Châtelet de Paris et Prévôté d'île de France: Commissaires au Châtelet, Office de Claude-Etienne Prestat. Scellé après le décès du S. Vallin, 12 juillet 1785.
- Z/1E/218 Eaux et Forêts, Maîtrise de Paris: Registre des Oiseleurs et des Pêcheurs, 1781-1789.
- Z/1E/1166 Eaux et Forêts, Papiers provenant des résidus des fonds judiciaires: Maître oiseleurs de Paris, 17-18 siècles.

Archives nationales, Colonies

- C/2/285 Correspondance à l'Arrivée: Compagnie des Indes: Mémoires sur les diverses productions des comptoirs d'Asie: étoffes, soies, teintures, café, thé, épices, porcelaines, animaux et curiosités. 1713-1789.
- C/5B/5 bis Correspondance à l'Arrivée: Cap de Bonne-Espérance, 1783-1788.
- C/5B/6 Correspondance à l'Arrivée: Cap de Bonne-Espérance, 1787-1792
- C/5B/7 Correspondance à l'Arrivée: Cap de Bonne-Espérance, 1780-1792
- C/5B/8 Correspondance à l'Arrivée: Cap de Bonne-Espérance, 1781-1787: Registre de correspondance de l'agent français au Cap.

Bibliothèque Centrale du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris

- MS 293 Documents géographique divers. C. Minutes de trois lettres de Le Juge adressées à Mgr ...
- MS 352 Notice des oiseaux qu'on desire recevoir de Cayene vivans.
- MS 369 Papiers provenant de Buffon.
- MS 864 Papiers de l'Abbé Bexon.
- MS 1765 Relations des Indes Orientales.
- MS 1995 Recueil de lettres adressées par Joseph-François-Charpentier de Cossigny à Louis-Guillaume Le Monnier de l'Isle de France, 1769-1783

Introductory Bibliography

- Baratay, É. and Hardouin-Fugier, E., *Histoire des jardins zoologiques en Occident (xvie-xxe siècle)* (Paris, 1998).
- Boehrer, B. T., *Parrot Culture: Our 2,500-Year-Long Fascination with the World's Most Talkative Bird* (Philadelphia, 2004).
- Corbey, R. and Theunissen, B. (eds.), *Ape, Man, Apeman: Changing Views since 1600* (Utrecht, 1993).
- Daston, L. and Mitman, G. (eds.), *Thinking with animals. New perspectives on anthropomorphism* (New York, 2005).
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- Loisel, G., *Histoire des Ménageries de l'antiquité à nos jours* (Paris, 1912).
- Ohnuki-Tierney, E., *The monkey as mirror. Symbolic transformations in Japanese history and ritual* (Princeton, 1987).

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Perfetti, S., *Aristotle's zoology and its Renaissance commentators, 1521-1601*.

Plumb, C., *Exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain* (PhD, Manchester, 2010)

Robbins, L. E., *Elephant slaves and pampered parrots. Exotic animals in eighteenth-century Paris* (Baltimore/ London, 2002).

Roche, D., *Voitures, chevaux, attelages du XVIe au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 2001).

Rublack, U., *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford, 2010).

Scaliger, I. C., *Aristorelis Historia de animalibus, Iulio Caesare Scaligero interprete. Cum eiusdem commentariis* (Toulouse, 1619).

Wiesner, M. E., *The Marvelous Hairy Girls — The Gonzales Sisters and Their Worlds* (New Haven/ London, 2009).

Publications

Books:

Monograph:

1. *Daum's boys – schools and the Republic of Letters in early modern Germany* (Manchester University Press, forthcoming 2015, in production)

Edited volumes:

2. Co-edited with T. Gromelski, C. Preusse, D. Tricoire:

Politische Ordnungsvorstellungen und Ordnungskonfigurationen im Heiligen Römischen Reich und in Polen-Litauen in der Frühen Neuzeit – Vergleiche und Transfers (forthcoming: Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2015)

3. Co-edited with P. Wilczek (principal editor), M. Choptiany, J. Koryl:

The Reformation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its European context – research postulates/ Reformacja w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej i jej europejskie konteksty – postulaty badawcze (Warsaw, Sub Lupa Press, 2010)

Journal articles:

4. 'Pupils' choices and social mobility after the Thirty Years' War – a quantitative study', *Historical Journal* 57:2 (2014), 311-341

5. 'Learning by wrong-doing: aspiration and transgression among pupils after the Thirty Years' War', currently undergoing peer-review by *Social History* for publication in Spring 2015

6. "'Da hingegen bei uns fast ein jedes Land und Ort sich ein besonderes machet..." – Zentrum und Peripherie im bildungsgeschichtlichen Kontext am Beispiel der kursächsischen Stadt Zwickau im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert' ["Whereas in our country almost every region and town does things their own way..." – Centre and Periphery in the context of education. The case from sixteenth and seventeenth-century Zwickau'], *Historisches Jahrbuch* 131 (2011), 263-283, downloadable at <http://cambridge.academia.edu/AlanSRoss>

Book sections:

7. 'Networks of trust: education and inter-confessional contacts within the seventeenth-century Republic of Letters', *Respublica Litteraria in Action*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, University of Warsaw Press, 2012) 177-180

8. 'Masterless children during the Thirty Years' War', L. Brockliss, H. Montgomery, *Childhood, violence and the Western tradition* (Oxford, Oxbow, 2010), 241-247

9. 'The History of Knowledge and the Reformation – some thoughts on Poland', P. Wilczek, *The Reformation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its European context – research postulates/ Reformacja w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej i jej europejskie konteksty – postulatory badawcze* (Warsaw, Sub Lupa Press, 2010), 39-43

10. 'The Colbovius Sendbrief and the Reception of Comenian pedagogy in Saxony', S. Chocholová, M. Pánková, M. Steiner, *Johannes Amos Comenius – The Legacy to the Culture of Education* (Prague, Charles University Press, 2009), 134-141

Public engagement and wider impact:

11. 'The thin, the fat and the ugly: the chancellor's body in post-war German politics/ Chudy, gruby i brzydki: ciało kanclerza w powojennej polityce Niemiec', *Res Publica Nowa* 15, Autumn 2011, 78-85

Reviews

12. Christopher H. Johnson, Bernhard Jussen, David W. Sabeau, Simon Teuscher (eds.), *Blood and Kinship: matter for metaphor from ancient Rome to the present* (Berghahn Books, New York/ Oxford, 2013), *Journal of European Studies* 44 (3), 2014, 1-2

13. **Pia F. Cuneo (ed.)**, *Animals and Early Modern Identity* (Ashgate, Farnham/ Surrey, 2014), *European History Quarterly* (forthcoming 2015)

Peer-reviewed journal articles in preparation:

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14. 'Reading the Jesuits – the Ratio Studiorum and Protestant pedagogy in seventeenth-century Germany', to be submitted for peer review to the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, January 2015

15. “‘Donkey work for sparrow pay” – the teaching profession and the cult of mistreatment, 1500 – 1900’, to be submitted for peer review to *German History*, May 2015

Academic translations:

H. Wolfram, 'The Public Instrumentalization of the Middle Ages in Austria since 1945' in: R. Evans, G. P. Marchal (eds.), *The Uses of the Middle Ages in Modern European States. History, Nationhood, and the Search for Origins* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2011), 197-220

G. P. Marchal, 'Medievalism and Swiss National Identity' in: R. Evans, G. P. Marchal (eds.), *The Uses of the Middle Ages in Modern European States. History, Nationhood, and the Search for Origins* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2011), 221-244