

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



Clothes Make the Ape: The Satirical Animal in Rochester's Poetry

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Perhaps as well-known as the poetry of John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester (1647-1680) is the portrait of the poet posing with a monkey. In this painting, by Jacob Huysmans, the monkey stares at the poet, while the poet glances ironically at the viewer. The painting thus draws a distinction between the human and simian gazes, with the monkey's eyes directing us to the central subject of the portrait: the human aristocrat.¹ Monkeys also play a central role in Rochester's poetry, but there the simian and human gazes are not so easy to distinguish. Indeed, the monkeys in Rochester's poetry ape man so faithfully and naturally that the positions of satirist and monkey are almost interchangeable. The peculiar way in which the monkey functions in Rochester's poetry has been overlooked in critical accounts of his work. Indeed, despite the new concern with the animal in literary studies, there has been little work on the place of animals in Rochester's poetry outside of his most famous poem, 'A Satyre against Reason and Mankind'. That poem has been extensively explored as a product of the theriophilic tradition of early modern poetry, in which beasts are held to be more natural and thus both superior to and happier than humans. What has not been thoroughly accounted for is how Rochester's engagement with animals complicates critical accounts of the theriophilic tradition, accounts which are themselves, in the wake of animal studies, being rigorously re-evaluated. Rochester does not merely place animals in a stable, normative position outside the human, a move which has been commonly made central to theriophily; instead, animals, exemplified in the figure of the imitative monkey, deny humanity an outside perspective on itself. Furthermore, as a figure of satire in Rochester's writing, the imitative monkey works to undercut the satiric

¹ For a clear interpretation of this painting and its relation to other instances of monkeys throughout Rochester's poetry see Keith Walker, 'Lord Rochester's Monkey (Again)', in *That Second Bottle: Essays on John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. by Nicholas Fisher (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 81-87. Walker argues that the painting is a gentle satire expressing 'a bemused and tolerant exasperation' towards Dryden, and that it is not as brutal as some of Rochester's poetic uses of the monkey (p. 87).

procedure and to show that satire is a form both beyond and beneath human capabilities. Beginning with 'A Satyre', and then looking at 'Tunbridge Wells' and 'A Letter from Artemiza in the Towne to Chloe in the Countrey', this essay will show that attending to the figure of the monkey in Rochester's poetry allows us to re-evaluate both Rochester's own satiric practice, and the importance of theriophily within the new discourse of animal studies.

'A Satyre': Rochester and Theriophily

It is almost impossible to consider Rochester's 'A Satyre' without examining its debt to the theriophilic tradition. From its very first lines, in which the speaker claims he would rather be any animal than man, the poem elevates beast above man, and claims that animals are both happier and more natural than the 'vain Animal/ Who is so proud of being Rational' (57; 6-7).² It is not surprising, then, that much of the criticism about this poem has sought to locate it within the theriophilic tradition that is outlined in George Boas's 1933 work, *The Happy Beast*. Boas's work carefully traces the revival of an ancient way of thinking about the relation between human and animal in early modern France. He writes that 'The theoretical...basis of Theriophily is that the beasts—like savages—are more natural than man, and *hence* man's superior.'³ This concise sentence sums up a complex and multifaceted mode of thought. Theriophily challenged some of the most widely and tenaciously held assumptions about animals including their ability to reason, their virtue, and their capacity for free will. In this context, James Gill gives a clear summary of the theriophilic tradition's 'topics of criticism: (1) the alienation of man from nature...; (2) the physical inferiority of man to beasts; (3) man's moral inferiority to beasts; (4) the evils peculiar to human society; and (5) the critique of human reason.'⁴ Nearly all of these (sometimes contradictory) claims can be found in Rochester's 'A Satyre'.⁵

² All references to Rochester's poems are to *The Works of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, ed. by Harold Love (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1999). Citations are of page and line number/s.

³ George Boas, *The Happy Beast in French Thought of the Seventeenth Century* (Octagon Books: New York, 1966), p. 1.

⁴ James Gill, 'Beast Over Man: Theriophilic Paradox in Gulliver's "Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms"', *Studies in Philology* 67. 4 (1970), 532-49 (p. 539).

⁵ For previous considerations of Rochester's 'A Satyre' as theriophily, see Nancy Rosenfeld, "'That Vain Animal': Rochester's Satyr and the Theriophilic Paradox," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 9.2 (2003) 5:1-27; Thomas H. Fujimura, 'Rochester's "Satyr Against Mankind": An Analysis', *Studies in Philology* 55 (1958), 576-90; Marianne Thormählen, *Rochester: The Poems in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Dustin Griffin, *Satires Against Man: The Poems of Rochester* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); and David Farley-Hills, *Rochester's Poetry* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978).

If it is clear that ‘A Satyre’ fits within the broad contours of theriophily, it is less clear, especially in the wake of the recent flood of interest in animal studies, how theriophily fits into debates over the status of the animal. Indeed, recent discussions of theriophily have fundamentally challenged Boas’s account of this paradoxical genre of thought. Laurie Shannon, for instance, has accused Boas of ‘secur[ing] the tradition in order to declaw it’ and of intentionally undervaluing theriophilic claims by treating them as a kind of argumentative parlour game.⁶ Further, critics have long assumed, with Boas, that theriophily is fundamentally anthropocentric, directed at providing man with a moral example. Gill, for instance, writes that ‘most simply, theriophily is the belief that animal life provides man with an exemplary pattern of conduct.’⁷ Erica Fudge, in contrast, has identified a radical and sceptical version of theriophily that ‘undercut[s] human dominion’ and removes the human from its privileged place in the order of things.⁸ In Fudge’s account of theriophily, the animal is not a moral example because theriophily fundamentally challenges the validity of man’s perspective on animal life by asking, in a spirit of scepticism, what gives man the right and ability to pronounce with truth on the experience of another.⁹ The previously well-defined limits of theriophily, and especially its potential to escape from anthropocentric accounts of the human-animal relationship, have become, then, subject to debate.

This is an opportunity to look at Rochester’s theriophily in a new context, as previous criticism has been concerned with demonstrating, in a historicist vein, the impact of his theriophily within the poem’s immediate context. For instance, Nancy Rosenfeld looks at the various responses to Rochester’s poem and thus demonstrates the extent of his challenge to orthodox contemporary views.¹⁰ Similarly, Sarah Ellenzweig locates the particular form of unbelief that is implied by Rochester’s theriophily, and at how that

⁶ Laurie Shannon, *The Accomodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 135.

⁷ Gill, p. 533. Peter Harrison says that in theriophily animals are ‘moral exemplars’ for humans; see Harrison, ‘The Virtues of Animals in Seventeenth Century Thought’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59. 3 (1998), 463-84 (p. 471). Nathaniel Wolloch argues that theriophily thus has the ‘ultimately anthropocentric aim of ameliorating human conduct’; see Wolloch, ‘Rousseau and the Love of Animals’, *Philosophy and Literature* 32. 2 (2008), 293-302 (p. 295). Gary Steiner discusses the ‘limits of Montaigne’s “theriophily”’ in similar terms; see Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), p. 137.

⁸ Erica Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 121.

⁹ On the relation between ancient skepticism and theriophily see George Boas and Arthur O. Lovejoy, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (New York: Octagon Books, 1973). For a more recent treatment of skepticism and theriophily in Rochester’s poetry see Sarah Ellenzweig, *The Fringes of Belief: English Literature, Ancient Heresy, and the Politics of Freethinking, 1660-1760* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008). Ellenzweig, however, maintains the status of the animal as moral exemplar as her argument focuses on religious skepticism rather than the kind of epistemological skepticism discussed by Fudge.

¹⁰ See Rosenfeld, ‘That Vain Animal’, and also Thormählen.

challenged the yoking together of religion and reason in the orthodox Anglicanism of the 1660s.¹¹ A reconsideration of 'A Satyre' within the context of the new debate about theriophily will allow us to ask how the poem fits within or pushes against the conceptual limits of theriophily (beyond specific historical contexts), and to appreciate the extent to which some of Rochester's other poems present a version of the human-animal relationship that is only hinted at in 'A Satyre'.

The first lines of 'A Satyre' contain, hidden in the speaker's ostentatious wish to be any kind of animal other than a man, a definition of mankind:

Were I (who to my cost already am
One of those strange prodigious Creatures Man)
A spirit free to choose for my own share,
What case of flesh and blood I pleas'd to wear;
I'de be a Dog, a Monky, or a Bear.
Or any thing but that vain Animal
Who is so proud of being Rational (57; 1-7).

Rochester ends up focusing on man's vanity and his pride in being rational, and reason is, of course, one of the major targets of his satire. However, the adjectives that directly modify 'Man' in these opening lines are prodigious and strange. These two descriptors are themselves paradoxical because they work to undo the very definition of man that they state. The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that 'prodigious' can mean astonishing and marvellous but, at the same time, appalling in a pejorative sense.¹² 'Prodigious' thus names two almost opposite qualities, and in this blending together of the marvellous and the appalling the word itself appears to blur its own normative definitional boundaries. Indeed, the word can also mean abnormal or freakish, and, for Rochester, it is precisely man, that being seemingly so familiar and with whom the poet identifies, that is, in his very identity, perverse and monstrous.¹³ The word prodigious, then, describes something that, in its very monstrosity, cannot be limited by any normative description. This monstrosity of man is also captured in the word 'strange', which is an odd word to use in a definition, as it is usually a comparative word that implies that there is a determinate, normative position from which what is strange is different. Because the poet speaks from the position of the man he already is, however,

¹¹ See Ellenzweig, *Fringes*.

¹² 'prodigious, adj, (and int.) and adv.' *OED*. 3rd Edition, June 2007. *OED Online*. (Oxford University Press. May 2, 2014). www.oed.com. See meaning 2a.

¹³ Meaning 3 of 'prodigious, adj, (and int.) and adv.' *OED* gives 'abnormal' and 'freakish'.

this position seems to be foreclosed. If man is strange, freakish, astonishing, and appalling, he is so to man himself.

In order to follow this definition of mankind as prodigious and strange, I will move directly to the part of the poem in which Rochester begins an extended comparison between man and animal. This means leaving aside Rochester's stunning critique of reason, a part of the poem which has been more thoroughly considered by previous critics.¹⁴ Having completed a reduction of reason from its metaphysical pretences to its purely materialist functioning, Rochester writes: 'Thus I think Reason righted, but for Man, / I'll ne're recant' (60; 112-3). What follows is a close comparison of the human to the bestial in which beasts are counted 'As wise at least, and better farr than' man (60; 116). This comparison of man to beast works to undermine the coherence of 'mankind' as a category. Rochester writes: 'Birds feed on birds, Beasts on each other prey / But savage Man alone does man betray' (60; 129-30). The birds and beasts in the first line of the couplet are plural, but the effect of this pluralisation is that birds and beasts are unified in their actions. The neat first clause shows all birds feeding on all others, and the second also implies a universal action of all beasts reciprocally preying on each other. The line about man is different. In the first place, it talks about man as if it is talking about a universal category, not about men in the plural. However, the action of man is precisely to betray man, to undo his own universality or categorisation, as much as it is to betray his individual fellow man. The zeugma of the line works in a strange way here. The verb 'betray' modifies the actions of both the object and subject of the sentence, which in this case are both 'man'. However, rather than working to yoke together object and subject in one verbal action, the zeugma emphasises the fact that despite the object and subject of the sentence being the same, the action they perform splits them apart. While birds and beasts, in their plurality, remain unified in their action, man, in his supposed universality, is split apart by what he does. The same effect is apparent in the next couplet: 'Prest by necessity they [birds and beasts] kill for food, / Man undoes Man to do himself no good' (60; 131-2). Again, birds and beasts are unified in their plurality while man is undone by zeugma. Here, the effect is heightened by the fact that the 'himself' in the second half of the line could refer to the man who is acted upon, or the man who acts. The singular 'himself' is undone by the failure of man, as a universal category, to remain stable.

¹⁴ See Fujimora; Thormählen; Griffin, *Satires*; Ellenzweig, *Fringes*; Farley-Hills; David M. Vieth, 'Toward An Anti-Aristotelian Poetic: Rochester's *A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind* and *Artemiza to Chloe*', *Language and Style* 5 (1972), 123-145; and Jonathan Kramnick, *Actions and Objects from Hobbes to Richardson* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

In 'A Satyre', Rochester thus maintains the standard theriophilic claim that the beast is happy, but what has not received adequate attention is that he also treats man as a creature that cannot be categorised. Rochester's demonstration of the impossibility of categorising man performs what Shannon identifies as one of the radical claims of theriophily not covered in Boas's account of the genre. In a reading of William Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Shannon identifies a radical consequence of theriophily that makes man into a negative exception. Man, in this tragic vision, is the one animal that is not suited to its place in nature. Man is unaccommodated, without a home. Lacking the clothes which animals have integrated into their bodies, his improper nakedness forces him to constantly supplement himself in order to make up for a lack. Without these supplements, 'an insufficient humankind hovers not at nothing, but at something short of even that.'¹⁵ Like the sixth sense of reason which Rochester says, in 'A Satyre', man contrived 'to contradict the other five', or the 'bladders of Philosophy' that temporarily keep man afloat as he drowns in his own reason, the need to supplement merely demonstrates man's own lack (57; 9, 21). Rochester's theriophily in 'A Satyre' cleaves strongly to the idea of man's negative exceptionality, and this makes his version of theriophily a fundamental challenge to an anthropocentric vision of the world. Man cannot even centre himself, let alone the world around him.

Rochester questions, in 'A Satyre', not only the propriety of man's place in the world, but also whether he is even identical to himself. This becomes clear in the final line of the poem, which itself borrows one of the most famous claims of the theriophilic tradition. The line reads: 'Man differs more from Man, than Man from Beast' (63; 225). Despite several scholars having meticulously traced Rochester's borrowings (the line comes from Plutarch via Montaigne), an important difference between Rochester's iteration of the line and Montaigne's has been overlooked.¹⁶ Montaigne writes: 'il y a plus de distance de tel à tel homme qu'il n'y a de tel homme à telle beste.'¹⁷ He speaks explicitly of the distance between particular men ('tel homme') and, as Thormählen says, Montaigne's 'contemplation of the distance between an ideal man like Epaminondas and people of Montaigne's own acquaintance led him to this estimation.'¹⁸ In Rochester's 'translation' of this line, however, the particularity disappears. It is no longer men that differ from one another, but the *category* 'man' which differs from itself. Man, here, is not an exceptional person with the potential of an Epaminondas, but a category that cannot contain the differences between particular

¹⁵ Shannon, p. 170.

¹⁶ Thormählen traces the genealogy of this line most clearly, p. 182. See also Griffin, (*Satires Against Man*). The line is from Montaigne's "De l'inegalité qui est entre nous."

¹⁷ 'There is more difference between such a man and such a man, than there is between such a man and such a beast.' Quoted in Thormählen, p. 182.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 182.

men. The category man differs more from itself than a man does from a beast. What is missing here is a category that would allow man to coherently draw a distinction between himself and the beast, and this is precisely because there is no category that can coherently organise man. Rochester's comparison is not anthropocentric because there is no centre to the category man, and man's exceptionality, like his strangeness, is first and foremost an exceptionality from himself. This is the less-than-zero of man's insufficiency that Shannon identifies in *King Lear*.

Rochester's evisceration of the category of man begs the question as to how, or from what position or perspective, it is possible to pass judgment on man without restoring the coherence of this categorisation. Shannon says that both theriophily and what she terms zoography, or writing from the point of view of the animal, look for 'a point of leverage from which to look askance at humankind itself.'¹⁹ In Shannon's account of *King Lear*, this leverage is attained by attending to the sufficiency of animals in comparison to human insufficiency, to the propriety of their coverings to protect them from inclement weather and the impropriety of man's nakedness, and especially to the fact that man seems to need superfluities (of dress, but also of comforts, of diet) in order to be truly human. Shannon claims that the result, in Shakespeare's tragedy, is the bleak image of man as 'a solitary unhappy beast.'²⁰ While Shakespeare's tragic vision removes man from society in order to demonstrate his 'unaccommodated' nature, Rochester's satirical method, addressing man at his most social, uses the figure of the ape or monkey to 'look askance' at man, while simultaneously refusing man a normative viewpoint on himself. 'Tunbridge Wells' and 'Artemiza to Chloe' use the monkey as a figure of pure imitation that reflects man back on himself. Man gets caught in his own reflection, and even sophisticated satirical attacks on man are undermined by the naturally imitative satire of the ape.

Clothed and Chattering: Monkeys and Jackanapes

In two of Rochester's most significant pieces of social satire, 'Tunbridge Wells' and 'A Letter from Artemiza in the Towne to Chloe in the Countrey', it is the ape who embodies the figure of the satirist. Because his satire is no more than pure imitation, however, the ape shows that the satirist is riveted to his own subject. The presence of the imitative ape makes Rochester's satire treat the problem of man's insufficiency and unaccommodated nature differently from the tragic version of the unaccommodated animal Shannon sees in Shakespeare. Rather than showing a naked, insufficient human,

¹⁹ Shannon, p. 133.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 171.

the imitative ape ‘naturally’ wears all of man’s prosthetic accommodations and thus makes man into something ‘naturally’ ridiculous. Man, like the ape, is always-already ridiculous because he is always adding things to himself to try to be something he has no business being. To see how this works, I will first explore ‘Tunbridge Wells’, a satire of the various ridiculous forms of humanity to be found at the popular spa resort. The poem is a tour, guided by a hungover libertine, of the fashionable spa town and its varied clientele. The speaker contemns the manifestations of human vice and folly that he sees, ranging from an awkwardly courting young couple to a group of Irish men whose speech is deemed unworthy of attention. The climax of the poem, however, is the poet’s comparison of a group of soldiers to a ‘beargarden Ape’ (53; 174). At the end of the poem, after the libertine satirist has catalogued the various examples of degenerate mankind he has encountered at the spa town, he makes a significant turn to a comparison between men and animals. The speaker sees a group of common soldiers who, ‘haveing trim’d a Cast off Spavin’d horse’, masquerade as officers (53; 169). When the men have ‘trim’d’ (dressed up or fitted out) their horse and dressed themselves up with ‘scarfe about the Arse, / Coat lin’d with red’, they ‘presume to swell’ (53; 171-2). The soldiers here are ‘unaccommodated’ (in a social, rather than an ontological sense) in that they are deprived of the characteristics that would allow them to make a figure at the Wells, and they attempt to use prostheses in order to better accommodate themselves. At this point in the poem, the libertine satirist who stands in an external, normative position sees through this clothed exteriority. The men appear ridiculous to him because they try (badly) to imitate something they can never be.

As the poem approaches its conclusion, however, this external position of normativity is called into question. Furthermore, the idea that man is ridiculous only in his failure to imitate his betters is replaced by the idea that man is ridiculous because he is always-already imitating, because his unaccommodated nature forces him to use prosthetics to become who he is. This turn comes when the poet compares the soldiers to ‘the beargarden Ape [who] on his Steed mounted/ No longer is a Jackanaps accounted / But is by vertue of his Trumpery then / Call’d by the name of the young Gentleman’ (53; 174-77).²¹ This is a complex comparison. On the face of it, the poet seems to say that the soldiers are as little worthy of being called officers as a clothed ape deserves the appellation ‘young Gentleman’. However, the ape does not merely undergo a (mock)

²¹ The ape that Rochester talks about here is most likely what we would now call a monkey. As Laura Brown and Richard Nash have shown, it was only with Tyson’s anatomical research in the early eighteenth century that English culture became conscious of the specificity of the great ape; see Nash, *Wild Enlightenment: The Borders of Human Identity in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2003) and Laura Brown, *Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes: Humans and Other Animals in the Modern Literary Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010). As Nash notes (p. 17), even Dr. Johnson’s Dictionary still used the terms ape and monkey interchangeably.

transformation from animal to human, but a transformation from ‘Jackanaps’ to ‘Gentleman’. Jackanapes is a term that can be applied to a tame ape, but can also be applied contemptuously to a person who is aping others in a ridiculous way. It thus produces a semantic overlap that confuses the metaphor’s terms of comparison.²² The jackanapes is not simply on the ape side of the ape-man comparison because it is a term that could be equally applied to the soldiers. Both the soldiers and the ape are mere dressed-up jackanapes. Neither man nor ape is naturally accommodated here. Both are unaccommodated animals who are ridiculous in their very natures. The men are forced to swell their shapes to make up for their lack, while the ape, lacking nothing, is an image of natural ridiculousness, a jackanapes before he even puts on his clothes.

The next couplet of ‘Tunbridge Wells’ further demonstrates the oddness of the relation between man and beast in this poem. The speaker exclaims ‘Bless me thought I what thing is man that thus / In all his shapes, he is ridiculous’ (53; 178-9). This exclamation, strikingly, comes directly after the description of the mounted ape and seems to indicate that the poet includes this jackanapes-gentleman within the shapes of mankind.²³ Indeed, Dustin Griffin argues that the poet’s ‘own affinity with the ape, while not openly admitted, seems to be the immediate impulse to the speaker’s final declaration of man’s ridiculousness.’²⁴ What disappears, at this point in the poem, is any normative position from which to judge the difference between man and beast, or the ascendancy of one over the other. This is not theriophily in its standard guise, in which the beast is happier than unhappy man, or in which the beast is a moral exemplar. Here, both man and ape are shapes of man, and even the normative outside (the animal that is suited to his nature) is removed. The ape naturally apes man, and his natural ridiculousness takes away even the privilege of mankind as the only ridiculous animal.

The difficulty of reinstating any normative category after raising the idea that a dressed up ape is one of the shapes of man becomes clear in the final few lines of the poem. Initially, the libertine speaker seems to ventriloquise the standard theriophilic position when he writes that ‘Thrice happy beasts are, who because they be / Of reason void, are so of Foppery’ (54; 182-3). Indeed, the last line of the poem is an encomium on the libertine’s horse who, by ‘doing only things fitt for his nature / Did seem to me, by much, the wiser Creature’ (54; 185-6). This normalising theriophily, however, cannot

²² Ann Richter has argued that what is most ‘characteristic of Rochester’s poetry’ is the way in which ‘a single word... will suddenly move into focus and reveal its possession of a variety of warring meanings.’ See ‘John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester’, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 53 (1967), 47-69 (p. 62). This is what happens with the word ‘Jackanaps’ in this part of ‘Tunbridge Wells’.

²³ Thormählen assumes the stanza break, not present in Love’s edition, divides the ape from the human, and that the ape on horseback is in fact degraded by his human trumpery (263).

²⁴ Griffin, *Satires*, p. 46. David Farley-Hills writes, similarly, that the poem leaves us with ‘not that much to choose between the satirist and the satirized’ (p. 191).

quite do away with the strangeness of the last action of the poem which has the libertine 'so ashamed' of humanity 'that with remorse / I us'd the insolence to mount my horse' (54; 184-5). This action is strange or paradoxical not because the poet puts himself below the level of his horse, even as he mounts him. It is rather that the poet does precisely what the bear-garden ape does. He masquerades as human by getting on a horse. The libertine speaker is caught in the reflective trap of the ape. The bear-garden ape, devoid of reason, seems not at all devoid of foppiness, but seems to be a natural fop, a jackanapes by nature. The libertine's imitation of his behaviour exposes his own 'natural' foppishness.²⁵

In 'Artemiza to Chloe', the appearance of a monkey also exposes the natural foppishness of man. The monkey is the catalyst for a breakdown in the distinction between human speech and animal chatter, between human culture and mere animal mechanistic. Speech, of course, is one of the qualities supposed to definitively separate the human from the animal and, in this poem, Rochester explores the proximity of the relation between poetry (perhaps the most refined, ordered form of speech imaginable) and chatter, mere animal noisemaking. David Farley-Hills argues that Rochester's great achievement in this poem is to represent the teeming chaos of the world within neat poetic form, and thus to counter the chaos of the world with the order of poetry.²⁶ The proximity between the chattering monkey and poetic voice that this poem presents us, however, demonstrates that poetic order is in too close proximity to animal chatter to control, or normalise, the chaos of the world. This is particularly so because this poem questions not only the supposedly human quality of speech, but also whether humans have the kind of intentionality necessary to address the chaos of the world in a purposive and ordered way. Man's position of authority over the world, his ability to make ordered representations of it, is called into question by the imitative monkey.

The related problems of intention and voice are apparent in the form of this poem which consistently ventriloquises the poetic voice by displacing it onto a series of speakers. The poem is a letter written by Artemiza at the request of her country friend Chloe, who wants to know 'what Loves have past / In this lewd Towne, synce you, and I mett last' (64; 32-3). In response, Artemiza narrates the story of her meeting with a fine lady, who in turn narrates the story of the prostitute Corinna. It is thus difficult to tell to what extent Artemiza's account of the fine lady is an answer to Chloe's question, or to what extent Artemiza agrees that the fine lady's discourse is an accurate description of the

²⁵ Kirk Coombe, in *A Martyr for Sin: Rochester's Critique of Polity, Sexuality, and Society* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), argues that it is the fop who is the implied target of all Rochester's satires. Here, as Coombe also notes with regard to other poems, the distinction between the poet's libertine persona and the target fop is reduced to zero.

²⁶ Farley-Hills, 206.

state of love in town. Indeed, much of the criticism about this poem has revolved around a discussion of the reliability of Artemiza as a narrator, and whether or not she represents a normative moral viewpoint.²⁷ This debate has commonly been considered in terms of gender, with the emphasis being placed on Artemiza's position as a female satirist. However, the appearance of the monkey in the middle of the poem means that the problem of a normative moral standpoint in 'Artemiza to Chloe' is also a question of the relation of the animal to the human.

Artemiza begins her account of the town by complaining about the way women there carry on the business of love. She argues that it has become all too mechanical. They have 'to an exact perfection...wrought / The Action *Love*, the Passion is forgott' (65; 62-3). Artemiza complains that, with regard to men, 'e'ne without approving they desire', and this distinction seems to imply a difference between the merely mechanistic form of desire, and the more subjective, internal, or passionate, idea of approval (65; 65). Dustin Griffin argues that the women Artemiza describes are 'only sexual machines'.²⁸ In Artemiza and Chloe, even the organs of perception become confused, as Artemiza writes 'Bovey's a beauty, if some few agree, / To call him soe, the rest to that degree / Affected are, that with their Eares they see' (65; 70-2). The women see with their ears, and it is merely hearing Bovey called a beauty that produces a passion in them. Human desire is not a form of intentional action, but something that confuses the senses and submits entirely to external social demands.

This treatment of desire continues immediately in the next section of the poem, in which Artemiza introduces the fine lady. Here, it is the speaking or voicing of desire that becomes important. This lady has just arrived back in London 'with her humble Knight, / Who had prevayl'd on her, through her owne skill, / At his request, though much against his will, / To come to London' (65; 74-7). The problem of the ventriloquism of desire is evident within this description as the husband speaks the wife's desires as his own. Despite her ability to manipulate her husband into voicing her own desires, this fine lady is, it seems, not herself. She thinks she is the 'alter'dst Creature breathing', is

²⁷ Thormählen summarises this debate succinctly and argues for Artemiza's status as a norm or moral arbiter, rather than an ironised and unreliable narrator (see pp. 104-8). This is a view supported by Gillian Manning, 'Artemiza to Chloe: Rochester's "female" epistle' in *That Second Bottle*, ed. by Nicholas Fisher (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 101-118. For those who see Artemiza as unreliable and an object of satirical scorn, see Griffin, *Satires*; Vieth, 'Toward an Anti-Aristotelian Poetic'; and Howard Weinbrot, 'The Swelling Volume: The Apocalyptic Satire of Rochester's "Letter From Artemisia in the Town to Chloe in the Country"', *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 5 (1972) 19-37.

²⁸ Griffin, *Satires*, 142. Ellenzweig and Kramnick discuss the mechanicity of sexual desire as a feature of Rochester's poetry more generally. Both focus on 'A Ramble in St James's Park'; see Kramnick, *Actions*, and Ellenzweig, 'Hitherto Propertied: Rochester's Aristocratic Alienation and the Paradox of Class Formation in Restoration England' *ELH* 69.3 (2002), 703-725.

‘ridiculously growne’, and, most importantly, her ‘Countrey nakednesse is strangely seene’ (66; 96, 97, 100). This visible nakedness is not a zero-point of humanity, a nature that exists before the cultured wearing of clothes. It is already a kind of clothing and, because of this, the human appears as something already supplemented, clothed even in its nakedness. This explains how the fine lady’s nakedness can be described as a ridiculous growth and alteration. While Shannon sees Shakespeare’s tragic vision reducing man to less than zero, Rochester shows mankind as always, even when naked, wearing more than he ought and thus seeming ridiculous. For the fine lady of ‘Artemiza to Chloe’, moving from country nakedness to the life of the town is not merely a matter of getting some new dresses. She asks Artemiza ‘who are the Men most worne of late?’ (66; 102) A gallant, it seems, is the best way to cover up one’s ‘Countrey nakednesse’. In Rochester’s social world men themselves are prostheses, and sociability is just another supplement to our unaccommodated natures.

The striking thing in ‘Artemiza to Chloe’ is that this sociability is not limited to human interaction. For the fine lady, a monkey can take the place of a gallant. Having launched into a long speech in which she declares her preference for fools over men of wit, she is suddenly ‘forc’d, to cease / Through Want of Breath, not Will, to hold her peace’ (67; 135-6). Once again, a mechanistic imperative overtakes intentionality as breath runs out before speech does. It is at this moment that the fine lady ‘to the Window runns, where she had spy’d / Her much esteemed deare Freind the Monkey ti’d’ and embraces what our narrator Artemiza calls ‘The dirty chatt’ring Monster’ (67; 137-8, 141). It is precisely appropriate that the monkey is tied-up because in the poem it represents the blind conformity to social niceties. The fine lady says to the monkey, ‘Kisse mee, thou curious Miniature of Man; / How odde thou art? How pritty? How Japan? / Oh, I could live, and dye with thee — then on / For halfe an houre in Complement shee runne’ (67; 143-6). The monkey is a miniature of man not only in appearance, but in behaviour. The fine lady’s exclamation, ‘How Japan’, emphasises the monkey’s artificiality. He is a product, like many of the fashionable luxuries imported from Japan.²⁹ In this sense, the monkey is not at all distinct from the society of the town, but is, rather, its most refined expression. This monkey, addressed with ‘fourty smiles, as many Antick bows’, receives all the social formalities (67; 139). He merely reflects them back.

It is important to note that the half-hour speech that the fine lady makes to the monkey is not necessarily a one-way affair. Indeed, more so than her speech to Artemiza, which goes unanswered for the duration of the poem, the fine lady seems precisely to engage in conversation with the chattering monkey. To qualify this engagement with the

²⁹ The *OED* quotes this line of ‘Artemiza to Chloe’ in its definition of ‘Japan’ as ‘belonging to, native to, or produced in Japan...frequent in names of natural or artificial products’. See ‘japan. n.’, meaning C1.

monkey as ‘conversation’ is, of course, to significantly downgrade the faculty of speech and the process of communication. The poem shows, however, that for all the potential of speech, it is most often, even when it flows from the mouths of sophisticated speakers, barely distinguishable from simian chatter. There is, it seems, hardly more than chatter in the thirty minutes of compliments paid to the monkey. Speech, here, is not a glorious faculty that separates man from the animal, but a mere mechanical running-on in which simian chatter and human language become so close as to be indistinguishable. The end of the poem goes so far as to position poetry within the realm of animal chatter, as poetic production itself comes to be mechanised.

As we have already seen, the fine lady’s speech is governed by the outpouring of breath as much as by an intention to create meaning. The rest of the poem consists of her telling a story that answers Chloe’s initial question about the state of love in the town. At the end of this speech, Artemiza comments, ‘Thus she ranne on two houres, some graynes of Sense / Still mixt with Volleys of Impertinence’ (70; 236-7). Just as with the conversation with the chattering monkey, this speech is a running-on that seems to follow its own motion rather than the logic of the ‘graynes of Sense’ it contains. It is the motion of speech or breath rather than reason or intention that keeps it going. We should keep in mind, here, Farley-Hills’s comment that Rochester’s triumph in this poem is to tame such verbal excess with the order of poetry. At the end of this speech, Artemiza’s comments are brief. She tells Chloe that she will stop writing in order to show her ‘pitty’, and that ‘By the next Post such storyes I will tell, / As joyn’d with these, shall to a Volume swell’ (70; 261-2). She ends the versified letter by saying, ‘But you are tyr’d, and soe am I. Farewell’ (70; 264). Artemiza’s position here is in a very uncomfortable proximity to the fine lady and her chattering monkey. For one thing, like the lady whose speech makes up most of this poem, Artemiza sends out a discourse that does not elicit any response. Also, like her, she seems to stop in an arbitrary spot, because she is tired and to show pity, not because she has answered the question that Chloe has asked.³⁰ Furthermore, in saying that she will have told more stories by next post, Artemiza seems to get caught up in a rhythm of speech dictated by the external form of the postal schedule, rather than by subjective intention. Her stories are not compiled on the basis of a coherent literary form, nor are they dictated by ‘graynes of Sense’. Instead, she merely writes until the next post tells her it is time to send off a letter. In producing a swelling volume of stories that seem to be joined to each other by the merest accident, Artemiza shows that even her tightly controlled poetic effort is based upon, and subject to, the swelling chatter of the town. Poetry itself, and not just

³⁰ Dustin Griffin, in *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), says that Rochester’s arbitrary conclusion to the letter ‘mocks the very idea of conclusion’ (p. 103).

polite conversation, swells and is distorted out of shape to the extent that it becomes indistinguishable from animal chatter. The imitative monkey catches the satiric speaker in its reflection just as easily as he catches the fine lady s/he mocks.

Conclusion: Satire and Animality

In the midst of a literary quarrel with the mediocre Sir Carr Scroope, Rochester makes the overlapping of cultured man and beast central to the genre of satire itself. He writes to Scroope:

[I]n thy person we more clerely see
That *Satyr's* of Divine Authority
For God made one on Man when he made Thee
To show there are some Men, as there are Apes,
Fram'd for mere sport, who differ but in shapes. (106; 4-8)

The original satirist, here, is God, who stands definitively outside of the dubious distinction between man and ape, and the butt of the divine joke is man himself.³¹ These lines contain a positive theory about the origin and legitimacy of satire, but one in which satire, even as it becomes divinely sanctioned, exists under erasure. This is so because of the strange position of the ape. From the divine perspective, apes are a satire on man, but a satire that man can never quite grasp. Ellenzweig reads theriophily (in both Montaigne and in Rochester) as rooted in 'the indifference of the Epicurean Gods.'³² Sceptical theriophily, she argues, insists that God (or the gods) gives man no special treatment. In Rochester's attack on Scroope, however, God is not indifferent. He makes man the butt of a divine joke, and part of the joke is that he cannot disentangle himself from the object that mocks him. In the epilogue to 'Love in the Dark', Rochester reiterates the naturally imitative character of the ape, writing that the 'Ape's mock face / By near resembling Man do[es] Man disgrace.'³³ The ape's face is an *a priori* mockery. It mocks man simply by resembling him, without even having to aspire to equality. In Rochester's private correspondence, there is a similar attitude to the relation between man and monkey as to that we have been exploring in his poetry. In a letter to Henry Savile dated June 18-25 1678, Rochester writes that now he has grown 'superstitious' he thinks it 'a fault to laugh at the monkey we have here when I compare

³¹ See Ken Robinson, 'The Art of Violence in Rochester's Satire' in *English Satire and the Satiric Tradition*, ed. by Claude Rawson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp. 93-108. Robinson writes that in this poem Rochester suggests that 'God acted as satirist when he created Sir Carr Scroope' (p. 101).

³² Ellenzweig, *Fringes*, p. 43.

³³ Rochester, 'Epilogue to Love in the Dark, As it was spoke by Mr. Haines', 120; 26-7.

its condition with humankind.’³⁴ The monkey’s similarity to man is no longer a cause for mirth, but for religious (‘superstitious’) meditation on the state of ‘human affairs.’³⁵ As an object of mirth, rage, or serious meditation, then, the monkey reflects, and reflects on, the human and its affairs.

The ape is thus an important figure both in Rochester’s satire, and in his theriophily. As the satirical animal, the ape is at once evidence of satire’s divine status, and a guarantee that man cannot find a position external to himself from which to construct a satire in which he would not be always-already included. That satire is of divine authority seems to authorise satire, to make its violence and rage lawful. At the same time, though, the very evidence we are given that satire has divine authority is that man is little different from an ape, that his distinction is purely one of ‘shape’ or exteriority. The divine authority of satire thus scuppers its use by men as a way to draw a distinction between man and beast, or to write from a normative position which would make that distinction visible. In this sense, the significance of the animal in Rochester’s poetry is not only to allow him, within his satires, to comment on the impossibility of distinguishing between civilised man and ape; the proximity between man and animal also stands, for him, at the heart of the paradoxical genre of satire itself. Satire is divine because of this proximity, and yet precisely because of this the satirist, to the extent that he is a man, is always-already the butt of his own joke.

³⁴ *The Letters of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. by Jeremy Treglown, (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1980), p. 194.

³⁵ *Letters*, p. 195.