

**Filling Up the Space Between
Mankind and Ape: Racism, Speciesism
and the Androphilic Ape**

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I believe it will be very difficult, or rather, impossible, for a man, who is accustomed to divide things according to specific marks, not individual differences, to draw the line betwixt the Orang Outang and the dumb persons among us. (Monboddo I, 297)

As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called animal offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say the bordercrossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself by the name that he believes he gives himself. (Derrida 381)

Race and culture have been analyzed and critiqued as “highly improper” fictions and metaphors during the past few decades of critical race theory and postcolonial theory (Young 53–54, Hall 443). In this article I want to turn to the production of two other contested notions, the “human” and the “animal,” with a focus on their various significations during the eras of slavery and Abolition. These terms predate the category of race as it is now used in critical race theory; indeed, they lay the ground for the deployment of race as concept and construct during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Numerous natural histories of the period are concerned with the taxonomization of human and animal, either in order to produce clear distinctions between these two contested categories, or to blur those distinctions. My discussion will centre on selected key works of the period, including Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon’s voluminous *Natural History*, published between 1748 and 1804, and Edward Long’s now notorious *History of Jamaica*, published in 1774. I want to focus on these two texts because of their enduring

cultural impact, and because in them the mutual dependence of notions of race and notions of the human and the animal emerge with particular starkness. As is well-known, Long is engaged in identifying and characterizing different species of humans: following this line of logic (or illogic), I am going to argue that race-thinking is a form of speciesism that is highly invested in notions of the animal and the human. Indeed, I want to insist that it is impossible to discuss the history of race and racism without taking account of formulations of species distinction in which the putative boundaries between animal and human were (and continue to be) asserted with varying degrees of emphasis.¹ Humanness is figured as a continuum in *The History of Jamaica*, and both Long and Buffon use spatial metaphors to describe the gradations by which man ascends from brute to civilized. If we were to adapt George Orwell's ironic observation about equality in *Animal Farm*, we might say that for Buffon and Long, all humans are human, but some are more human than others. Human, as it will be clear, is a qualitative term: it is interpellative, performative, and ideologically contingent. It is, as Giorgio Agamben notes and as I discuss below, not a specific identity but the ability to recognize oneself as human (26).

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century natural historians may have argued over where to fix the border between human and animal, but as Marjorie Garber elucidates in her essay "Heavy Petting," a new breed (so to speak) of "critical anthropomorphists" is currently engaged in interrogating why it is that "science" insists on the existence of a fixed boundary between human beings and the rest of the living world. "Indeed," writes Garber, "as one researcher points out, the desire to establish a firm borderline somewhere, anywhere, between humans and other beasts—a desire inherited from both Judeo-Christian religion and the philosophy of Descartes—has resulted in a kind of scientific gerrymandering, a constant redrawing of boundaries to suit the intellectual politics of the time" (16). The scientific manipulation of species boundaries has, as Garber intuits, a long history that extends back to Descartes and beyond. In *A Discourse on the Method* (1637), Descartes claims that both animal and human bodies are like a kind of "moving machine," and he insists that despite the visual similarities between them, it is nonetheless

Filling Up the Space Between Mankind and Ape

possible to distinguish an animal from a human “machine.” According to Descartes, this is because animals do not use language as humans do, and because their actions are mechanical, not conscious: “This shows not only that animals have less reason than man, but that they have none at all.” Descartes concludes: “they have no mental powers whatsoever... it is nature which acts in them, according to the disposition of their organs; just as we see that a clock consisting only of ropes and springs can count the hours and measure time more accurately than we can in spite of all our *wisdom*” (47–48).²

Visual similarities notwithstanding, Descartes insists on the internal differences between animals and humans. Still, if Garber is correct that anthropomorphism is a kind of transference in which human properties are transferred onto animals (in her essay, dogs), her formulation nevertheless presupposes that there is such a thing as a “human” property that is defined and recognizable and ready to be “transferred” from human to non-human.³ Earlier commentators such as Buffon and Long are engaged in debating precisely these kinds of questions: what is a human, for example, or how is it possible to distinguish human from animal, or how and where should species distinctions be drawn? (cf Monboddo 1: 297, quoted above).

Accordingly, Buffon and Long set out to delimit the ways in which animals and humans may be perceived, understood, and spoken about. In the course of their discussions, both of them use the body of the ape as an example, and like other eighteenth-century natural historians, both are fascinated and troubled by this borderline, hybrid creature that proves so difficult to define with any certainty. It would certainly be possible to argue that Buffon and Long (as well as other key commentators such as Rousseau and Monboddo) are engaged in the discursive practice of what Donna Haraway calls simian orientalism, whereby the primate body is both “a map of power” and “an intriguing kind of political discourse” (10). Haraway lays out the “transformative operations” that constitute the project of simian orientalist discourse:

Simian orientalism means that western primatology has been about the construction of the self from the raw material of the

other, the appropriation of nature in the production of culture, the ripening of the human from the soil of the animal, the clarity of white from the obscurity of color, the issue of man from the body of gender, the emergence of mind by the activation of body.... Primatology is a western discourse, and it is a sexualized discourse. (11)

As Haraway suggests in her inclusion of “the obscurity of color” amongst the binaries listed here, simian orientalism is a thoroughly racialized discourse, in which the boundaries of a gendered, white western self are secured through the construction of a dark, furry, ape “other.” According to Haraway, nature and culture as well as sex and gender mutually construct each other, so that one pole of each dualism cannot exist without the other (12). And yet, the orang-utan in Buffon and Long is neither othered nor gendered in exactly the ways one might expect, for while these two authors pay close attention to the similarities and relations between orang-utans and people of African origin (both authors are particularly interested in the putative visual resemblances between the two), neither of them argues that negroes are animals. If Linnaeus had dealt a blow to human pride by placing man among the primates as *Homo sapiens*, then it was at least possible to exploit this classificatory proximity by insisting that some humans were indeed more human than other, different species of human.⁴ Long’s speciesism similarly relies on a particular construction of the animal as sub-intelligent, untamed, savage and so on, but it is also based upon an acceptance of the proximity and similarity of animal and human, to the extent that Long insists that the orang-utan *is* human, and that negroes belong to this particular human species.

Like the mulatto, the ape exerted (indeed, continues to exert) a mixture of fascination and horror on white European (human) observers, perceived as it was/is to be unstable, hybrid, borderline, border-crossing.⁵ As Diana Fuss observes, the human may be one of our most elastic, mutating fictions. The dividing lines between humans and nonhumans have been repeatedly re-drafted to accommodate new systems of classification, which in turn represent different political agendas. “Sameness

and not difference, provokes our greatest anxiety (and our greatest fascination) with the ‘almost human’” Fuss writes (2, 3). Long’s negro and ape exert precisely this fascination, stretching as they do the border between animal and human to reveal its elasticity and contingency. In order to understand the imbrication of constructions of race and species, it will be useful to consider some of the discursive functions served by the figure of the orang-utan in the works of Buffon and Long. Why is the negro retained as (mostly) human? What kinds of displacements occur from the humanity-conferring European observer to the African and the ape? Let me reassert that my exploration of these and other questions is informed by my assumption that racism and speciesism are discursively dependent and inseparable, sharing as they do the same historical and ideological trajectory. In that case, it is impossible to analyze and to discuss notions of race, past and present without also engaging with the deployment of the animal as category and concept.

“Everyone knows of the turmoil into which European thought was thrown by the discovery of the great apes of Africa and South-East Asia,” writes Keith Thomas in his *Man and the Natural World*: indeed, “since Vesalius [1514–64] anatomists had been embarrassed by their inability to find some respect in which the human brain differed in structure from that of the higher animals” (129). When Edward Tyson dissected an infant chimpanzee (which he called an orang-utan) in 1699, he demonstrated its essential resemblance to the human form. Prior to that in 1641, Nicholas Tulp had included in his *Observationum medicarum libri tres* an image of “Homo sylvestris – Orang-outang.” Just over a century later, in his “epoch-making” tenth edition of the *Systema Naturae* (1758), Linnaeus divided animals into six classes including a new group, *mammalia*, a category that joined humans to the animal kingdom (Schiebinger 383–84). Earlier editions had grouped humans in the order *Anthropomorpha* along with apes, monkeys and sloths, but *Anthropomorpha* was changed to *primates* in 1758. This term was greeted with resistance by natural historians such as Blumenbach who continued to insist on separating humans and apes into distinct orders. Buffon was amongst those who complained that Linnaeus’s order *Anthropomorpha* lumped humans together with apes and sloths: in his opinion this “vi-

olence” was wreaked on the natural scheme of things simply because “there was some small relationship between the number of nipples or teeth of these animals or some slight resemblance in the form of their horns” (qtd. in Schiebinger 388).⁶

Other contemporaries of Linnaeus were less resistant to his taxonomical “lumping together” of man with animals. In his *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men* (1755), Jean Jacques Rousseau wonders whether

various animals similar to men, which travellers have without much observation taken for Beasts, either because of some differences they noticed in their outward conformation, or merely because these Animals did not speak, might not indeed be genuine Savage men whose race, dispersed in the woods in ancient times, had had no occasion to develop any of its virtual faculties, had not acquired any degree of perfection, and was still in the primitive state of Nature. (205)

It is not easy to distinguish between men and beasts and monsters, Rousseau concludes, since the only men “we” Europeans know are Europeans (209). “I say that when such Observers assert about a given Animal that it is a man and about another that it is a beast,” he writes, “they will have to be believed; but it would be most simpleminded to rely in this matter on coarse travellers about whom one might sometimes be tempted to ask the same question they pretend to answer about other animals” (211).

Like Rousseau, James Burnet, Lord Monboddo cites the account of a traveller who claims that “the Orang Outang is not a man, but a species betwixt man and monkey” (1, 289; Rousseau 205), and like Rousseau, he claims that since the orang-utan possesses “the organs of pronunciation,” it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between orang-utans and men (Monboddo 299, Rousseau 207). Whereas Buffon, like Descartes, makes the faculty of speech the essence of humanity, Monboddo asserts that “articulation is not natural to man;” rather, it is “an artificial operation.” Since language is invented and neither innate nor natural, there must have been a time when men did not speak. In that case, asks

Filling Up the Space Between Mankind and Ape

Monboddo, what is the “distinguishing mark of difference” between men and orang-utans?

I desire any philosopher to tell me the specific difference betwixt an Orang Outang sitting at table ... and one of our dumb persons; and, in general I believe it will be very difficult, or rather impossible, for a man, who is accustomed to divide things according to specific marks, not individual differences, to draw the line betwixt the Orang Outang and the dumb persons among us. They have both their organs of pronunciation, and both shew signs of intelligence by their actions, with this difference, no doubt, that our dumb persons, having been educated among civilized men, have more intelligence. (293, 297)

Rousseau and Monboddo are aligned on one side of what Laura Brown has called “an anxious, even virulent debate on the topic of alterity,” whereby the notion of ‘man’ is problematized by its juxtaposition with or inclusion in other categories of being. These debates, as Brown rightly observes, imaginatively absorb one dimension of the European encounter with the non-European, while “the exploration of being in relation to humanity” involves a sustained (and sometimes uncomfortable) “intimacy with alterity” (223). Philosophers and natural historians of the period respond to this intimacy in different ways. For some, ‘man’s’ lack of physiological advantage necessitates the identification of something *within* which marks his superiority to the animals among whom he has been taxonomized. This is Buffon’s “principle of thought,” which, he declares, apes do not possess, even though they might closely resemble humans (9:138). Long similarly differentiates orang-utans from certain (white) humans by arguing that they can neither think nor speak, even though they possess tongues and brains that look identical to human tongues and brains (2.363). Both philosophers seem to be following Descartes, who asserts that the difference between men and animals is marked by animals’ inability to use words, which is itself a sign of their lack of reason. “[W]e can ... determine the difference between men and animals by these two means,” Descartes insists, “For it is a very remarkable fact that there are no men so dull-witted and stupid, not

even madmen, that they are incapable of stringing together different words, and composing them into utterances ... and conversely, there is no other animal, no matter how perfect and well endowed by birth it may be, that can do anything similar" (47). "Surely," retorted Linnaeus in a note to the *Systema Naturae*, "Descartes never saw an ape" (qtd. in Agamben 23).

In *The Open. Man and Animal*, Giorgio Agamben identifies the act of differentiating between human and animal as *constitutive* of humanity, and he gives a detailed description of the crucially humanizing function of this distinction-recognition. It is worth quoting his account in full:

The division of life into vegetal and relational, organic and animal, animal and human ... passes first of all as a mobile border within living man, and without this intimate caesura the very decision of what is human and what is not would probably not be possible. It is possible to oppose man to other living things, and at the same time to organize the complex—and not always edifying—economy of relations between men and animals, only because something like an animal life has been separated within man, and only because his distance and proximity to the animal have been measured and recognized first of all in the closest and most intimate place ... Man has no specific identity other than the *ability* to recognize himself ... to define the human not through any *nota characteristic*, but rather through his self-knowledge, means that man is the being which recognizes itself as such, that *man is the animal that must recognize himself as human to be human* ... Those who ... do not recognize themselves in the position that the *Systema* has assigned to man should apply the *nosce te ipsum* to themselves; in not knowing how to recognize themselves as man, they have placed themselves among the apes ... *Homo sapiens*, then, is neither a clearly defined species nor a substance; it is, rather, a machine or device for producing the recognition of the human. In line with the taste of epoch, the anthropogenic (or ... an-

Filling Up the Space Between Mankind and Ape

thropological) machine is an optical one ... constructed of a series of mirrors in which man, looking at himself, sees his own image always already deformed in the features of an ape. *Homo* is a constitutively 'anthropomorphous' animal (that is 'resembling man,' according to the term Linnaeus constantly uses until the tenth edition of the *Systema* who must recognize himself in a non-man in order to be human ... In Linnaeus's optical machine, whoever refuses to recognize himself in the ape, becomes one: to paraphrase Pascal, *qui fait l'homme, fait le singe* [he who acts the man, acts the ape]. (26–27)

Linnaeus' category of *homo sapiens* is not a taxonomic given, notes Agamben, but an imperative, the *sapiens* summarizing the old adage, *nosce te ipsum*, to know oneself. Linnaeus does indeed insist that "[i]t is the exclusive property of man, to contemplate and to reason on the great book of nature," and that only man is able to "form just conclusions from such things as present themselves to his senses, which can only consist of bodies merely natural. Hence the first step of wisdom is to know these bodies and to be able, by those marks imprinted on them by nature, to distinguish them from each other, and to affix to every object its proper name" (Linnaeus, 1802 2–3). Unlike Monboddo, Linnaeus expresses no doubt about the readability of the marks imprinted on bodies by nature, so that to be human in this context does indeed involve acknowledging humanity and animality through acts of looking. Linnaeus and Monboddo's "marks," as well as Agamben's "optical machine," suggest that humanity as such is an identity produced in the field of vision, in much the same way that gender and race are performatively constituted through looking and enunciation (we might be reminded of Fanon's "Look! A Negro!," Butler's "It's a girl! ... It's a lesbian—and now we might add "It's a human! ... It's an ape!"). The human, as Agamben suggests, is merely that which *sees* itself as such, while *homo sapiens* is the optical machine that produces this recognition, both through a self-knowledge of the animal life separated within man, and by gazing upon the deformed mirror of the non-human Other in which the trace of the so-called human is nevertheless contained.⁷

As we know, what confounded natural historians of this period, and what they sought to explain by recourse to the internal and metaphysical, was the discomforting visual similarity of animal and human forms in the body of the ape. Buffon accordingly acknowledges the “great picture of resemblances, in which the living universe presents itself as but one family,” before passing swiftly and somewhat anxiously to the “differences, wherein each species claims a separate place” (9:134). It is the ape in particular that concerns Buffon, since his body “appears to be most perfect, that is, approaches nearest to man.” In spite of these similarities, Buffon insists that apes

require very accurate observations to distinguish one from the other ... We shall find in the history of the orang-outang, that if we should only attend to the figure, we might look on that animal as the one in which the ape species begins, or, that in which the human species ends; because, except the intellect, he is not deficient in any one thing which we possess, and because, in his body, he differs less from man than from the other animals to which we have given the denomination of apes. (9:135)

Like many commentators (including Descartes), Buffon gets around the problem of morphological similarity by insisting that apes are only mimicking humanity, even though they might *look* human (which would seem to imply that apes must be *looking at* humans in order to imitate them). Thus his acknowledgement of the physiological likeness of man and orang-utan is qualified by an important caveat: “The mind, thought and speech ... do not depend on the form or organization of the body. Those are gifts bestowed on man alone. Though the orang-outang, neither speaks nor thinks, he has a body, limbs, senses, a brain, and a tongue, entirely similar to those of man. He can counterfeit every motion of the human species, and yet cannot perfectly perform one single act” (9:135–36). Thanks to his invocation of the divinely bestowed gift of intelligence, Buffon can safely conclude that “whatever resemblance there is between the Hottentot and the ape, the interval between them is immense, since the former is endowed with the facul-

ties of thinking and speaking” whereas “the ape ... has not the necessary principle [of thought]” (9:138). In that case, the ape “is in fact, no other than a real brute, wearing externally a human masque, but internally destitute of thought, and every other attribute which constitutes the human species” (9:149).

Apes thoughtlessly ape humans according to Buffon, just as Long will argue that negroes ape white people, a capacity for mimicry that constitutes their taxonomic danger and, ultimately, the inferiority that necessitates the interval between animal and human.⁸ Whereas Buffon’s ape remains no more than “a real brute, wearing ... a human masque,” Long’s simian is not so sharply distinguished from certain humans, even at the formal level of his text’s organization. Unlike Buffon, whose analysis of “The Nomenclature of Apes” is situated at a five-volume remove from his discussion of varieties of human species (the former occurs in volume nine of the ten-volume history, whereas the “Varieties” chapter is included in volume 4), Long does not deal with orang-utans in a separate chapter or section; instead, he slyly segues from discussing the apparently bestial physical form of negroes into a description of orang-utan behaviour, before concluding that there is not much difference between the two.

In fact, Long has already asserted that

there are extremely potent reasons for believing that the White and the Negroe are two distinct species. A certain philosopher of the present age avers ‘none but the blind can doubt it.’ It is certain, that this idea enables us to account for those diversities of feature, skin and intellect, observable among mankind; which cannot be accounted for in any other way, without running into a thousand absurdities. (2:336)

Long’s emphasis on the visual is resonant of Linnaeus and Monboddo’s “marks” and Agamben’s “optical machine,” whereby it is presupposed that the differences between humanity and animality are produced through the (white subject’s) humanizing perception of them. Long accordingly inventorizes the visual “marks” of bestiality in black people: their “covering of wool, like the bestial fleece, instead of hair ... the

roundness of their eyes, the figure of their ears, tumid nostrils, flat noses, invariable thick lips and general large size of the female nipples, as if adapted by nature to the peculiar conformation of their children's mouths." Their bodies are infested by black lice, since "some say, that almost all animals have their peculiar sort [of lice]," their smell is "bestial or fetid," their manners are also "bestial," they have no moral sensations and do not cultivate the land, while "their barbarity to their children debases their nature even below that of brutes" (2:352–54). Only a few insignificant tribes know anything about mechanic arts or manufacture, "and even these, for the most part, are said to perform their work in a very bungling and slovenly manner, perhaps not better than an *orang-outang* might, with a little pains, be brought to do" (2:355). "When we reflect on the nature of these men, and their dissimilarity to the rest of mankind, must we not conclude that they are a difference species of the same *genus*?" asks Long. After all, other animals are divided into myriad subordinate species and kinds, so why conclude that man alone is "undiversified"? Horses, for example, resemble men, as do gibbons or orang-utans, which have some similarity to the "ape-kind" but are closer to men in their physical make-up (2:356, 2:358).

After quoting Buffon and Tyson's descriptions of orang-utans, and citing (as Buffon does) La Brosse's observation that orang-utans sometimes try to rape negro women (Long 2:360), Long concludes that

when [the orang-utan] is compared with the ape, baboon, or monkey, he is found to have far more conformity to man than to those animals. The Indians are therefore excusable for associating him with the human race, under the appellation of oran-outang, or *wild man*, since he resembles man much more than he does the ape, or any other animal ... If he is a creature *sui generis*, he fills up the space between mankind and the ape, as this [i.e. the ape] and the monkey tribe supply the interval between the oran-outang and quadrupeds. (2:363)

"Ludicrous as the opinion may seem," Long continues, "I do not think that an oran-outang husband would be any dishonour to an Hottentot

female.” Again, the ensuing “description” emphasizes the Hottentot’s bestial features, since, Long asserts, “they are more like beasts than men . . . Has the Hottentot from this portrait a more manly figure than the oran-outang?” He concludes: “That the oran-outang and some races of black men are very nearly allied is, I think, more than probable; Mr. Buffon supports his deductions, tending to the contrary, by no decisive proofs” (2: 364–65). In sharp disagreement with Buffon, Long consigns Hottentots and “some races of black” men to Agamben’s mobile border, the intimate caesura where “man” and “animal” are “very nearly allied.” According to Long, they are *like* each other in external appearance, and what is more, they *like* each other sexually. Orang-utans and negroes “have the most intimate connexion and consanguinity,” Long asserts: “The amorous intercourse between them may be frequent; the Negroes themselves bear testimony that such intercourses actually happen; and it is certain, that both races agree perfectly well in lasciviousness of disposition” (2:370).

“Prominent in the discursive representation of the ape was the trope of interspecies miscegenation, in which the male ape, usually the orangutang, is said to carry off the female African, often described as a ‘Hottentot,’” observes Laura Brown in *Fables of Modernity*. “In eighteenth-century England,” she continues, “the sexual encounter of ape and human is a staple trope in the fable of the nonhuman being, offering a fertile instance in which a radical alterity is countered by a sudden intimacy” (236, 238). Brown argues that this “leap of affinity” generates the anxiety to separate European from non-European, and she is surely correct to note the reciprocal relation between what she characterizes as “attacks” on human superiority, and the development of “racialist” thinking (239, 240). All the same, to ascribe “radical alterity” to the “leap” of affinity between human and ape may be a contemporary retrospective projection, since eighteenth-century commentators seem fairly uniform in their acceptance of the “likeness” between ape and human. Furthermore, the persistence of the so-called ape rape theme in this period is symptomatic and not simply causal; in other words, it does not merely generate an anxiety, but it reflects one that is pre-existing and entrenched.

The physiological similarities between negroes and orang-utans, along with the miscegenated unions cited by Long, Buffon, Monboddo and others, lead Long to conclude that “an orang-outang ... is a human being, *quoad* his intellect; he has in form a much nearer resemblance to the Negroe race, than the latter bear to white men.”⁹ This is part of the divine plan, since in his infinite wisdom, God has diversified the human species according to varying degrees of intellectual capability, positioning orang-utans as “the lag of human kind,/Nearest to brutes, by God design’d” (2:371).¹⁰ In the human hierarchy Long assembles, orang-utans constitute a “race,” a “kind,” a “type of man” (2:375).¹¹ “Guiney Negroes” are one step up; and from there “the human” ascends into lighter shades of complexion, and therefore more advanced degrees of “humanity,” “until we mark its utmost limit of perfection in the pure White.” Long expresses his confidence in God’s racial design, insisting that “every member of the creation is wisely fitted and adapted to the certain uses, and confined within the certain bounds, to which it was ordained by the Divine Fabricator,” and that black people have an allotted “measure,” a “space, or degree, beyond which they are not destined to pass” which “discriminate[es] them from the rest of men, not in *kind* but in *species*” (2:375; original emphasis). It may be possible to teach orang-utans to speak, since there are examples of talking dogs and learned horses; indeed, orang-utans might even surpass Africans in their intellectual attainments, as “Guiney Negroes” have shown no sign of increased civilization in spite of their protracted contact with white men. And yet, “we cannot pronounce them [Guiney Negroes] insusceptible of civilization,” Long concludes, “since even apes have been taught to eat, drink, repose and dress, like men” (2:376).

The racism of Long’s hypothesis hardly needs pointing out, and yet his argument is nonetheless somewhat extraordinary. Rather than banishing negroes from the category of the human to that of the animal he has broadened the former in order to include orang-utans as a race or species of men with whom negroes have much in common, both physically and ontologically. To return to Agamben and Derrida, assigning the space or degree or limit of civilization to orang-utans and negroes alike constitutes and consolidates Long’s white European humanity and

superiority. If this is a version of Haraway's "simian orientalism," it is one in which the white self is secure in his assumption that the dark, furry Other under scrutiny will challenge neither the representation of it, nor the space that has been allotted to it in God's grand design. What we see here, then, is a paradoxical undermining—or at least, a revising—of the limits of "the human" on the basis of the putative visual similarities between negro and orang-utan, and the neurotic (because so frequently repeated) insistence on the miscegenetic unions between these two varieties or species of man. Surely the ascription of orang-utan lust for negro women, along with the latter's welcoming of the former's "libidinous and shameless" embrace is one of the most heinous displacements in Long's *History*, effectively erasing as it does the spectre of white men "carrying off" negro slave women for forced sex (2:383)? Strikingly, Long claims in a footnote that when "[a negro] lady conceived by her [orang-utan] paramour," it prompted the extension to women of the law against bestiality.¹² Long's contention that "the oran-outang and some races of black men are very nearly allied" contains a highly significant biological assumption—namely that black women and orang-utans are capable of procreating (2:365)—whereas, of course, he notoriously argues that mulattoes "produce no offspring, though in appearance under no natural incapacity of so doing with a different connexion" (2:336).¹³

If Long's repeatedly invoked spectre of an orang-utan making off with a black woman is a displacement of white male sexual violence against black women, then perhaps herein lies the reason behind his discursive retention of "the Negro" as "human." To consign "the Negro" to a *genus* of animals would put many (perhaps most?) white men in Jamaica on the wrong side of the law against bestiality, while the mixed offspring of such unions would also throw white European species-status into doubt. Is this why Long humanizes the orang-utan while simultaneously bestializing the negro? At the very least, his discursive move suggests that human and animal are indeed mobile, elastic fictions or borders. Like race, they are highly problematic ideological tropes with troubled histories, and we might do well to continue subjecting such taxonomies and the assumptions by which they are underpinned to sustained and careful critique.

Notes

- 1 “Speciesism” is the term Singer uses to denote a prejudice or bias in favour of the interests of one’s own species against members of other species. He argues that objections to racism and sexism apply equally to speciesism (6).
- 2 See also Fudge et al. for a brief discussion of the conundrum of “the human” in Descartes’ philosophy (3).
- 3 Although she provides a fascinating account of Freud’s dogs, in this instance, Garber does not seem to be using the term “transference” in a strictly psychoanalytic sense. Still, it would be interesting to consider the unconscious fantasies that are contained in anthropomorphic projections.
- 4 See Haraway, “[Linnaeus] is noted [by contemporary scientists] for placing human beings in a taxonomic order of nature with other animals, i.e. for taking a large step away from Christian assumptions. Linnaeus placed ‘man’ in his taxonomic order of Primates as *Homo sapiens*, in the same genus with *Homo troglodytes*, a dubious and interesting creature illustrated as a hairy woman in Linnaeus’s probable source” (9).
- 5 See, for example, Wiseman: “What is an ape? This question troubled the natural philosophers of the Enlightenment just as much as the early modern mythographers because the ape was where the border between the human and its others was both maintained and dissolved” (215).
- 6 I am indebted to Schiebinger’s account of Linnaeus’s taxonomies. See especially 384–88; see also Thomas 130.
- 7 Derrida reverses this humanity-constituting gaze in his essay, “The animal that therefore I am (more to follow),” by considering himself naked from the vantage point of the look of a cat.
- 8 The first citation of the verb “to ape” meaning ‘to imitate’ is 1632 in OED, although the phrase “to play the ape” is cited as early as c.1230.
- 9 See Buffon 9: 156, Monboddo 1:335.
- 10 Long is quoting Matthew Prior.
- 11 Buffon also refers to apes as a “race” or “variety.” See Buffon (9.199).
- 12 This is still in the Jamaican constitution, along with “buggery.”
- 13 See Long’s reference to the “goatish embraces” of “some black or yellow *quasheba*,” resulting in the production of “a tawney breed” (2:328).

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Filling Up the Space Between Mankind and Ape

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