

How not to be human

APE IN SCIENCE FICTION

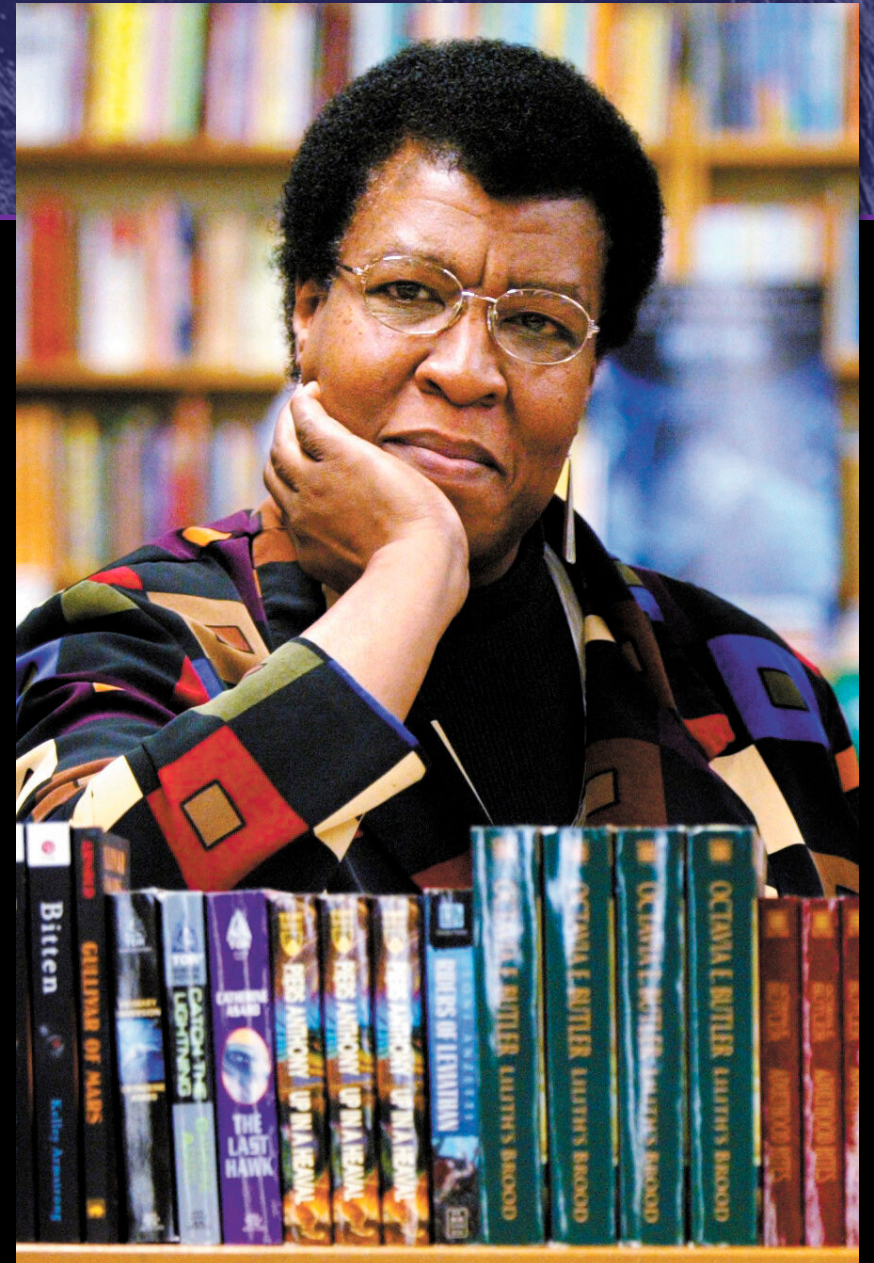
Jim Endersby



GRESHAM
COLLEGE

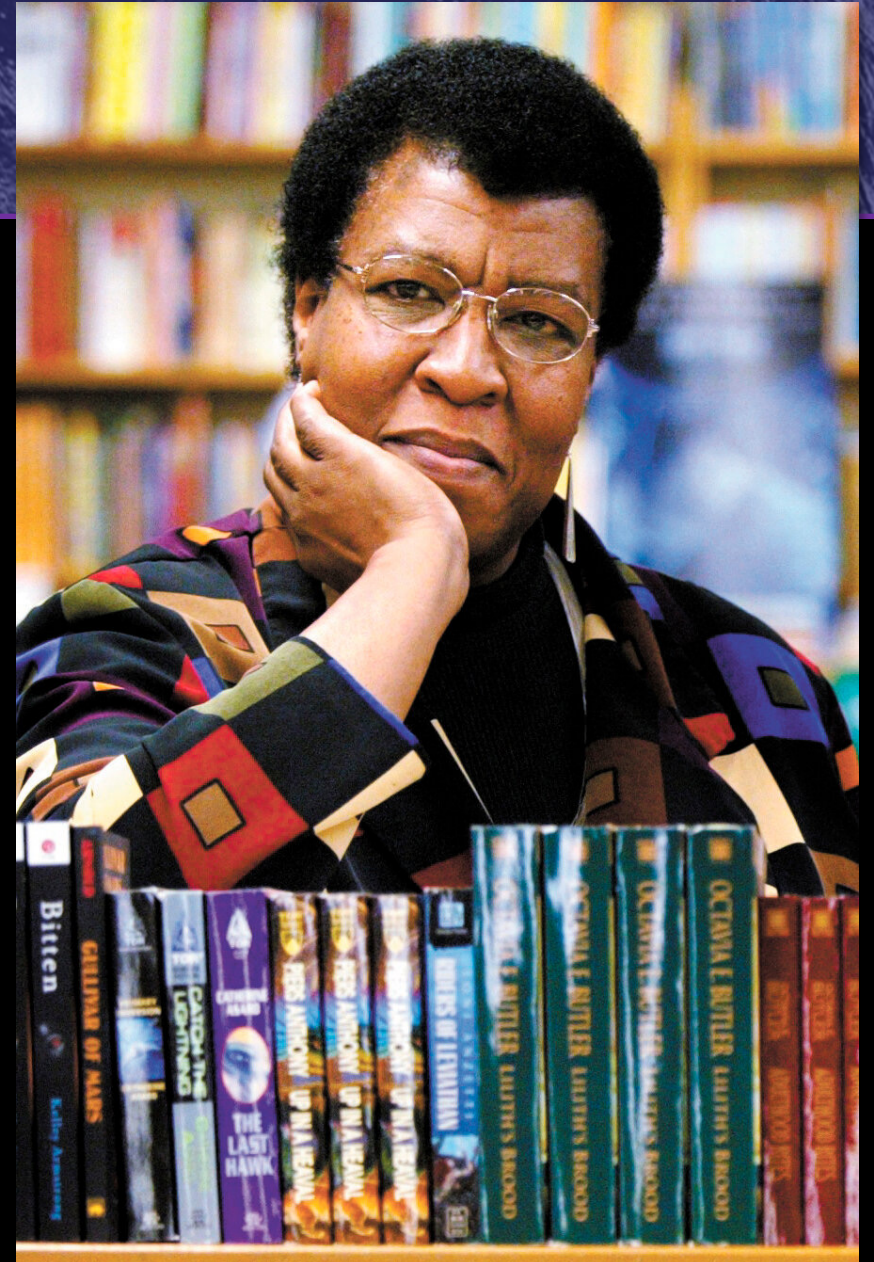
What use is science fiction?

Octavia Butler (1947–2006) reported that African-American people often asked her “what good is science fiction to Black people?”. This was her response:



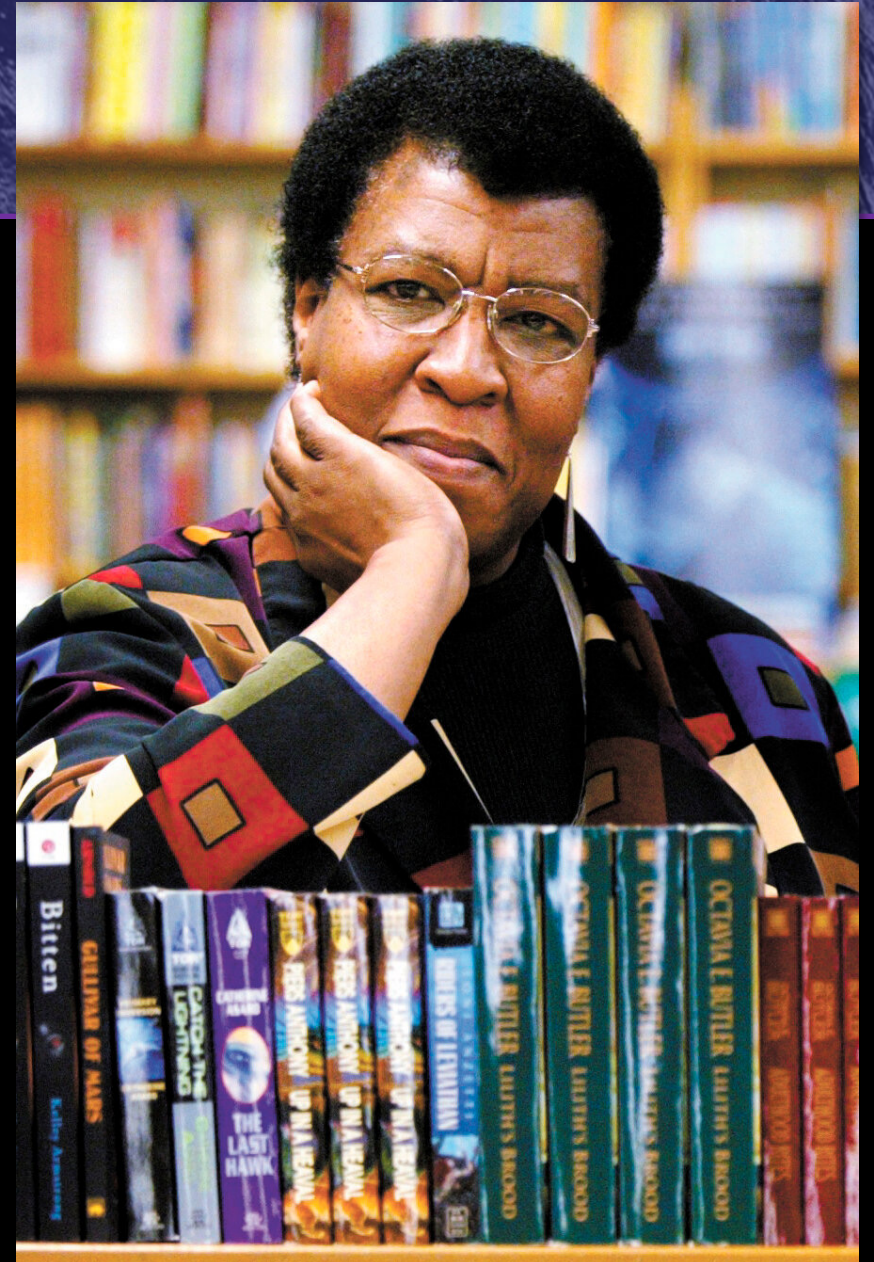
Octavia Butler

“What good is science fiction’s thinking about the present, the future, and the past? What good is its tendency to warn or to consider alternative ways of thinking and doing? What good is its examination of the possible effects of science and technology, or social organization and political direction?



Octavia Butler

“At its best, science fiction stimulates imagination and creativity. It gets reader and writer off the beaten track, off the narrow, narrow footpath of what ‘everyone’ is saying, doing, thinking—whoever ‘everyone’ happens to be this year. “And what good is all this to Black people?”

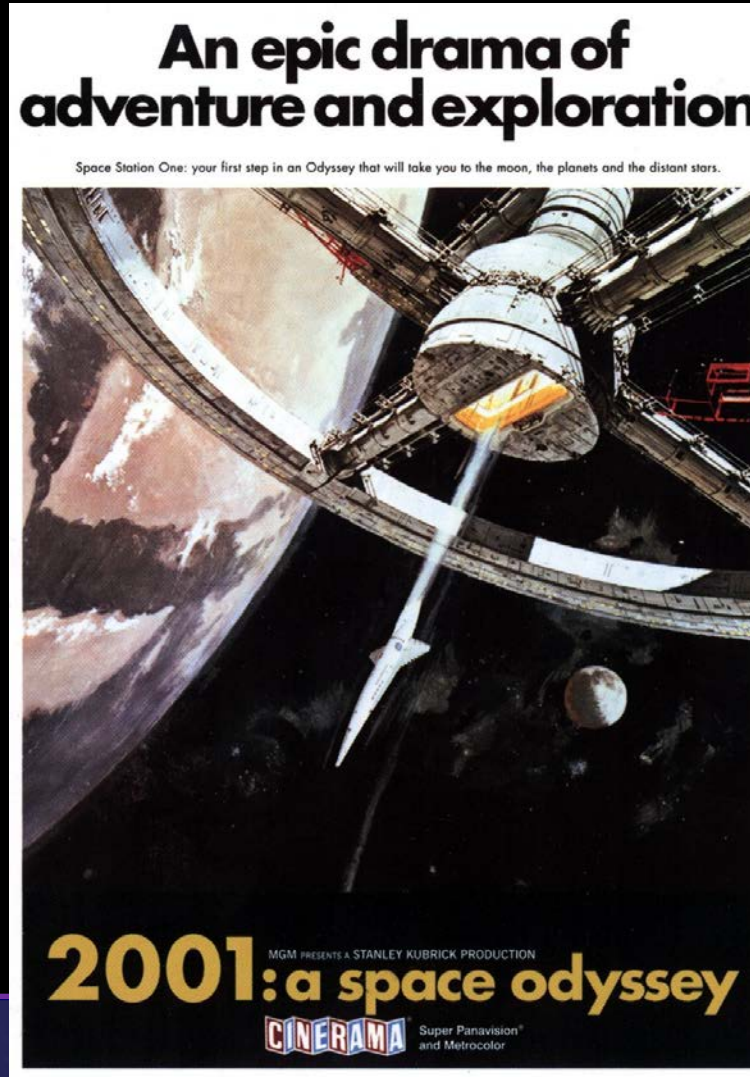


“Who is this *we*?”

Creating insiders and outsiders.

Many definitions of human nature involve contrasting human with not-human.

Later lectures will examine robots, aliens and women (male writers assumed that “we” meant “men”, because humans were defined as rational, and men were more rational than women).



Apes at the movies

***King Kong* (1933)**

Famous for Ann Darrow's (Fay Wray's) screams – long, loud and often.

Darrow is terrified of Kong and the audience is expected to share her fear.



(Re)-imagining apes

***King Kong* (1933)**

Unless Kong inspires fear, the audience cannot be surprised by his gentleness.



(Re)-imagining apes

***2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)**

Began with “The Dawn of Man” sequence.

Showed the early ancestors of humans (who look more like apes than people), living a nasty, brutish and short life on the drought-stricken African savannah.





(Re)-imagining apes

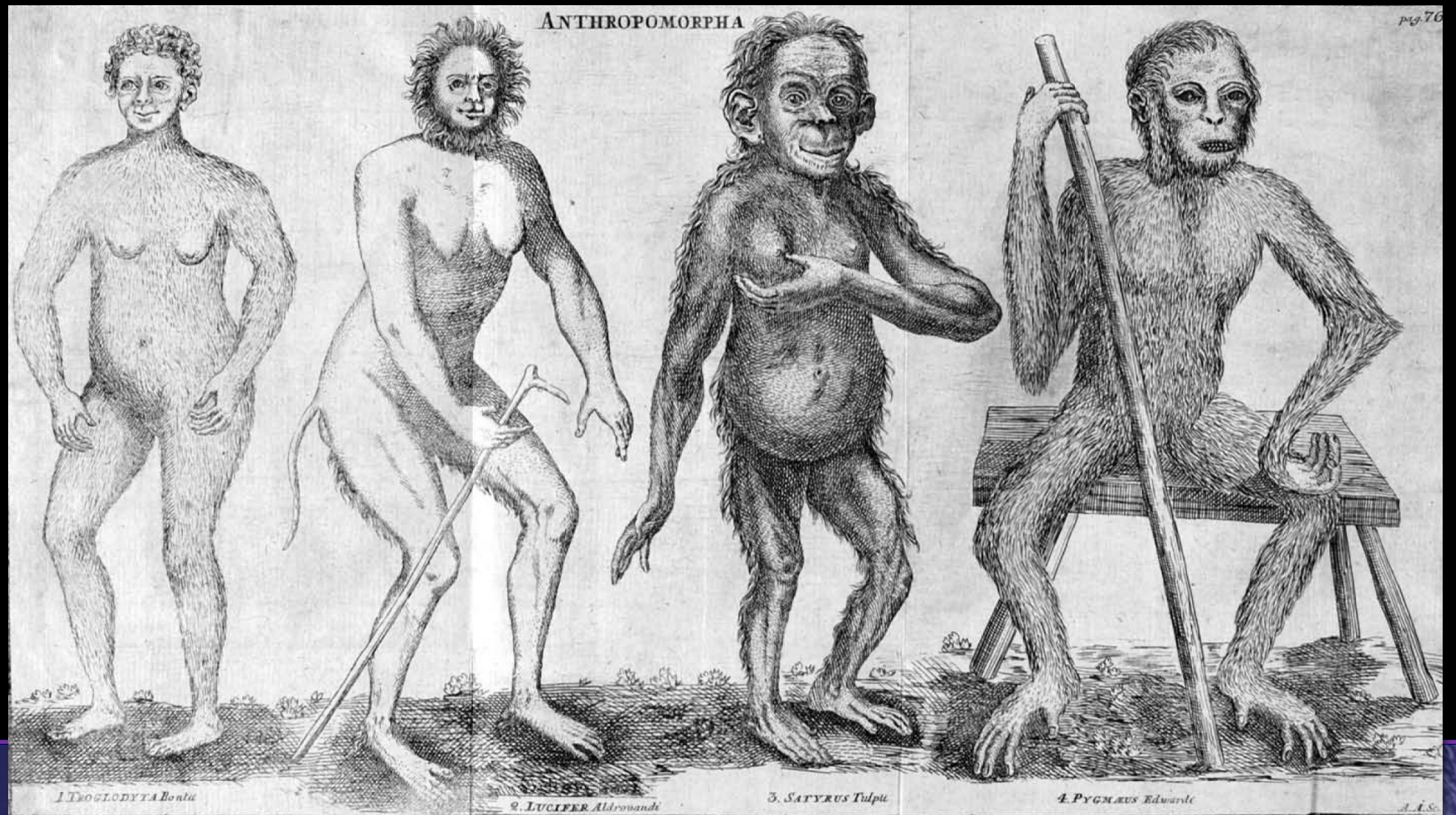
Rise of the Planet of the Apes **(2011)**

Most recent films in the long-running franchise depict apes more sympathetically than any of the early ones.

By the conclusion of the final film, the human audience are all rooting for the apes.





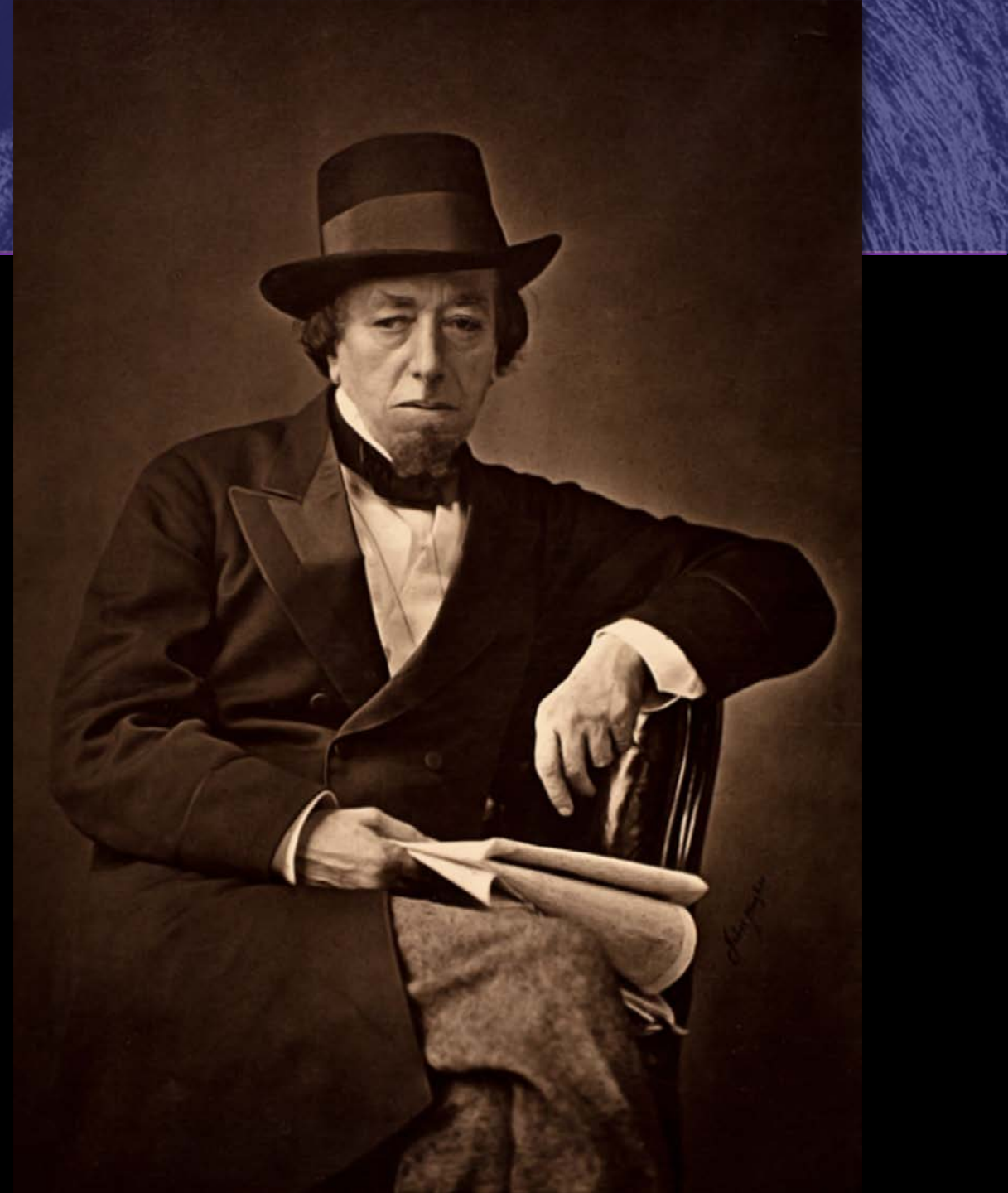


Evolving Apes

The great question

In 1864, Benjamin Disraeli commented in parliament:

“What is the question now placed before society with a glib assurance the most astounding? The question is this—Is man an ape or an angel?”



The great question

In 1864, Benjamin Disraeli commented in parliament:

“What is the question now placed before society with a glib assurance the most astounding? The question is this—Is man an ape or an angel?

My lord, I am on the side of the angels”.



Evolving apes

Darwin and the apes

The Origin of Species
(1859):

“light will be thrown
on the origin of man
and his history”.



ON
THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

BY MEANS OF NATURAL SELECTION,

OR THE

PRESERVATION OF FAVOURED RACES IN THE STRUGGLE
FOR LIFE.

By CHARLES DARWIN, M.A.,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL, GEOLOGICAL, LINNEAN, ETC., SOCIETIES;
AUTHOR OF 'JOURNAL OF RESEARCHES DURING H. M. S. BEAGLE'S VOYAGE
ROUND THE WORLD.'

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

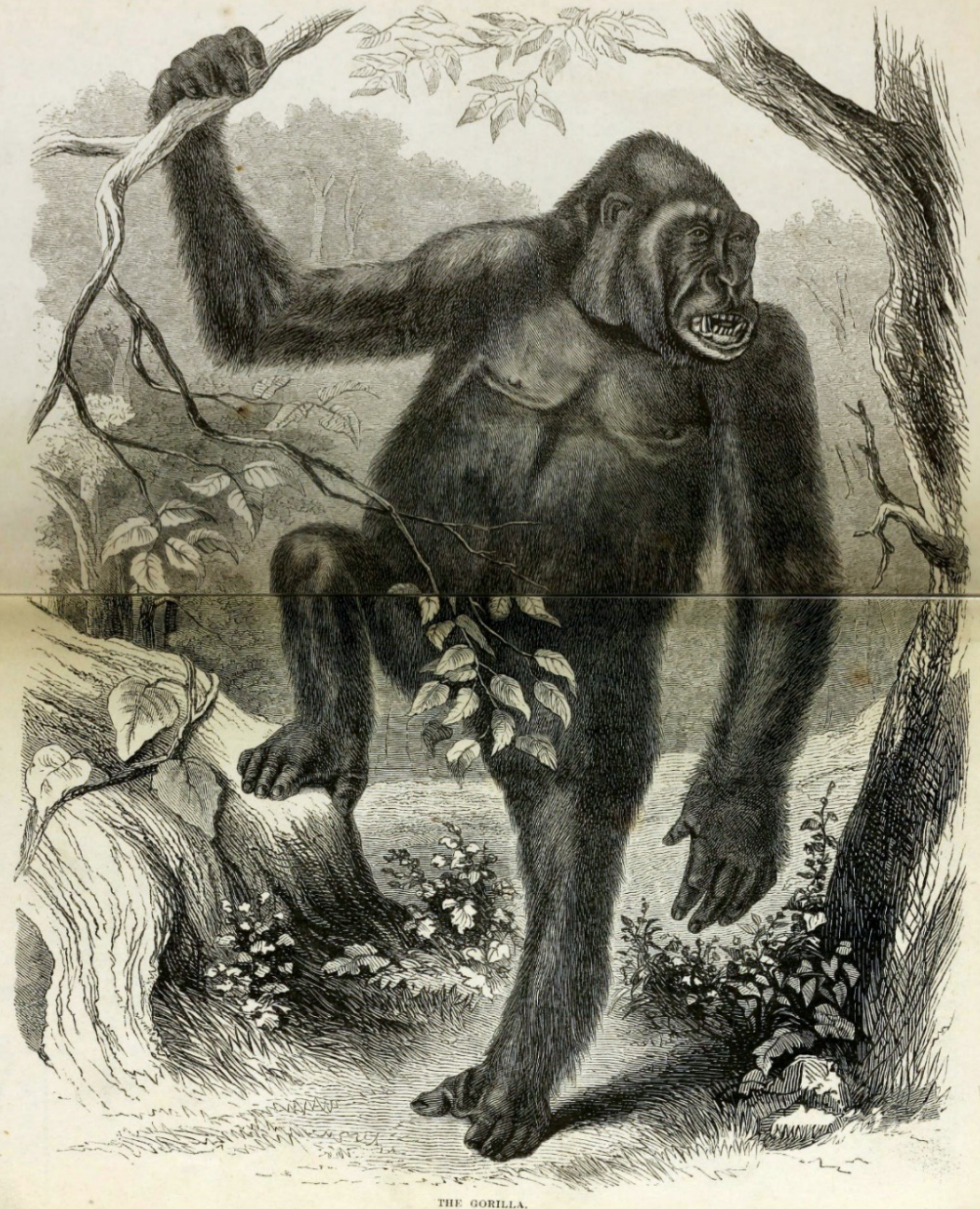
1859.

The right of Translation is reserved.

Paul Belloni du Chaillu

(1831–1903)

1861: *Explorations and
Adventures in Equatorial
Africa.*

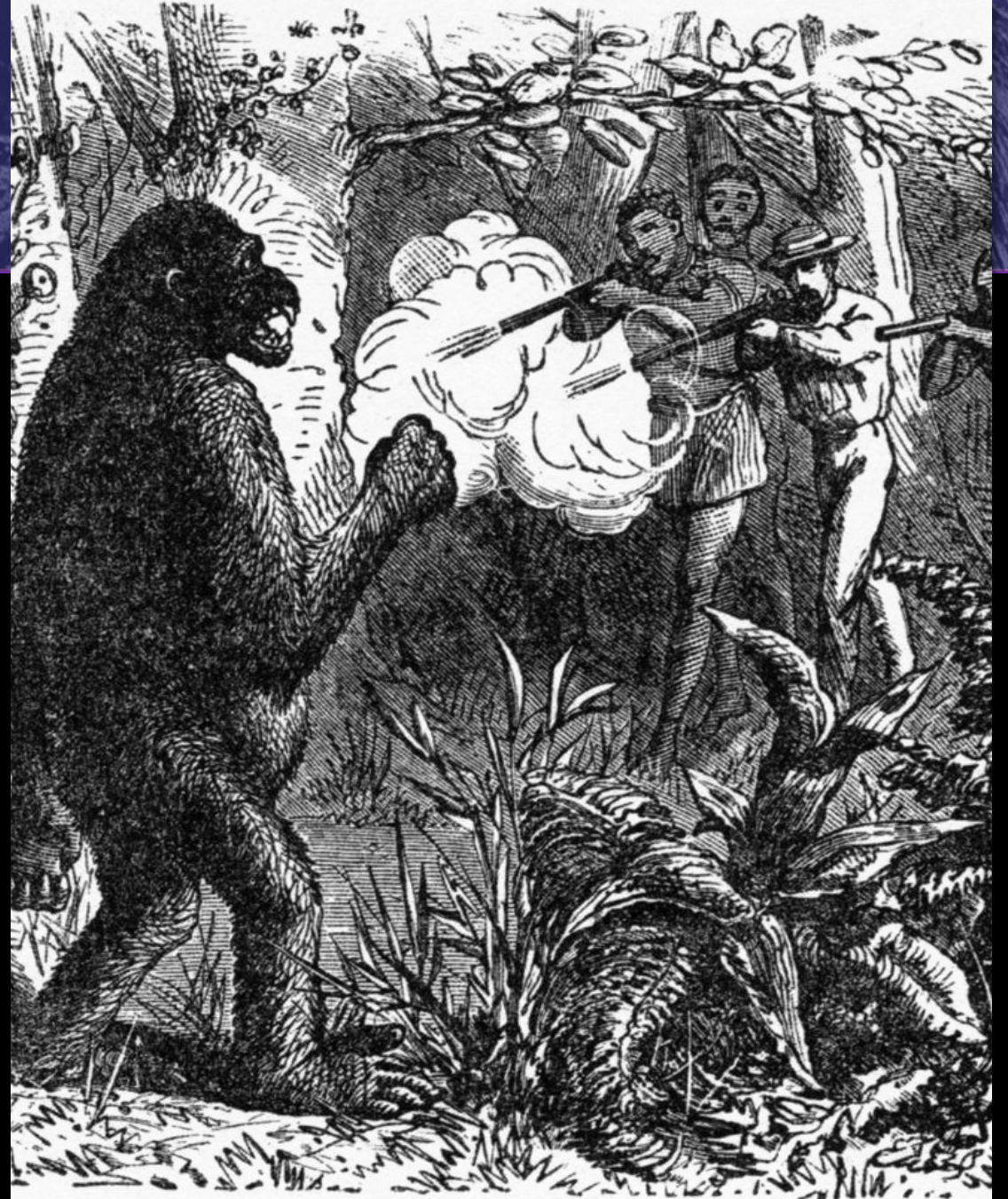


THE GORILLA.

Paul Belloni du Chaillu

The gorilla was “an animal scarce known to the civilized world, and which no white man before had hunted”.

First time he saw its footprints, his “heart beat till I feared its loud pulsations would alarm the gorilla, and my feelings were really excited to a painful degree”.

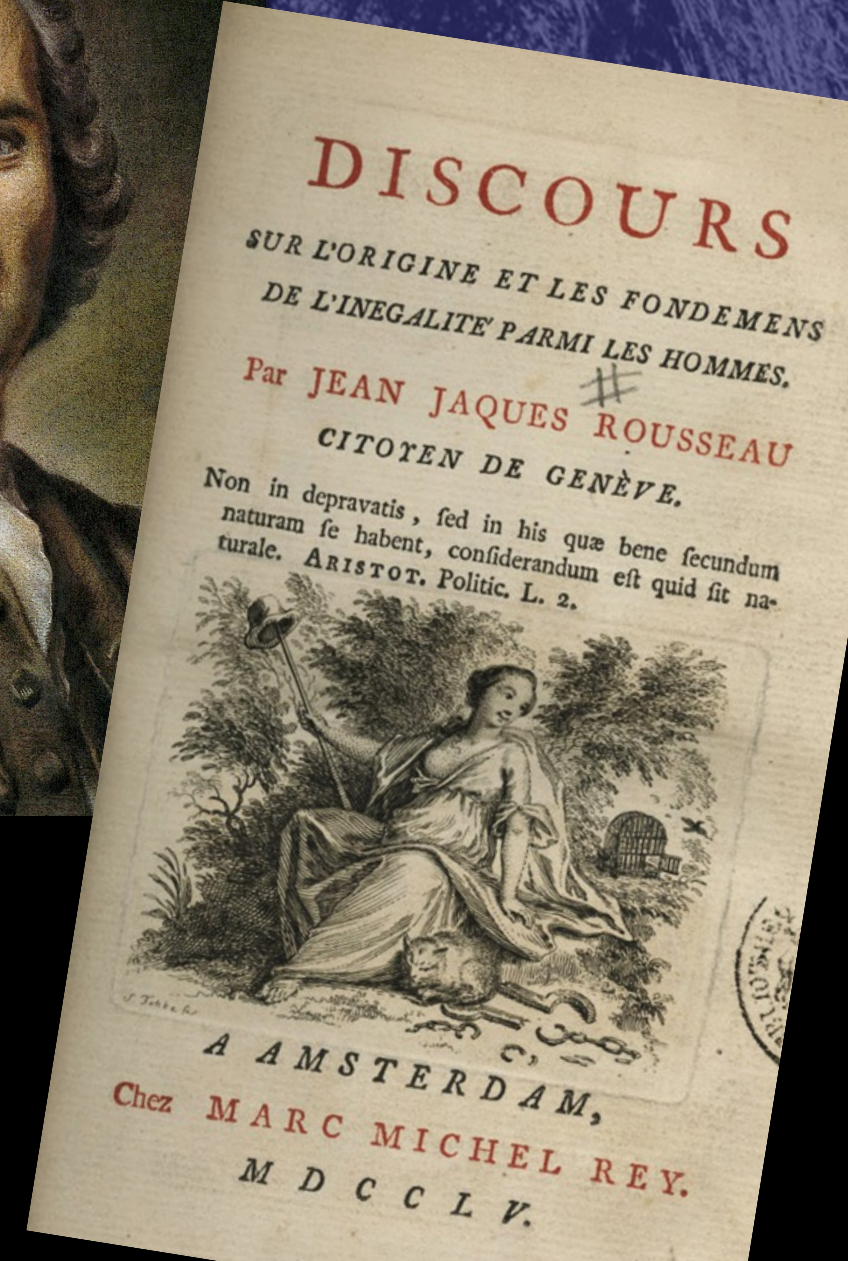
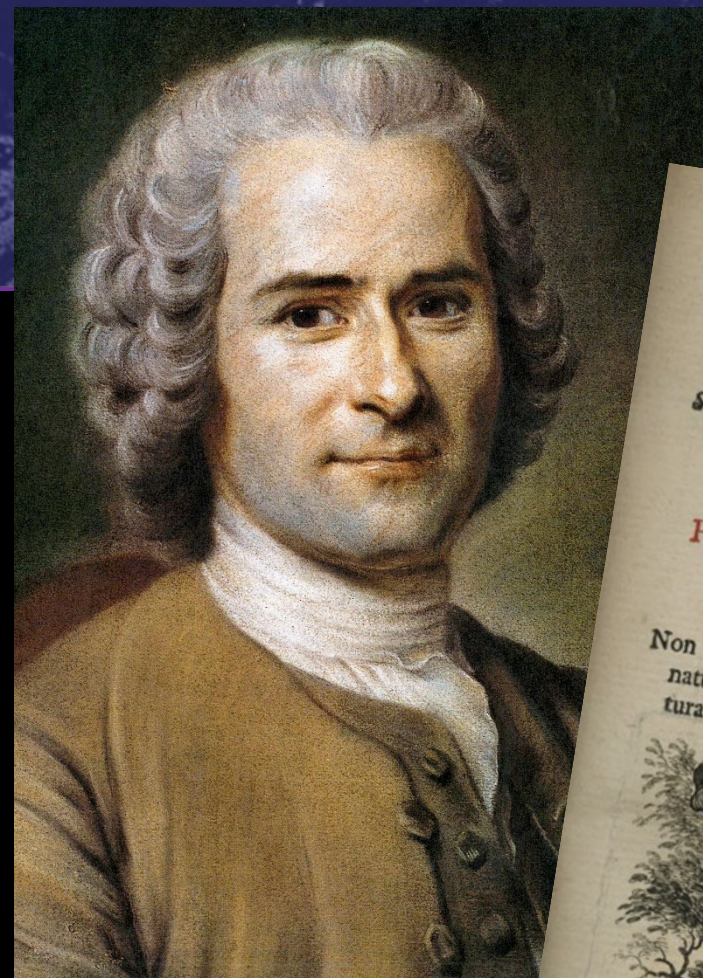


MEETING THE GORILLA.

Enlightened Apes?

Most Europeans depicted apes as savage, but Jean-Jacques Rousseau had other ideas.

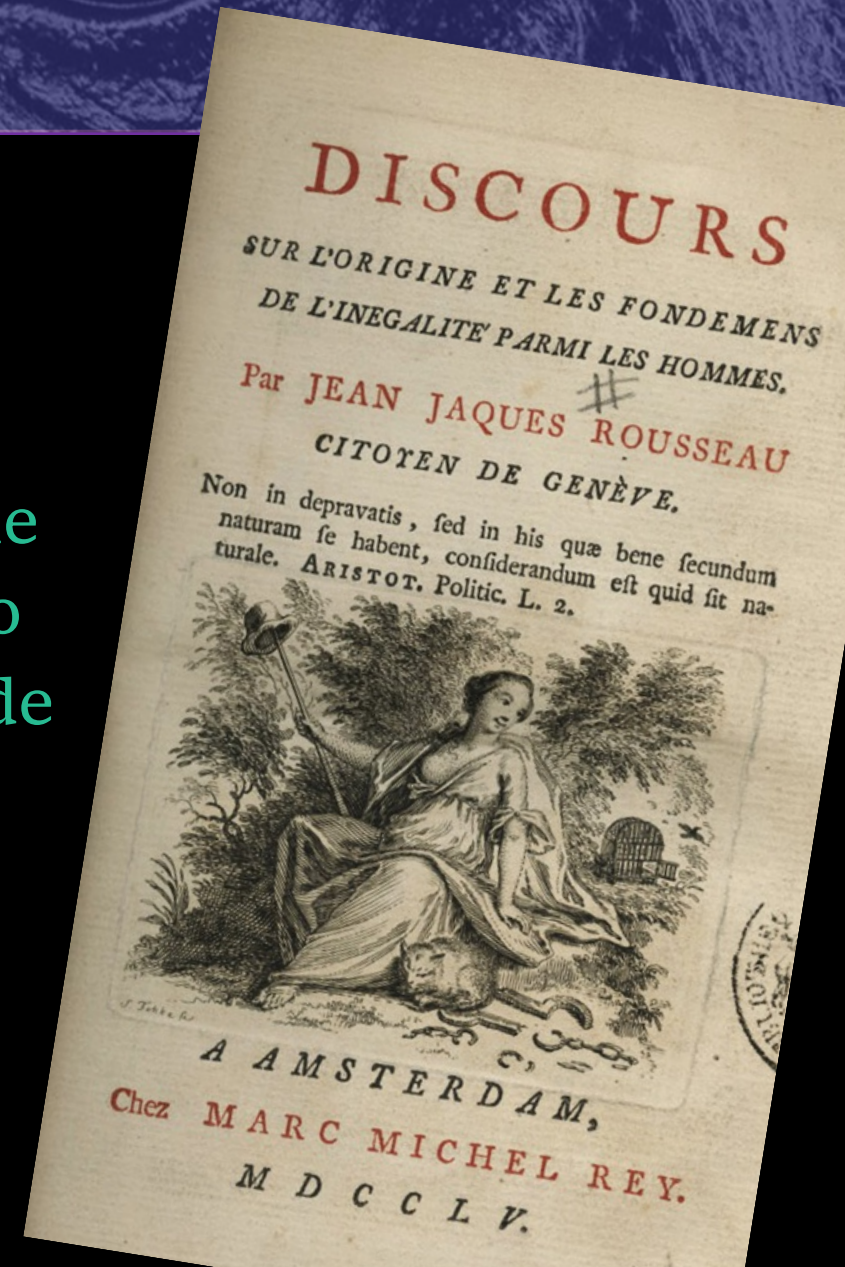
He argued that the orang-utan (or pongo) was an unspoilt human.



Enlightened Apes?

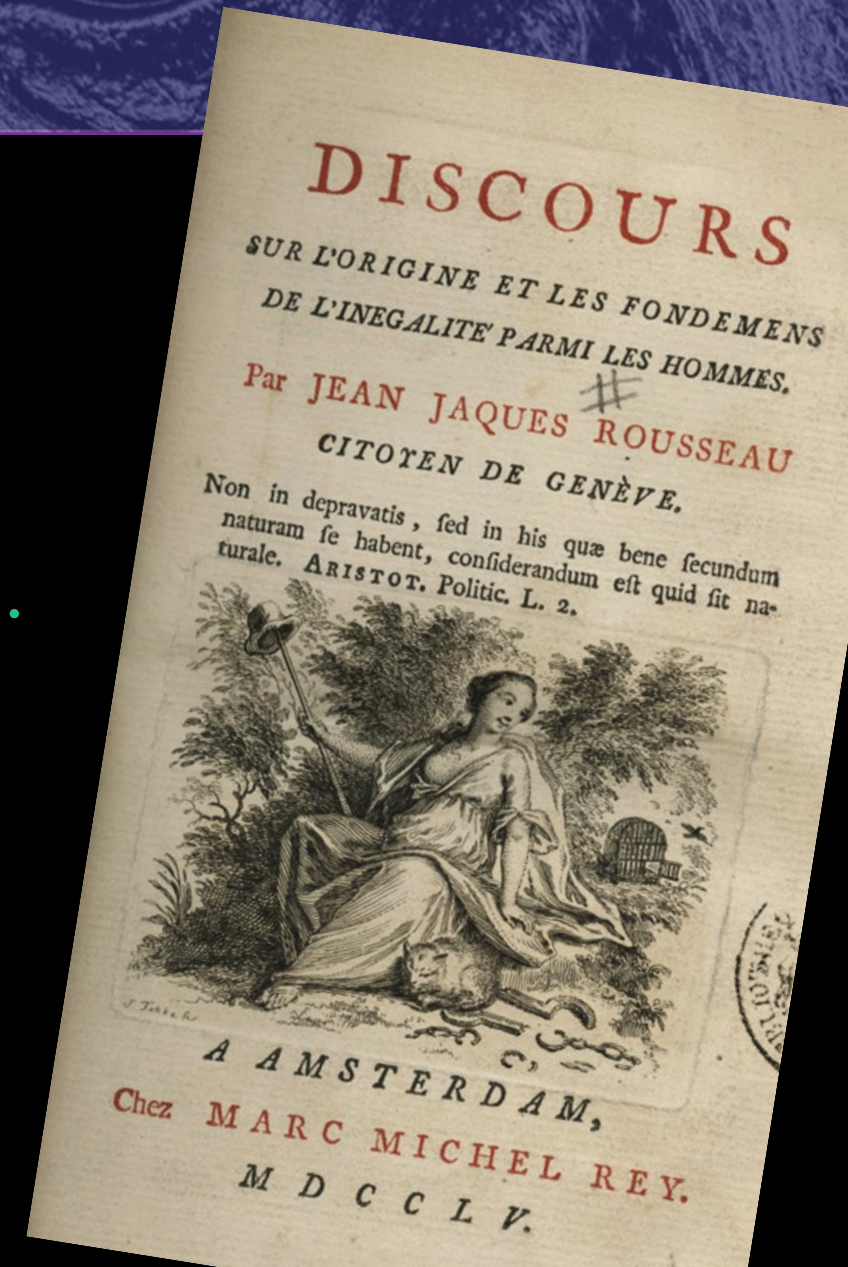
Supposedly civilised people of Europe were in fact degenerate:

“we had only fashioned a steeper path of decline from our natural state; we had bred livestock to satisfy our artificial needs and had thereby made our senses still more dull and our constitutions more frail,



Enlightened Apes?

“so that in modern society we are hardly any longer even animals of a certain degenerate kind, but only pets, or prey, broken in by ourselves – weak, docile, fattened, and fleeced”.

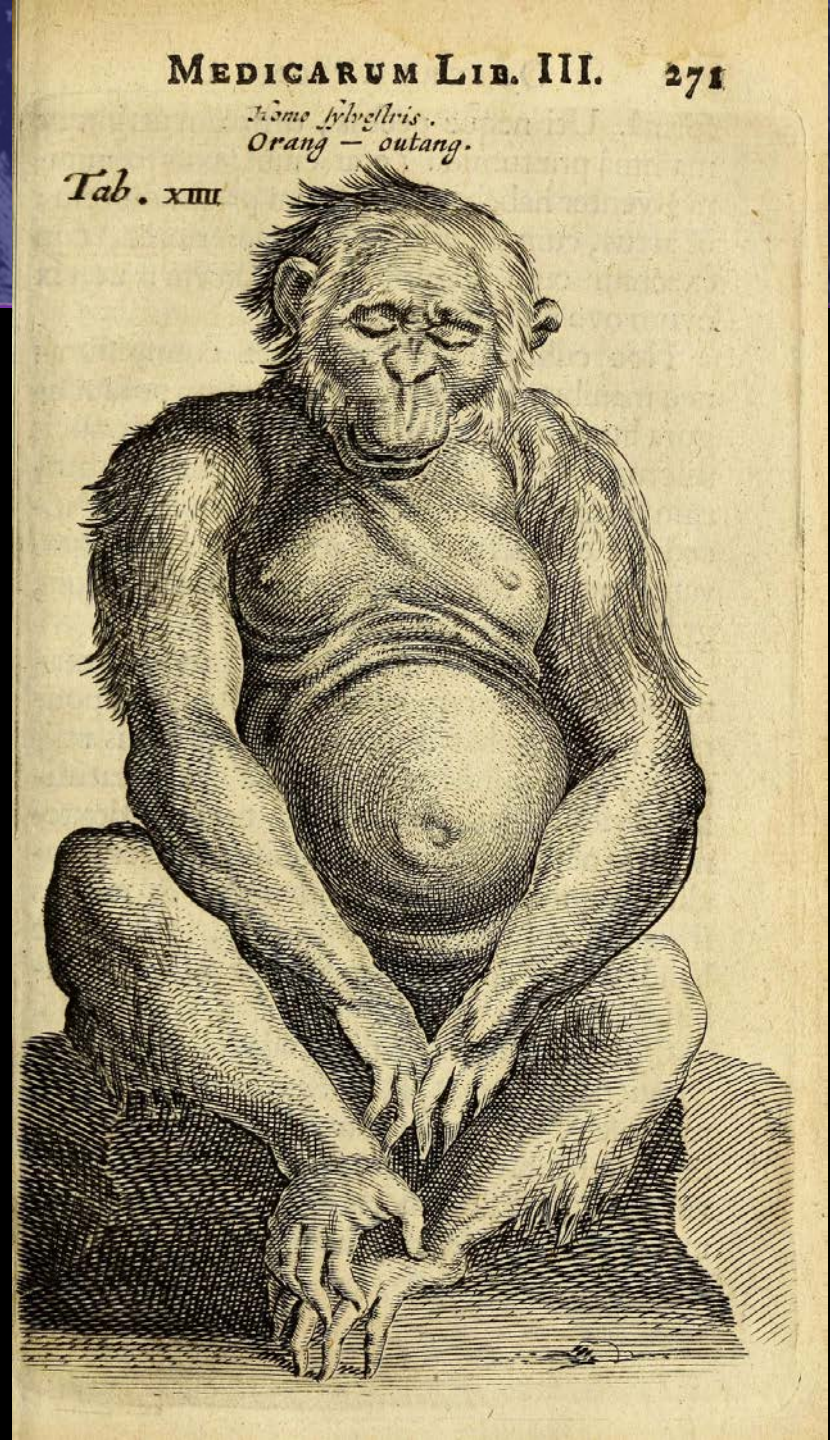


Traveller's tales

Rousseau (like most Europeans) had never seen an ape (even in captivity). Relied on other's accounts.

A century later, Alfred Russel Wallace (*The Malay Archipelago*, 1869) confirmed that orangutans were not territorial.

Rousseau had assumed that, but only because he believed that private property was one of the sins of civilisation.

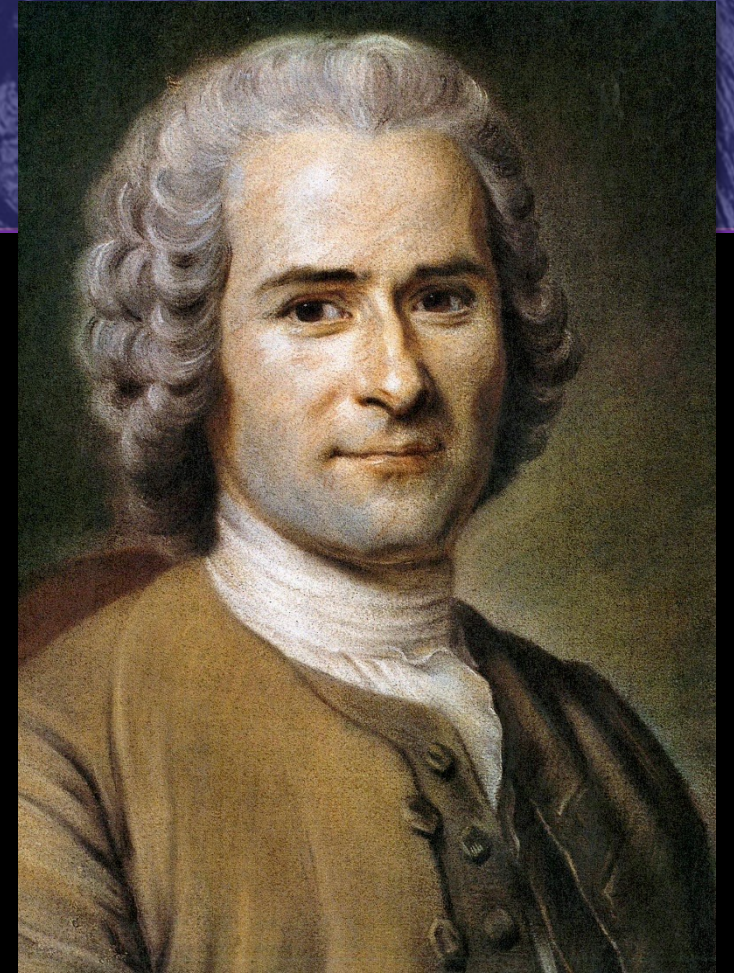


Noble savages?

Orangutans seem to embody Rousseau's ideal of the "Noble Savage".

Except that Rousseau never use the term and was sceptical about any simplistic association of primitive life with nobility.

He used orangutans (and the lives of other, supposedly backward peoples) primarily as a way of criticising European civilization.



Nicolas-Edmé Rétif de la Bretonne

Lettre d'un singe aux animaux de son espèce
(Letter of an Ape to Others of his Species, 1781), purportedly written by “César of Malacca” (son of an ape and a local woman).



Lettre d'un singe

César warned against humans and he urged his fellow apes never to imitate them.



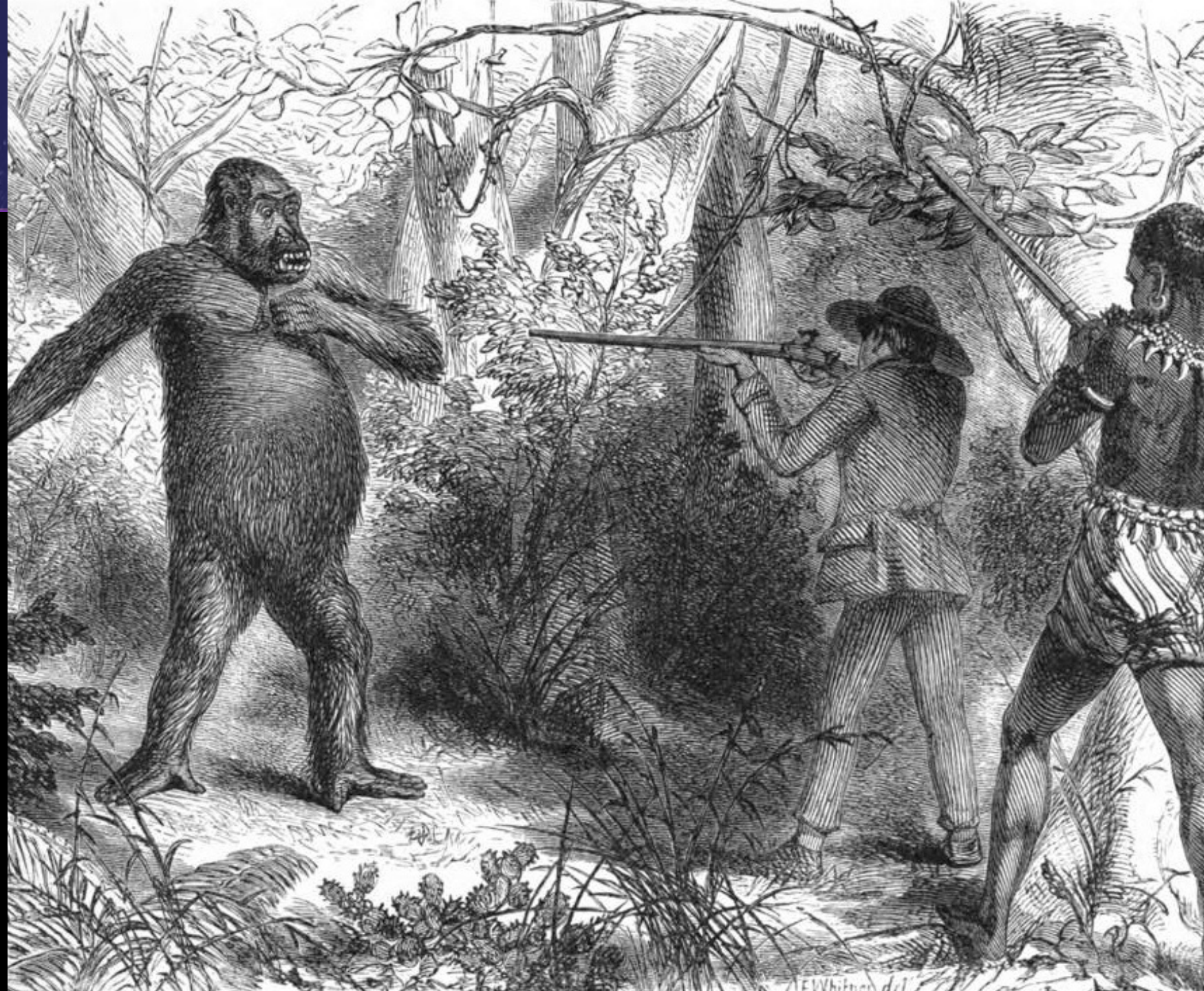
Ignoble savages?

During the nineteenth century, the ideal of the noble savage became increasingly unfashionable as Europeans competed to carve up Africa.



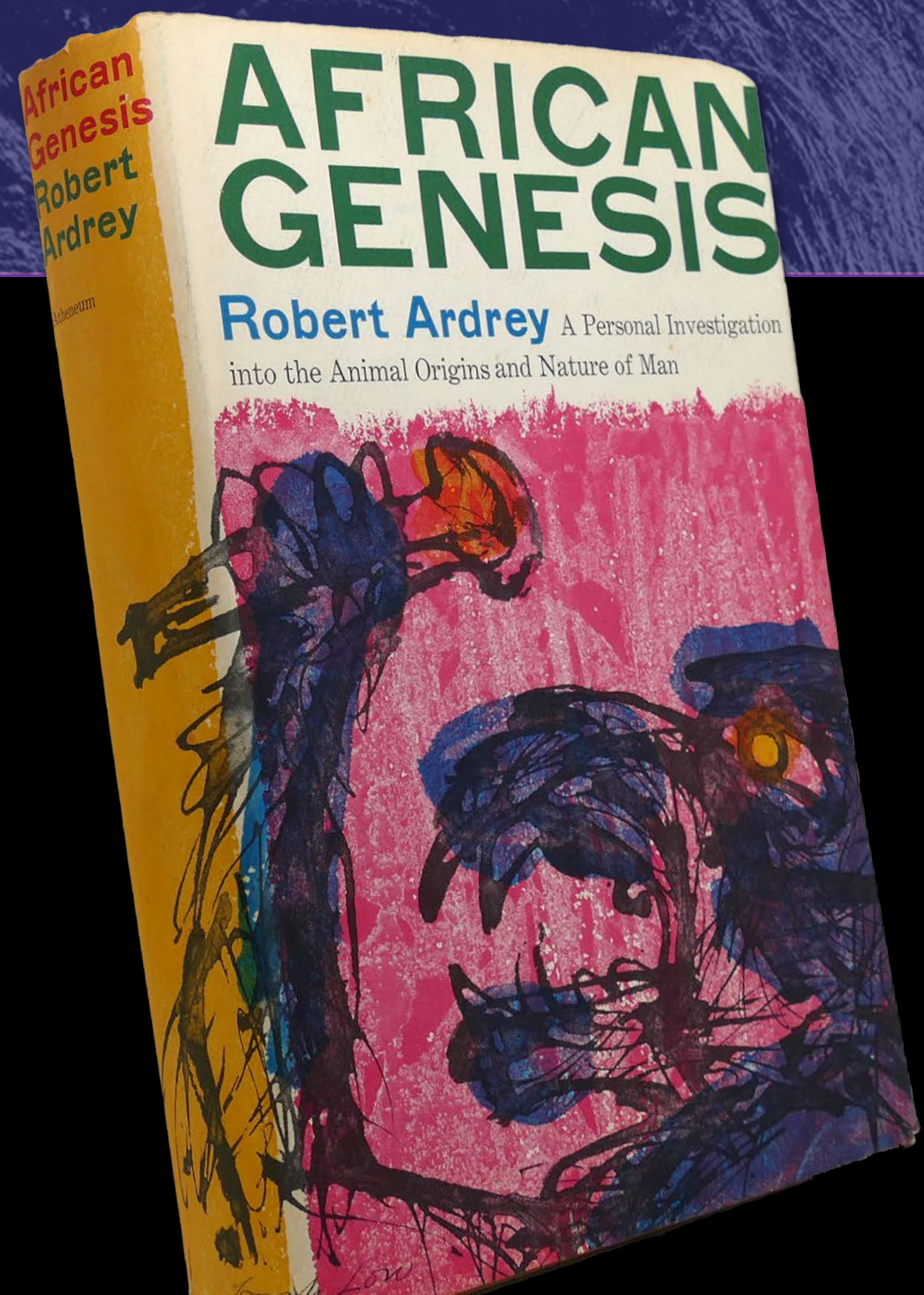
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Killer Apes

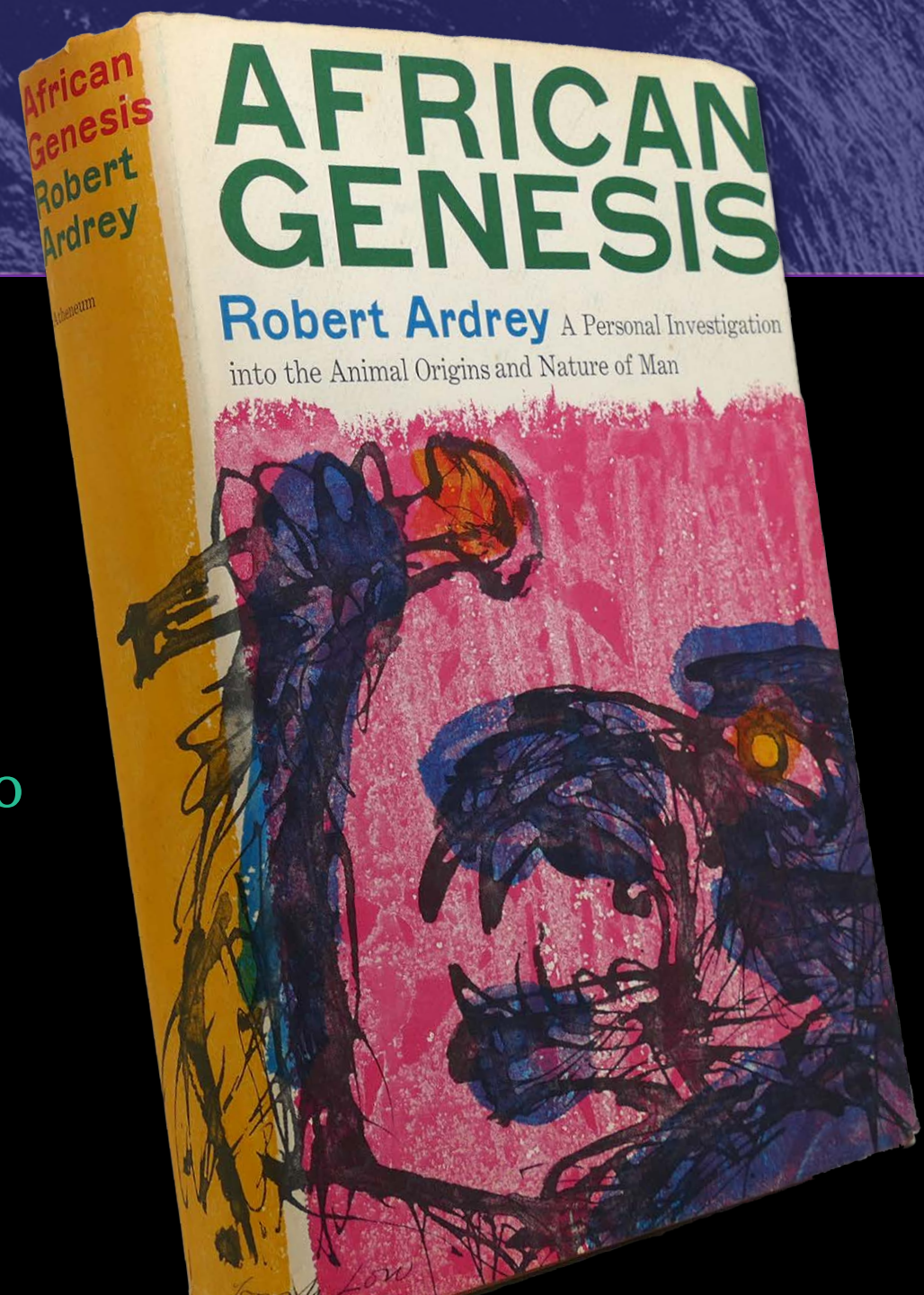
Popular American playwright, Robert Ardrey, attacked Rousseau's "Romantic Fallacy" in *African Genesis* (1961), a popular description of recent research into human origins.



Killer Apes

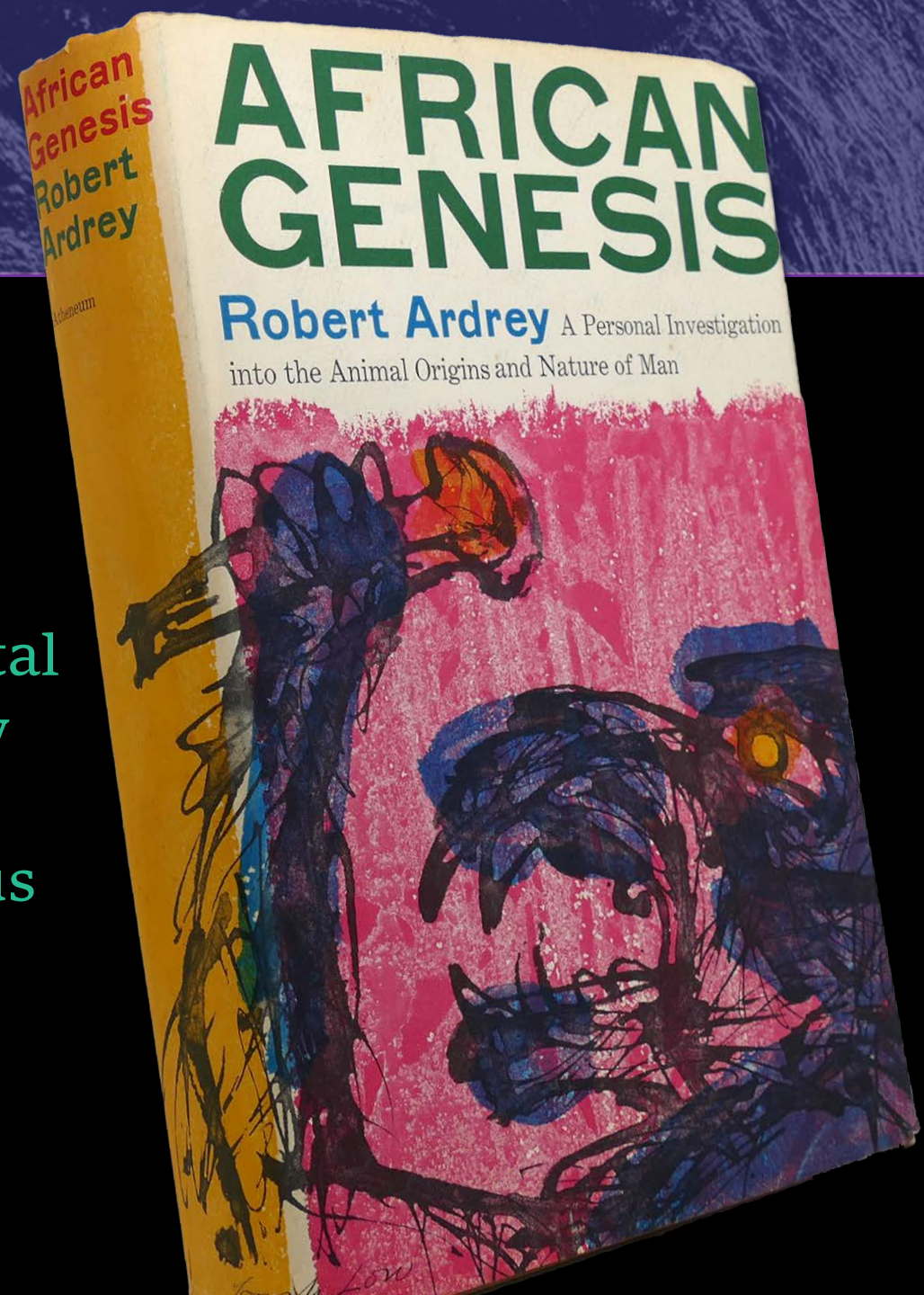
Based on the work of South African paleo-anthropologist, Raymond Dart (who discovered *Australopithecus africanus*).

In “The Predatory Transition from Ape to Man” (1953) Dart argued the “simple thesis that Man had emerged from the anthropoid background for one reason only: because he was a killer”.



Ardrey:

“Long ago, perhaps many millions of years ago, a line of killer apes branched off from the non-aggressive primate background. For reasons of environmental necessity, the line adopted the predatory way. For reasons of predatory necessity Dart was convinced that Australopithecus was not only carnivorous, but hunted using tools – weapons fashioned from bones”.



Kubrick and Ardrey

“The Dawn of Man”
dramatized Dart’s thesis.

When Kubrick was attacked
over *A Clockwork Orange*, he
cited Ardrey’s work to
defend himself: humans
were naturally violent.



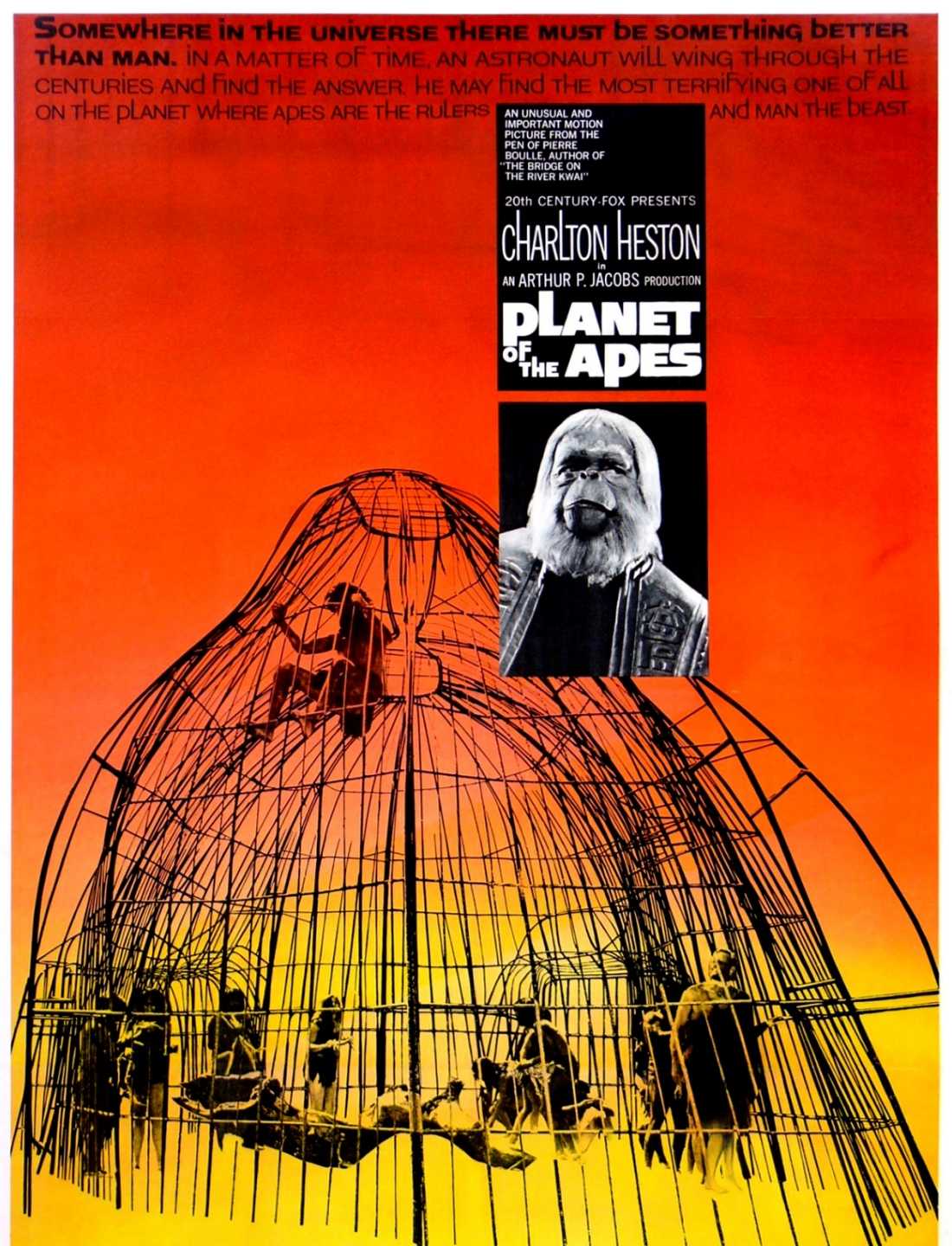


Planets of the Apes

Planet of the Apes (1968)

Dir by Franklin Schaffner,
starring Charlton Heston, Roddy
McDowall and Kim Hunter.

Shocking spectacle of the
human/animal hierarchy being
dramatically overturned gave the
film enormous impact. A box-
office hit (to be followed by four
sequels, TV series, books, comics
and – to date – four remakes).



Allegory?

Not long after the film came out, its producer, Arthur Jacobs and associate producer, Mort Abrahams, bumped into Sammy Davis Jnr., who embraced Jacobs and told him *Planet of the Apes* was the best film about black-white relations he had ever seen.

Neither Jacobs nor Abrahams had any idea what Davis was talking about.



Allegory?

The apes in the film enslaved humans, put them in cages, forced them to serve their ape masters, who whipped them when they disobeyed.

African-American audiences in particular seemed to have no difficulty in perceiving the film as an allegory.



Planets of the apes

Allegory?

When the sequel, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970) came out, some of its adverts used the line: “Can a planet long endure half human and half ape?”

THE BIZARRE WORLD OF “PLANET OF THE APES”
WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING...

Now civilization's final
battle between man and
ape is about to begin!

An ARTHUR P. JACOBS Production

BENEATH ↓ THE PLANET OF THE APES



20th
CENTURY-FOX

Starring JAMES FRANCISCUS • KIM HUNTER • MAURICE EVANS • LINDA HARRISON
Co-Starring PAUL RICHARDS • VICTOR BUONO • JAMES GREGORY • JEFF COREY • NATALIE TRUNDY • THOMAS GOMEZ



and CHARLTON HESTON as Taylor

Produced by APJAC PRODUCTIONS • Associate Producer MORT ABRAHAMS • Directed by TED POST • Screenplay by PAUL DEHN • Story by PAUL DEHN and MORT ABRAHAMS

Based on Characters Created by PIERRE BOULLE • Music by LEONARD ROSENMAN • PANAVISION® Color by DE LUXE®

G ALL AGES ADMITTED
General Audiences

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705
105

***Lettre d'un singe* (1781)**

The imaginary author Bretonne's letter, *César* offered as his strongest condemnation of humans that “man is cruel, and singularly cruel to his own kind. . . . [and] to be convinced of this truth, we have only to see how he treats Negroes! It is a cruelty that passes the imagination and which he will exercise towards any of us”.



The Scopes Trial

1925: John T. Scopes, a teacher in Dayton, Tennessee, prosecuted for violating a state law that banned teaching evolution.

Became known as the “Monkey Trial” and attracted massive publicity.



Planets of the apes

The Scopes Trial

Cartoon from the *Chicago Defender* (20 June 1925).



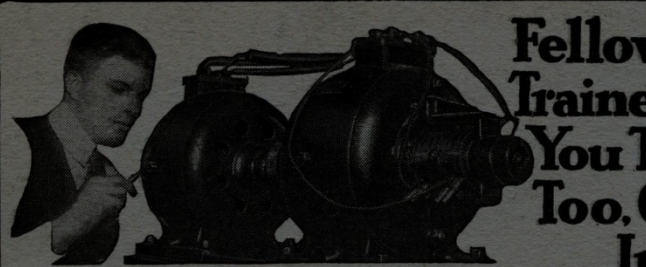
“The Ape Cycle” (1930)

Clare Winger Harris was a regular and popular writer in the early days of the pulp science fiction magazines.



Science WOND Quart

SCIENCE WONDER QUARTERLY



ELECTRIC

Not By Correspondence

"First I enrolled with a School teaching Electricity by correspondence. I tried to work out several lessons, but quit when I saw your ad. telling how you taught Electricity by actual work. I didn't have much money when I went to Coyne, but through your Employment Department I was able to work for my room and board. Three days after graduating you got me a good job with a Battery and Electric Shop, and a year later I bought a Shop of my own. I now have a \$1300 car and a thriving business—all paid for."

George W. Stoneback, Illinois.

Lands a Job at \$8,000 a Year

"Before going to Coyne, I was an ordinary mechanic. Now I make \$300.00 a month, and am accepting a new position the first of the year as Chief Electrician at \$8,000 a year. Any man who works for me will have to be a Coyne graduate."

Stanley Zurawski, Michigan.

From \$20.00 a Week to \$100.00 a Week

"Before going to Coyne, I had worked in a garage for five years at \$20.00 a week. I had no advanced education and didn't know a volt from an ampere. Yet I graduated in three months with a grade of 98%. Since I left Coyne, I have jumped from \$20.00 to \$100.00 a week, and am still going strong. I owe all my success to the practical training I got in the Coyne Shops."

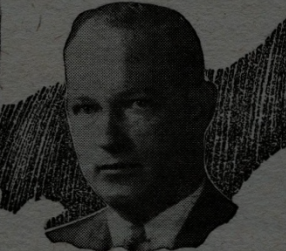
Harry A. Ward, Iowa.

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Find out how QUICKLY and EASILY you can land a Big-Pay Electrical Job! IT COSTS NOTHING TO INVESTIGATE! Just mail the coupon and let me send YOU the same Big Free Book that started all these other fellows on the road to success. This doesn't cost you a cent, nor does it obligate you in any way. GET THE FACTS. Mail the coupon—NOW!

Coyne Electrical School, H. C. Lewis, President, Founded 1899
500 S. Paulina St. Dept. 40-85 Chicago, Ill.

"I knew nothing about Electricity, before I went to Coyne," says Nolan H. McCleary. "I had no advanced education and so little money that I could never have stayed at school. If Mr. Lewis hadn't gotten me a part-time job. Yet I finished the course in twelve weeks, and the School immediately placed me in a fine electrical job. Now I am Chicago District Manager of the largest electrical concern of its kind in the world, making more money than I ever dreamed of making before I went to Coyne. I am convinced that there is but ONE MIGHTY WAY to learn electricity and that



NOLAN H. MCCLEARY
Chicago District Manager, Beardsley-Wolcott Co.
is the way of the Coyne School—BY DOING ACTUAL ELECTRICAL WORK YOURSELF UNDER EXPERT INSTRUCTORS, ON FULL-SIZE, RUNNING ELECTRICAL MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT."

For thirty years Coyne has been training men for responsible, Big-Pay electrical jobs—NOT BY BOOKS OR CORRESPONDENCE but by an amazing way to teach that makes you a practical expert in 90 days. You need no advanced education or previous experience. I don't care if you don't know an armature from a generator. If you're sixteen years old or forty. IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE! I will prepare YOU for a fascinating, Big-Pay electrical job in twelve weeks time. I will allow you your railroad fare to Chicago—and you get part-time work while at School—and give you every assistance in locating just the job you want when you graduate.

Say \$6

"Be cents a my till that be in twa doing a I had I and ha catalyst \$200.00 I made made a

"Som just w respons anyone is TO electr you will OR USE how to the job

Not

"Be! sponde too des got you dent ac and de I was or \$63.00 a car hardl

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Mr. H. C. COYNE
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Dear Mr. L:
Without all details ment. Say motive Cou
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"She is Yours, Master!"

SICK at heart the trembling girl shuddered at the words that delivered her to this terrible fate of the East. How could she escape from this Oriental monster into whose hands she had been given—this mysterious man of mighty power whose face none had yet seen?

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SAX ROHMER	SAX ROHMER	SAX ROHMER	SAX ROHMER	SAX ROHMER	SAX ROHMER	SAX ROHMER	SAX ROHMER	SAX ROHMER
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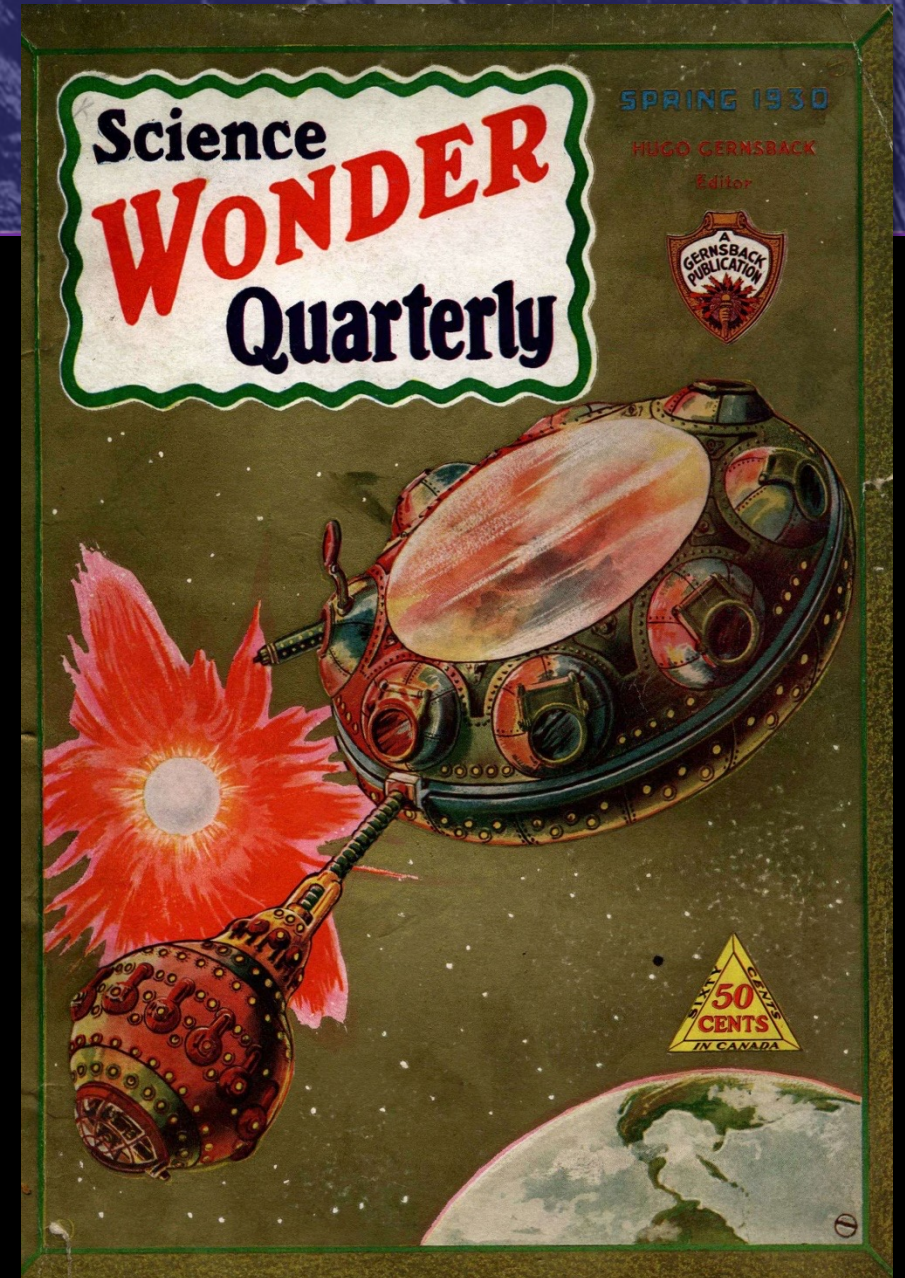
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"The Ape Cycle" (1930)

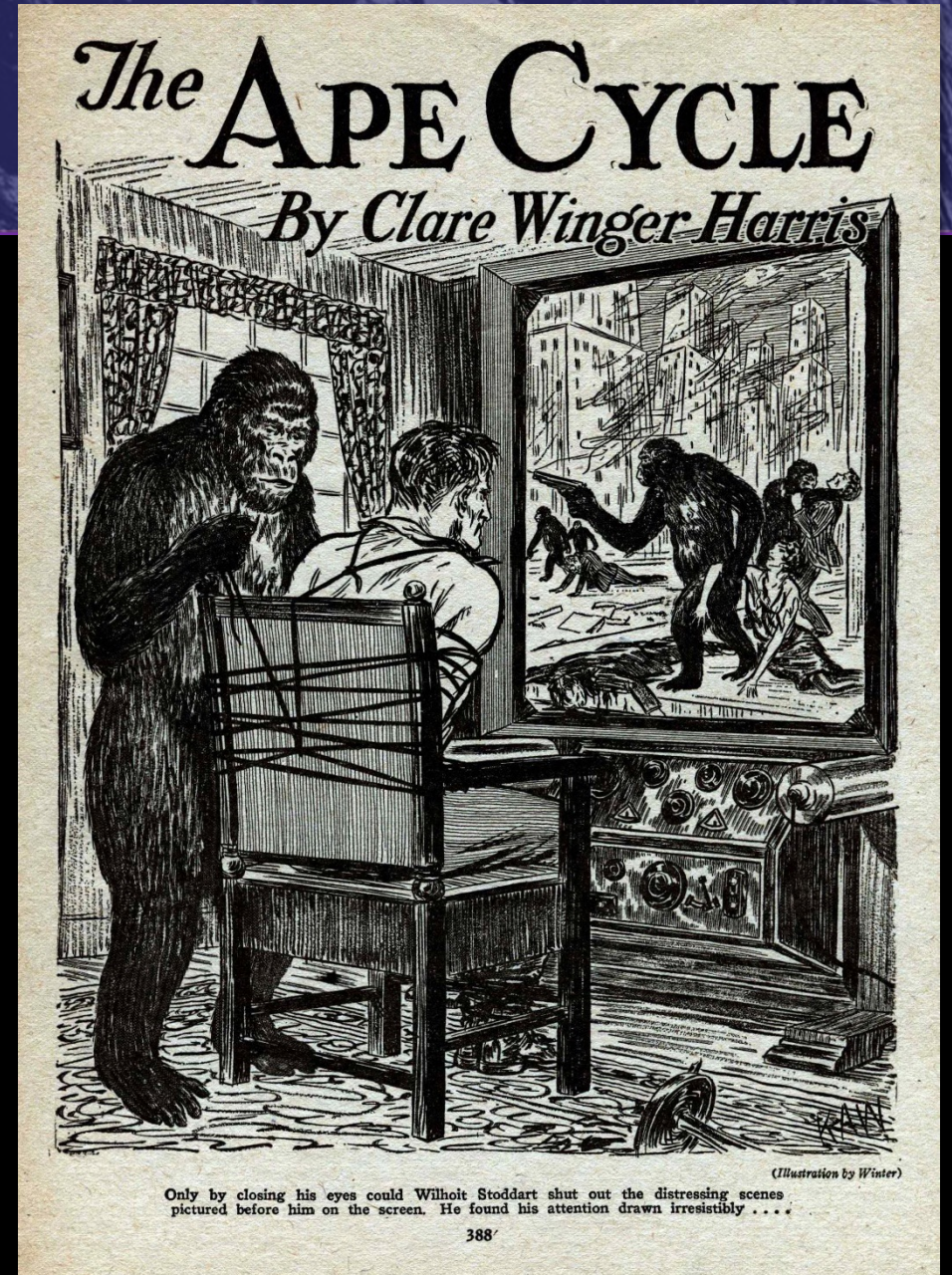
Scientist Daniel Stoddart trains apes to act as human servants. They become an invaluable labour force. However, one of the characters wonders whether the stimulus of training and education might cause the apes to evolve until they become human.



“The Ape Cycle” (1930)

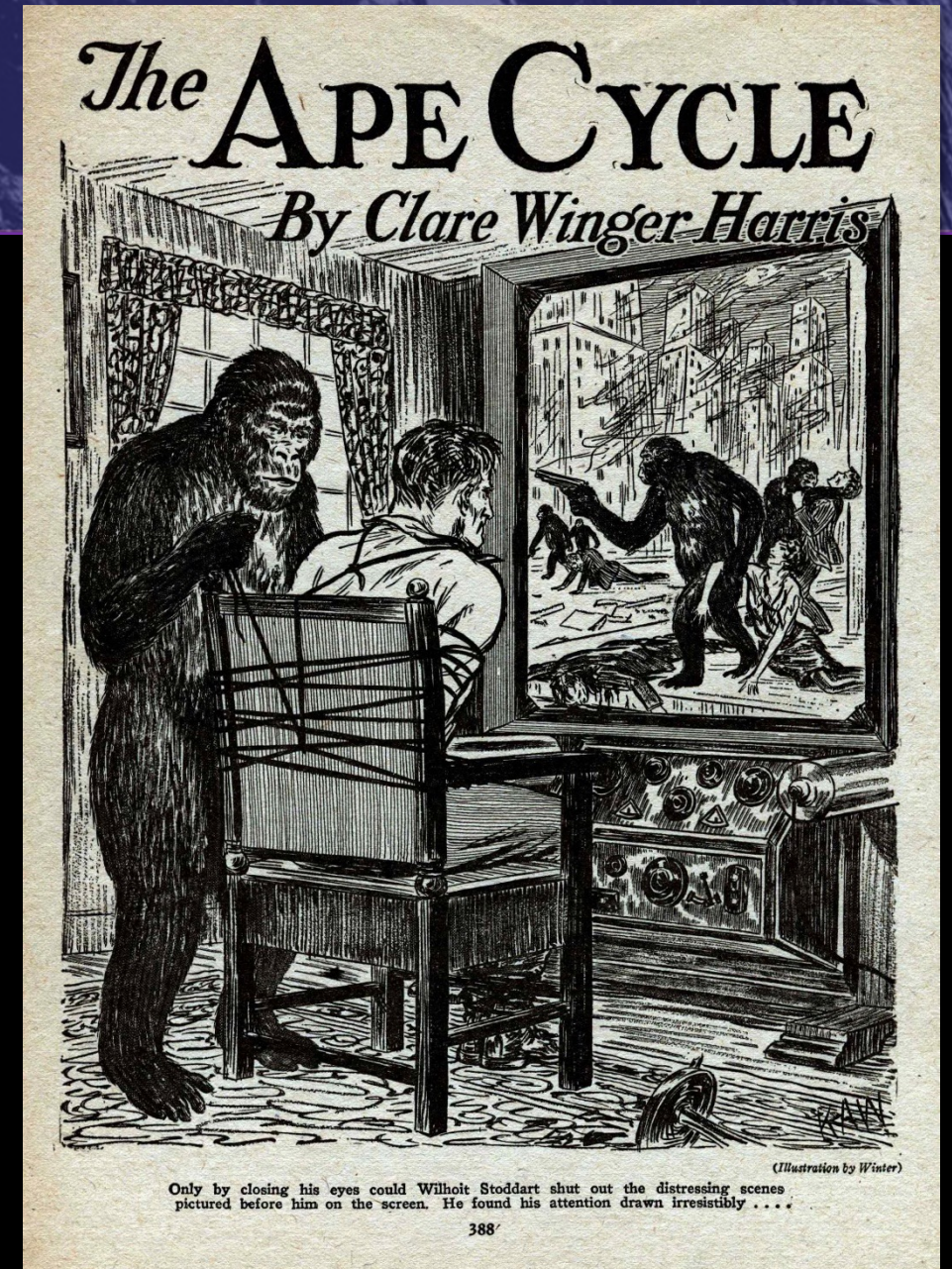
This thought which prompts one of the story’s female characters, Melva, to comment that:

“if they ever do become human we can’t have them work for us any more. That would be slavery”.



“The Ape Cycle” (1930)

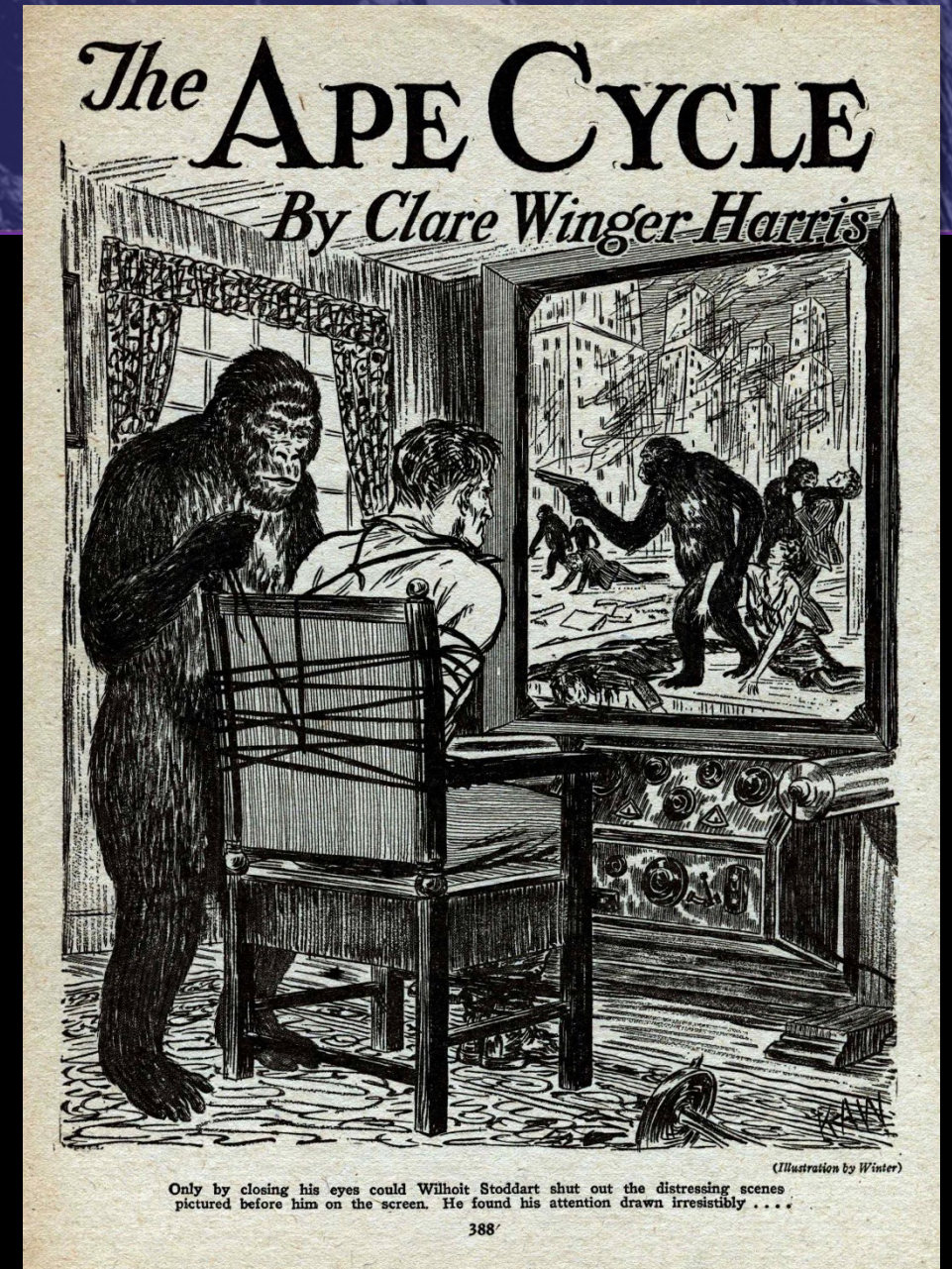
Melva married Stoddart's son, Ray, who discovers how to make the apes into even more useful servants: “By making extracts of the known glands of human beings and discovering a few for himself, he was able to procure in a concentrated form the vital substance that controlled the mental growth of the race”.



"The Ape Cycle" (1930)

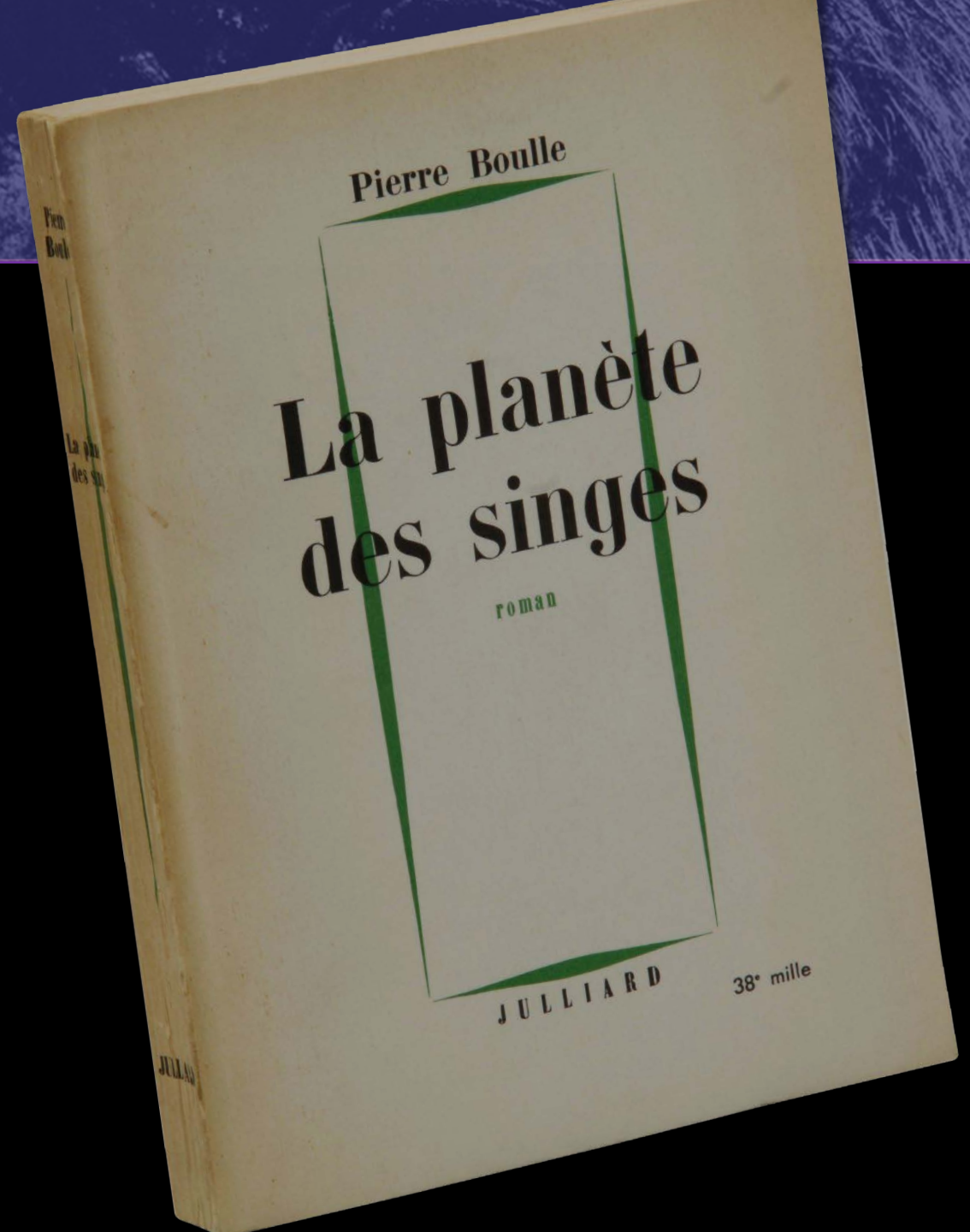
Apes eventually rebel, briefly rule the country. The humans regain control by bombing the capital and killing all the ape leaders.

New human president wonders whether apes will always be a threat; perhaps, he ponders, they are "nature's method of keeping us strong and pure", ensuring that humans continue to struggle and evolve, instead of degenerating



Pierre Boulle *La Planète des singes* (1963, Monkey planet)

The novel from which the first *Planet of the Apes* film was adapted.



Racial readings

Fourth film, *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* (1972). Governor Jason Breck (obsessed with rising ape IQs and determined to prevent them conquering humanity) is talking to the ape's leader, Caesar.

ALL NEW! THE REVOLT OF THE APES
THE MOST AWESOME SPECTACLE IN
THE ANNALS OF SCIENCE FICTION!



The
newest
and
biggest
yet!



20th Century-Fox presents an ARTHUR P. JACOBS Production
"CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES"
starring RODDY McDOWALL and DON MURRAY and RICARDO MONTALBAN as Armando.
Produced by APJAC Productions. Directed by J. LEE THOMPSON. Written by PAUL DEHN.
Based on Characters Created by PIERRE BOULLE. TODD-AO 35" COLOR BY DE LUXE

PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED
Some material may not be suitable for pre-teens

Planets of the apes

Racial readings

Caesar: “how do we differ from the dogs and cats you and your kind used to love? Why did you turn us from pets to slaves?”

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Racial readings

Breck: Because your kind were once our ancestors. Man was born of the ape and there's still an ape curled up inside of every man. The beast that must be whipped into submission. The savage that has to be shackled in chains. You are the beast, Caesar. You taint us. You poison our guts. When we hate you, we're hating the dark side of ourselves.

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"CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES"
starring RODDY McDOWALL and DON MURRAY and RICARDO MONTALBAN as Armando.
Produced by APJAC Productions. Directed by J. LEE THOMPSON. Written by PAUL DEHN.
Based on Characters Created by PIERRE BOULLE. TODD-AO 35" COLOR BY DE LUXE®

PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED
Some material may not be suitable for young viewers



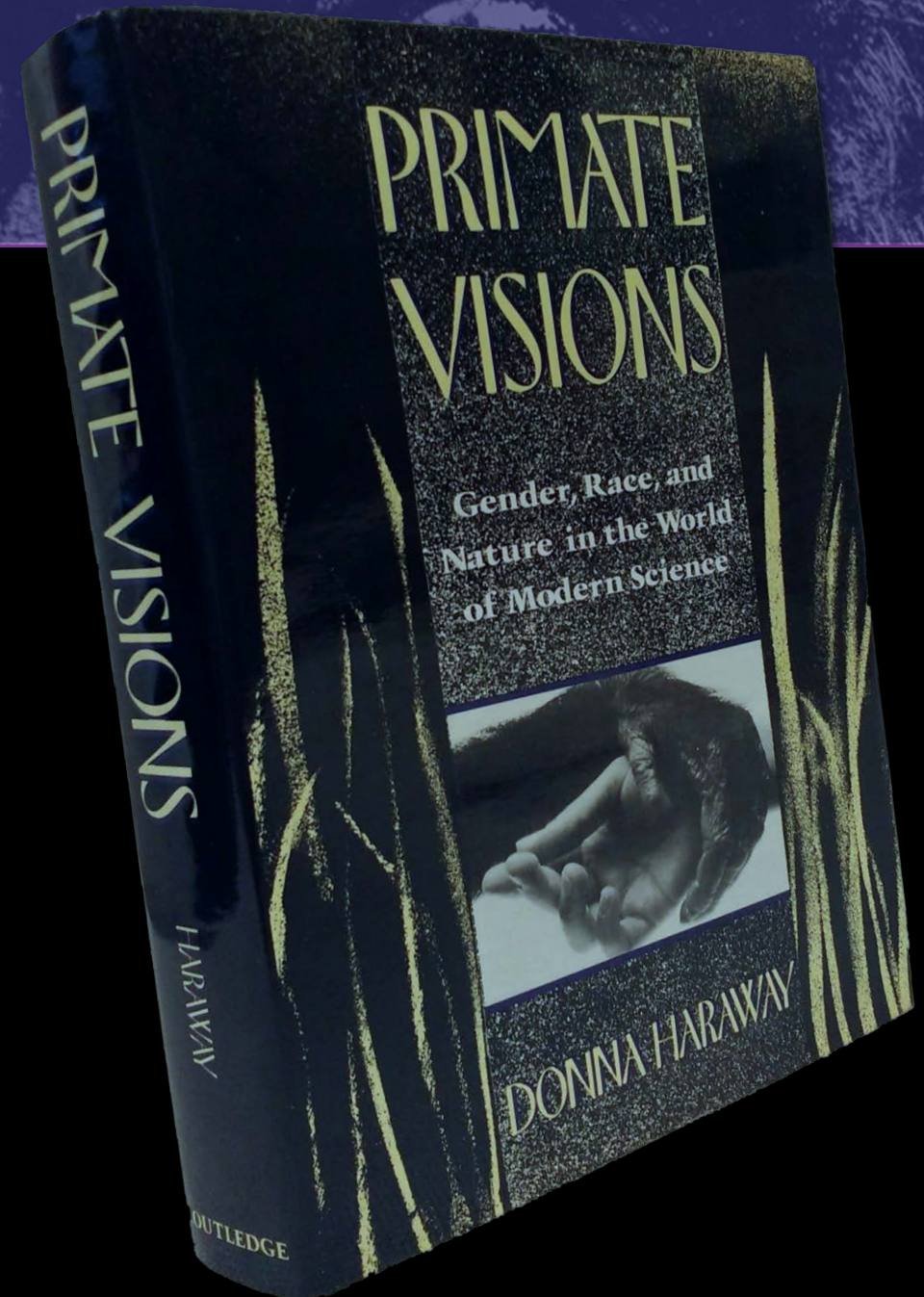
© National Geographic

Searching for our inner ape?

Women and apes

When Ardrey wrote the study of apes (and fossil humans) was – like most science at the time – dominated by men.

The historian and philosopher of science, Donna Haraway has shown how the field was revolutionised during the 1970s as increasing numbers of young women joined it.



Women and apes

Included Jane Goodall, Diane Fossey and Biruté Galdikas. Supported by Louis Leakey, who recruited women to do field work, partly because they were (initially) untrained. He hoped they would be genuinely open-minded observers.



Jane Goodall

In 1960s, men lead the research and studied male chimps. The few women (mainly grad students) were studied mother/infant pairs.

Almost nobody took any interest in what female chimps were doing.



Jane Goodall

When women researchers looked more closely at the behaviours of adult female chimps, they began to discern a matriarchal structure at the heart of chimp society. Male aggression seemed largely peripheral.



Jane Goodall

Became clear that female chimps were intelligently maximising their own reproductive success – something that it had previously been assumed only the males were doing.

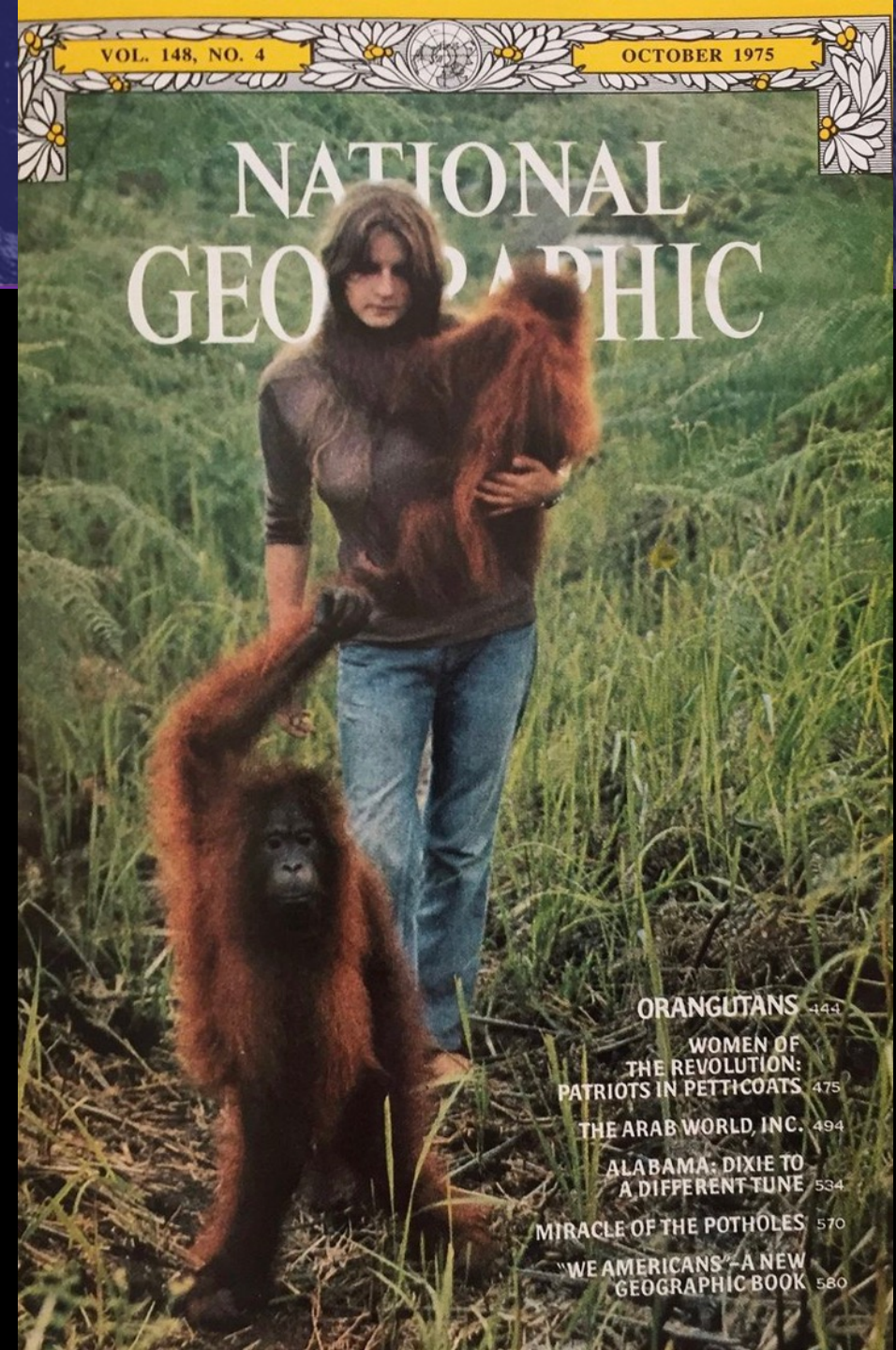
Public image of ape cultures changed dramatically.



Our inner ape

Biruté Galdikas

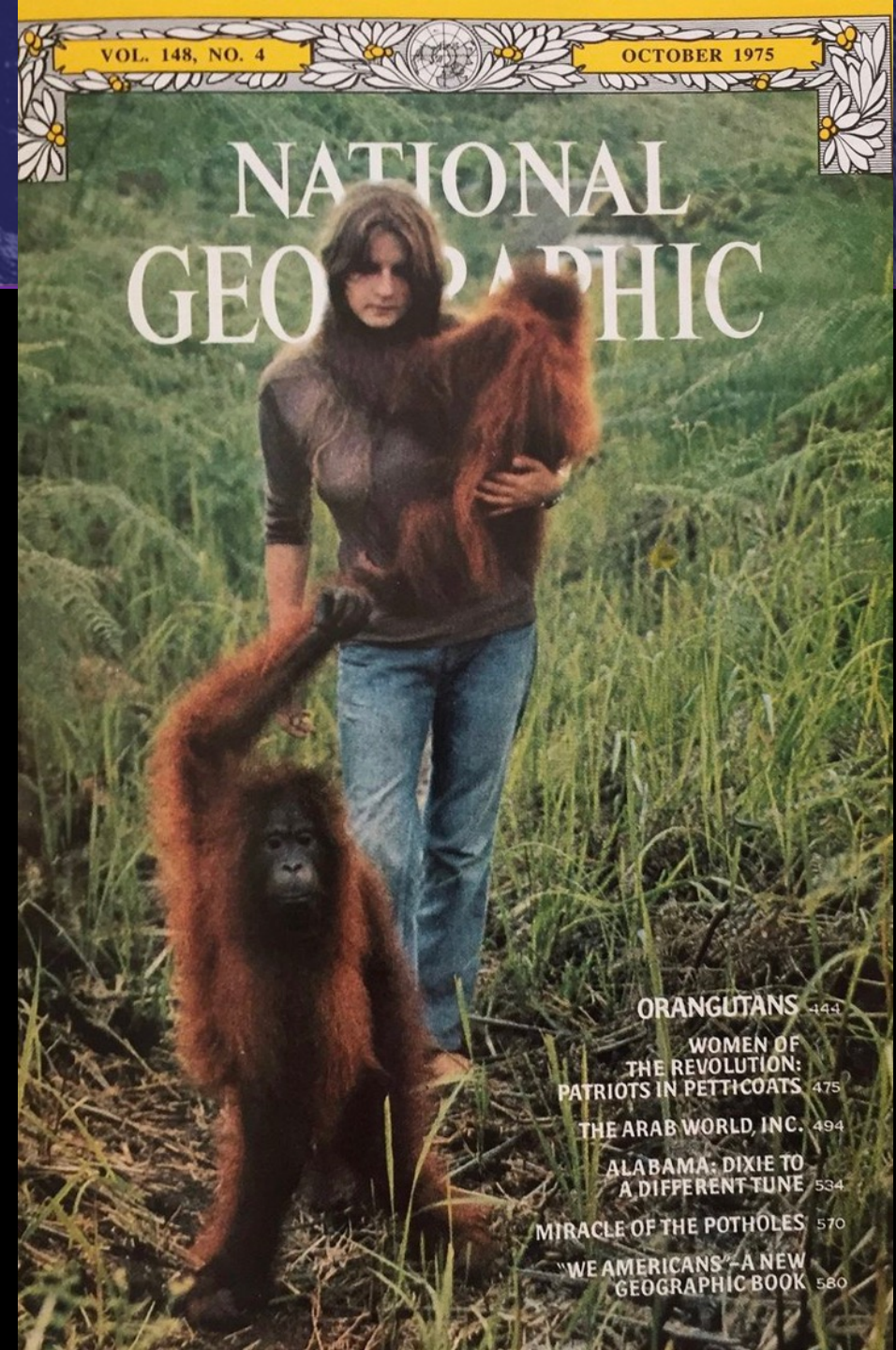
Studied orangutans in Indonesia.
Rehabilitated orphaned orangs.
Become interested in teaching apes
American Sign Language (AMESLAN)
Got Gary Shapiro (one of Washoe's
trainers) to teach one of her orangs,
Sugito, to sign.



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Birutė Galdikas

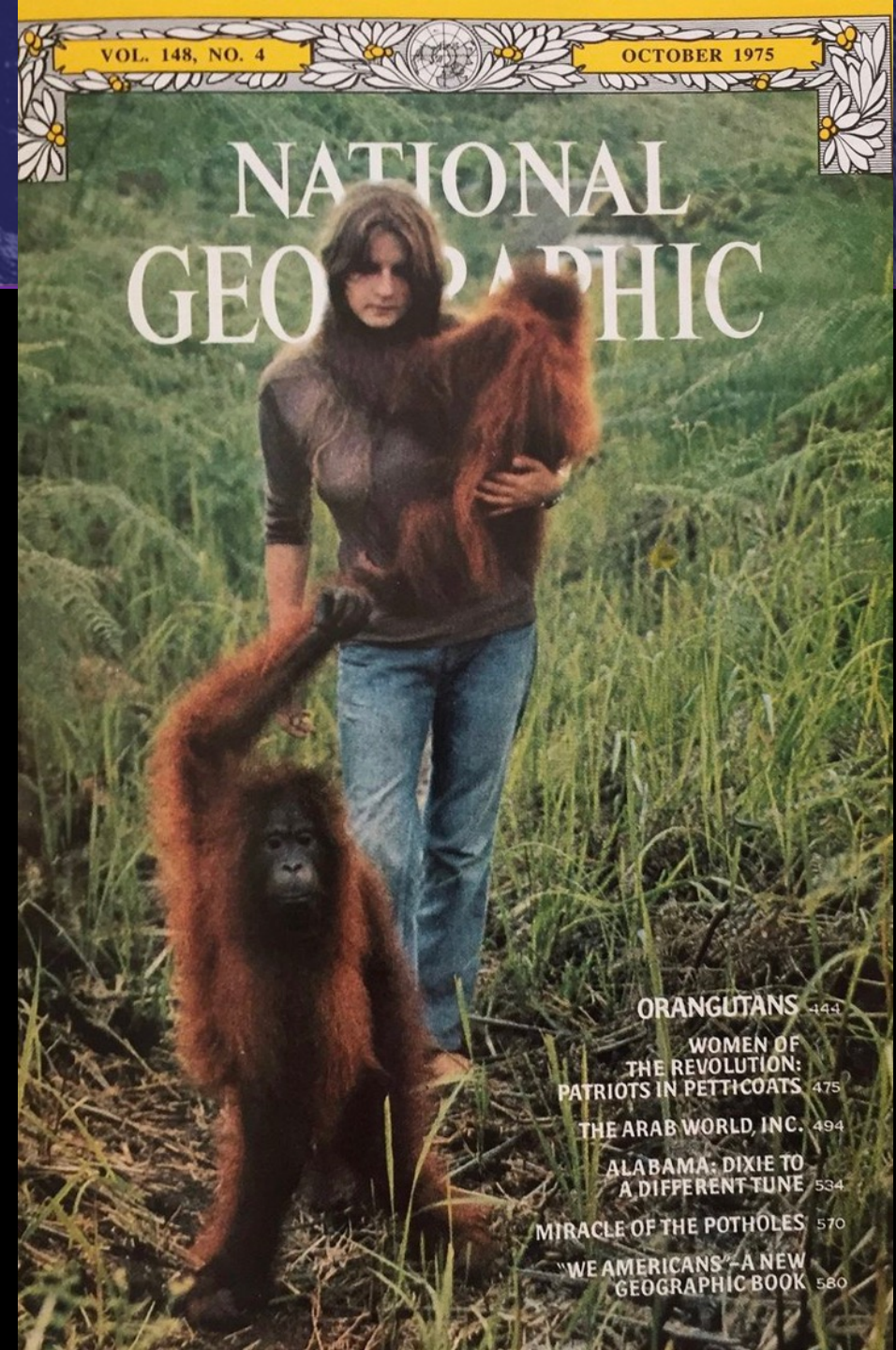
Galdikas explained that she “had often regretted that I would never be able to talk to Sugito, so that I examine how he perceived and interpreted the world. By teaching orangutans sign language in their native habitat, we might find out what was important to them, rather than to us”.



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Birutė Galdikas

Experiment became disastrous when Sugito hit puberty. Began to react to Shapiro as a male rival, then started killing other orangs. Had to be relocated to a distant part of the forest where he could live apart from his kind.



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Birutė Galdikas

“Perhaps the Biblical analogy was apt: Raised by a human mother and exposed to human culture, he had eaten of the ‘tree of knowledge’ and lost his orangutan innocence”.



Galdikas with Siswi, a female orangutan. © Orangutan Foundation International (Borneo)

Sarah Blaffer Hrdy

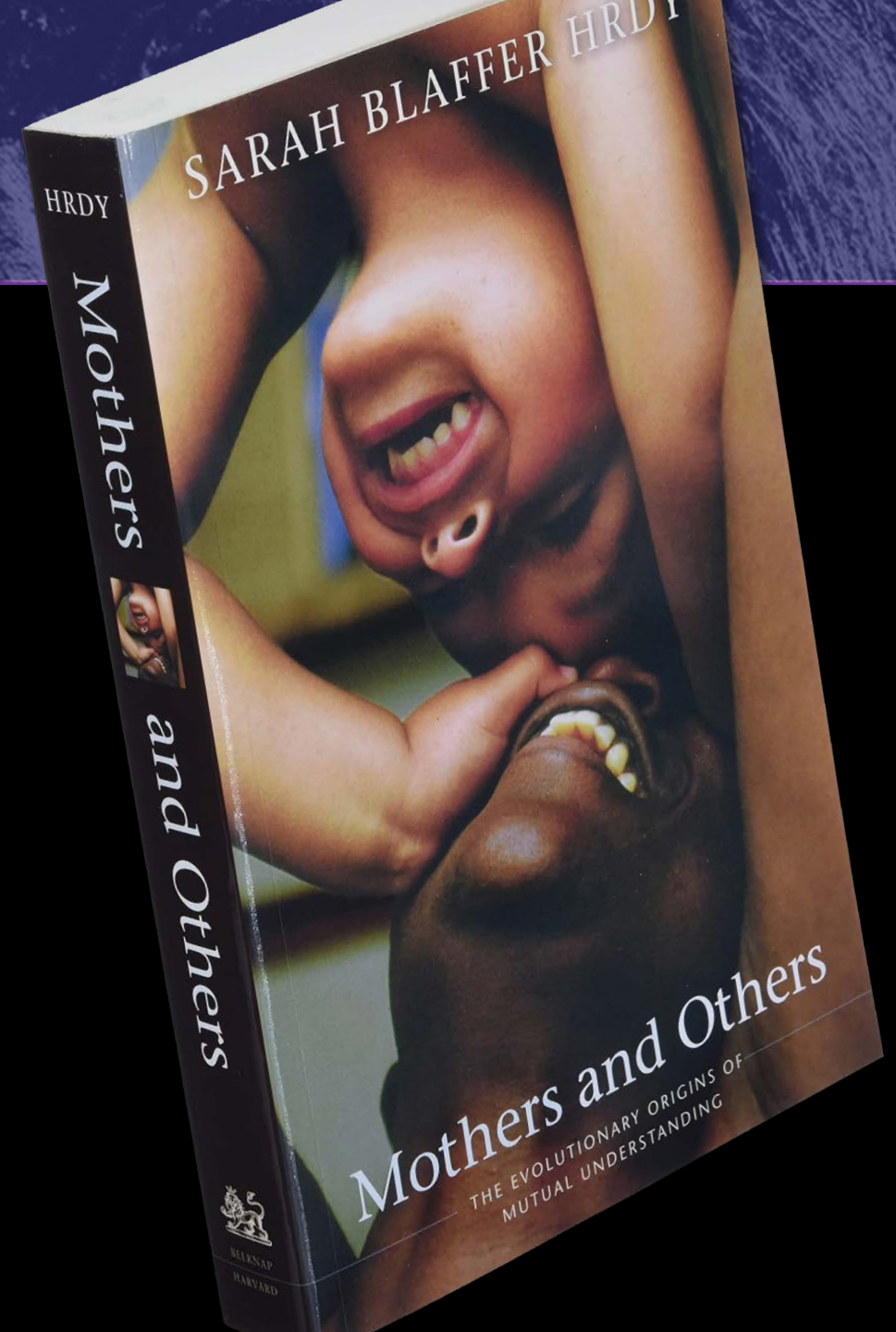
Studied Hanuman langurs at Mount Abu in India. She became an internationally renowned anthropologist whose third book (*The Woman That Never Evolved*, 1981), developed the discoveries that she and other women had made about the sophistication of female primate behaviour.



Our inner ape

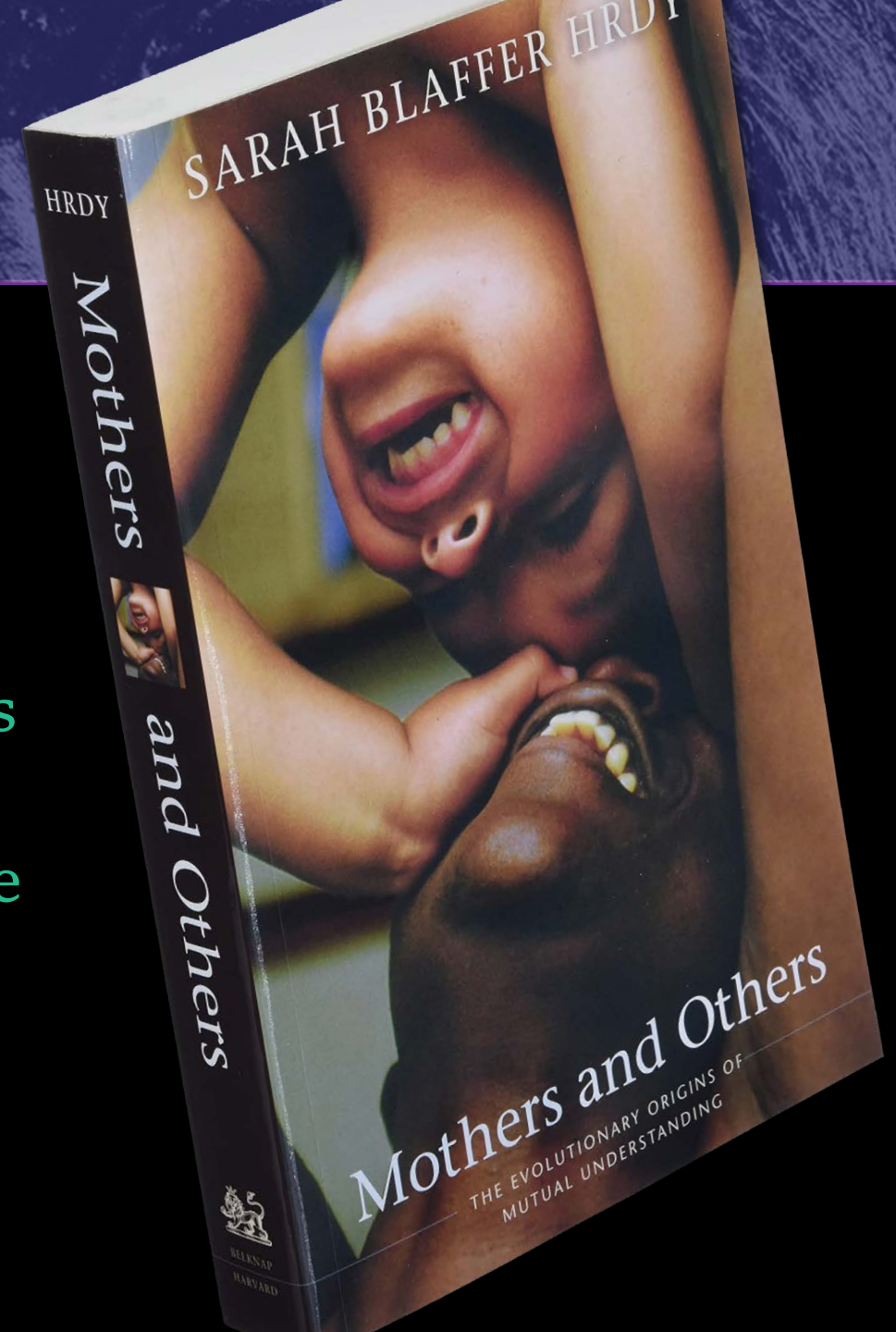
Sarah Blaffer Hrdy

Mothers and Others: The Evolutionary Origins of Mutual Understanding (2009).



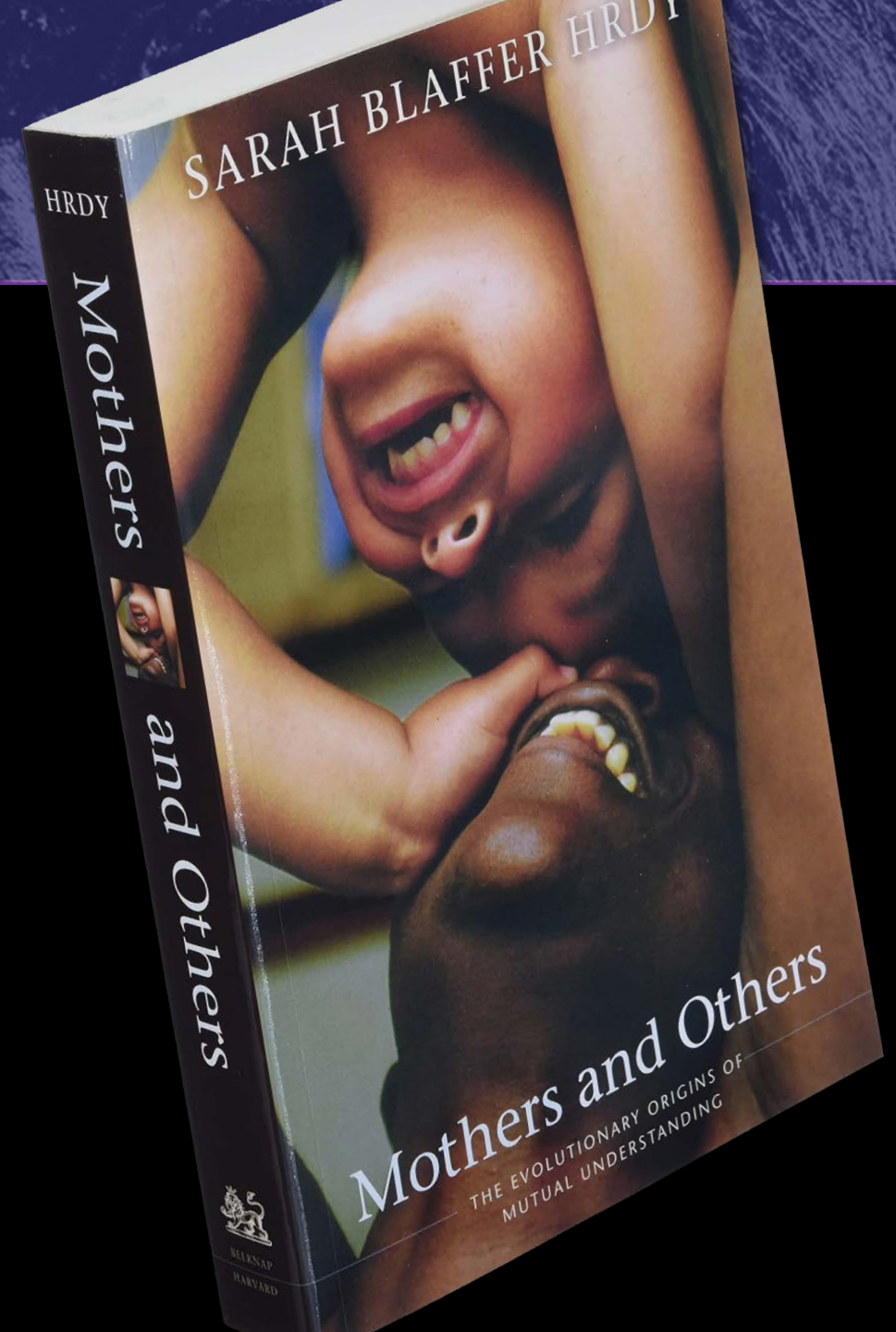
Sarah Blaffer Hrdy

By comparison with apes, human infants are born prematurely. Our ancestors and their infants survived by becoming cooperative parents. Surrounded by adults to whom they were not biologically related, an infant would have relied on the ability to understand what others were thinking.



Sarah Blaffer Hrdy

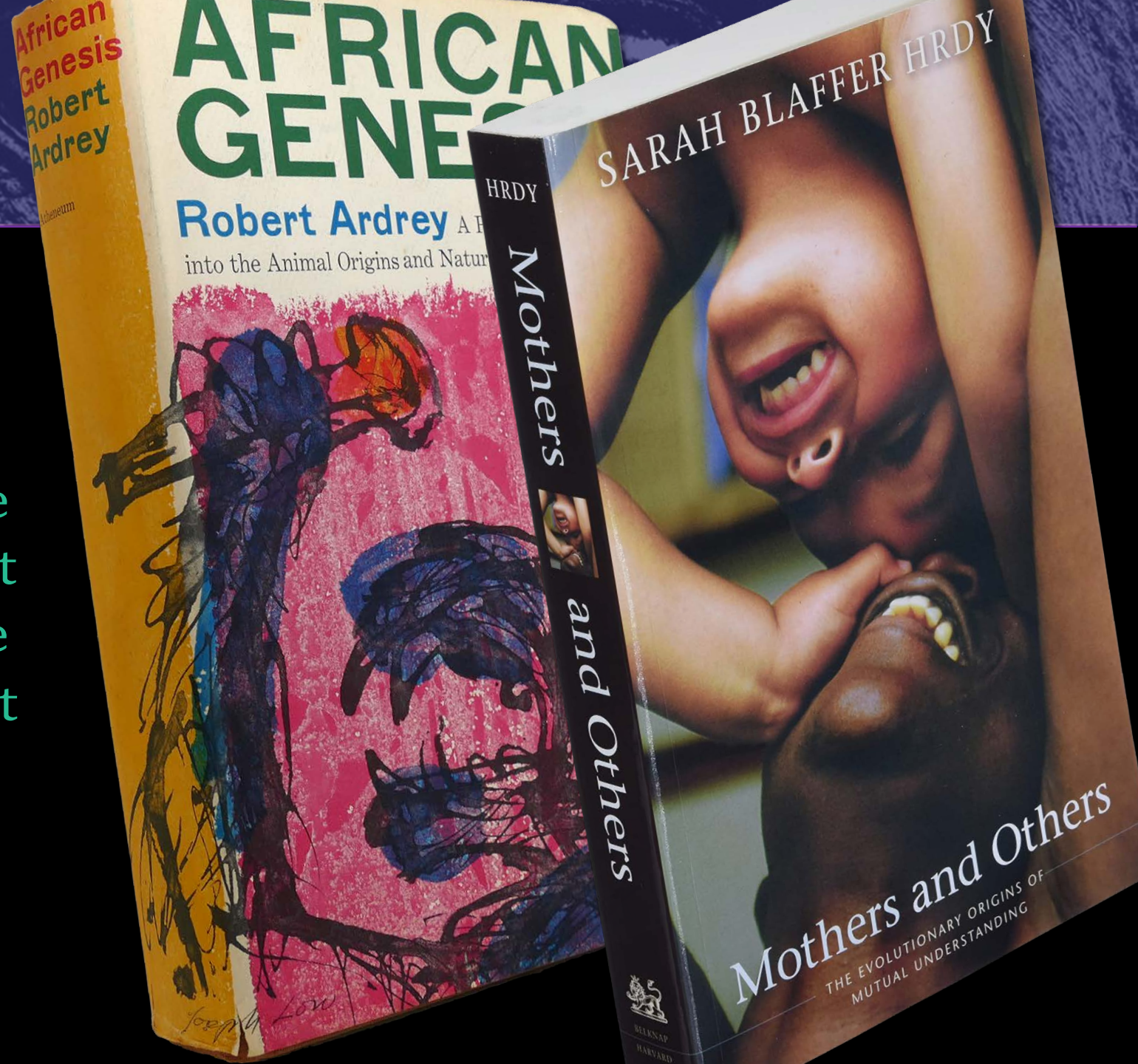
Empathy would have been the essential human trait that allowed our infant ancestors to find the adults who would feed them – while avoiding those likely to harm them.



Our inner ape

So, who is right?

Do the opening scenes of *2001* give us a realistic sense of Australopithecine life, or was Rousseau right to see the angel in our ape ancestors – a creature that didn't exploit or enslave other members of our species?



Our inner ape

Aldous Huxley

Attacked egalitarian beliefs like
Rousseau's as “anti-scientific”:



Aldous Huxley

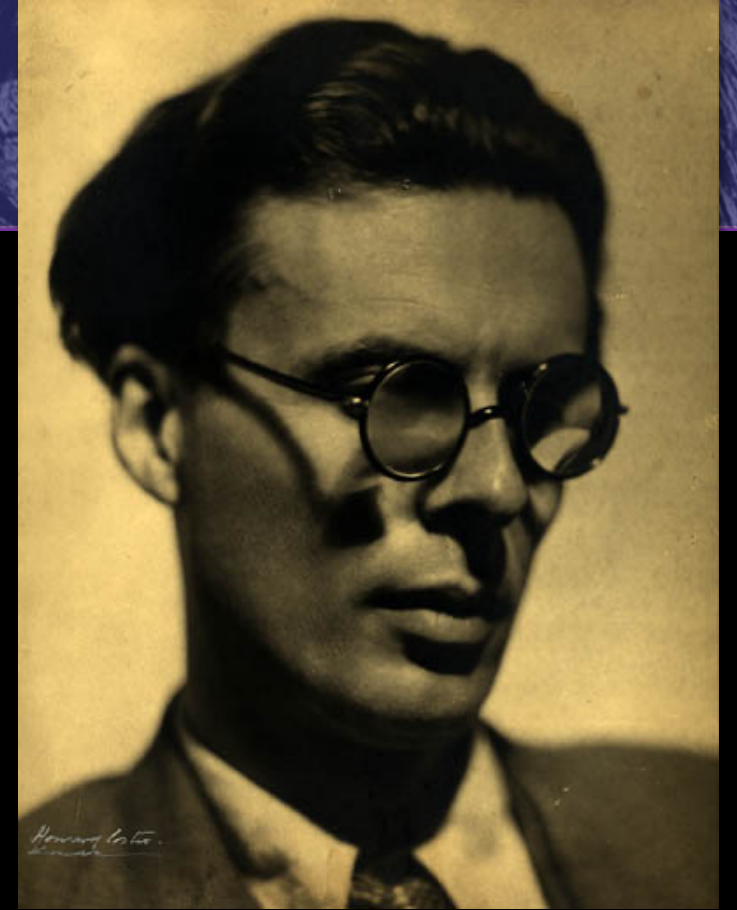
“The doctrine of Original Sin is, scientifically, much truer than the doctrine of natural reasonableness and virtue. Original Sin, in the shape of anti-social tendencies inherited from our animal ancestors, is a familiar and observable fact. Primitively, and in a state of nature, human beings were not, as the eighteenth-century philosophers supposed, wise and virtuous: they were apes”.



Aldous Huxley

He was describing brutal, savage, early-twentieth-century apes (his comments were made a few years before *King Kong* appeared).

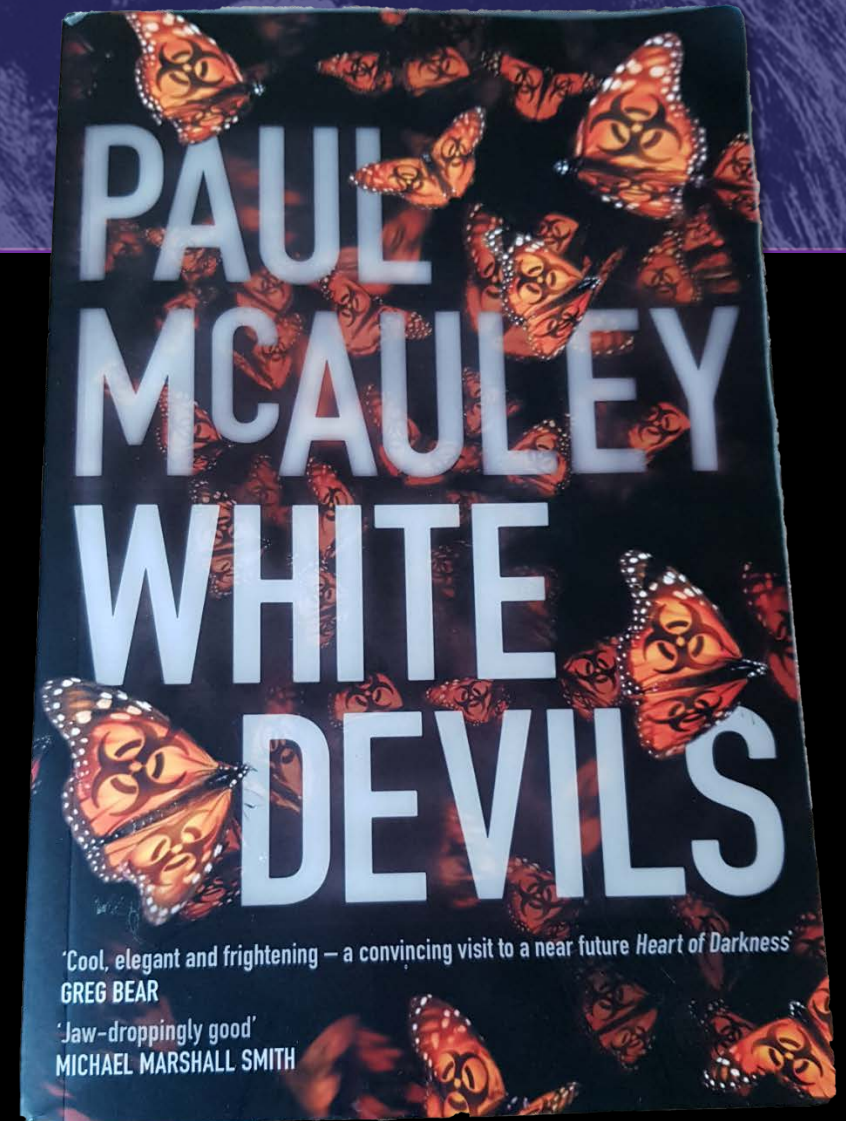
In the twenty first century most of us agree that humans were originally apes; the question now is what sort of apes? Aggressive carnivores or peaceful collaborators?



Our inner ape

Revisiting the past

Paul McAuley's SF novel *White Devils* (2004). Science tries to recreate our pre-human ancestors





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"THE QUESTION IS, IS MAN AN APE OR AN ANGEL? (*A Laugh.*) NOW, I AM ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS. (*Cheers.*)"—MR. DISRAELI'S Oxford Speech, Friday, November 25.