

From Beast to Machine

Transformations of Non-Human Actors in Performing Arts of the 18th and 19th century

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“Mundus universus exercet ursiludium”

About the popularity of animal fightings and baitings

The focus of this contribution is on theater forms that are not necessarily part of conventional history of performing arts. Retrospectively, these forms are usually just considered as historical side notes, despite the immense popularity they enjoyed in their time. We will look at theater types with animals or non-human actors, like animal-baiting, animal dressage and machine theater in the 18th and 19th centuries and see a particular shift in the practices and thus the social/cultural status of non-human actors.

The starting point is a special performing practice. Rather, we normally associate it with the Spanish-speaking world (*corrida*) or as it is known to us from Shakespeare's time (bear-baiting) or going more back in time from Roman Antiquity (*venationes*). It is a theater that was highly popular in its respective time. Yet, with the hegemonic establishment of theater as “moral institutions” (Germ.: *moralische Anstalten*), as Friedrich Schiller called them (1785), they fell prey to being removed from the cultural consciousness.

The Latin phrase “mundus universus exercet ursiludium”, that is “all the world is but a bear-baiting”, dating from the time of Henry VIII (Gomme 1905: 76), is meaningful in many ways. It gives an indication of

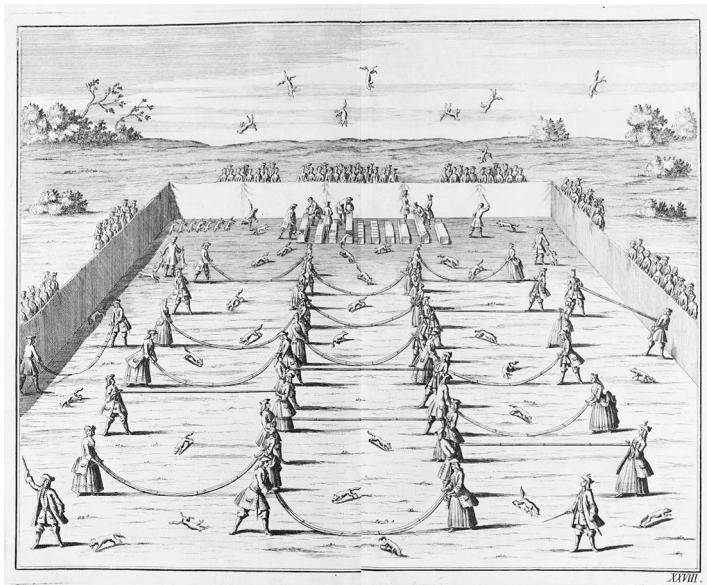
how popular and ubiquitous this type of theater was, that it found its way into a typical *theatrum mundi* metaphor. It is debatable whether the whole world is or was “a bear-baiting”, but it definitely was Eurocentric. Up until the 18th and 19th centuries, animal fighting or baiting arenas could be found all over Europe. For example: in Bayreuth (Lindner 1964: 211), Berlin (Fidicin 1843: 79), Bratislava (Nicolai 1785: 437), Brno (d'Elvert 1852: 80), Budapest (Binal 1972: 39), Graz (Fleischmann 1974: 96), former Königsberg (Bekmann/Bekmann 1751: 787), Moscow (Reimers 1803: 147), Nuremberg (Hampe 1902: 114), Paris (Fayt 2009: 28), Prague (Svátek 1899: 347), Regensburg (Fendl 1988: 136), Warsaw (Frankowska 2003: 231) and in Vienna, which we will focus on.

Theater practices with non-human actors, with animals, were an integral part of European cultures even before the establishment of what we understand today as circus. Such types were not limited to a certain social or cultural milieu, they were part of courtly festivities and of commoner's festivities. An extraordinary insight into this is provided by Hanns Friedrich von Fleming's (1670–1733) “*Der vollkommene deutsche Jäger*” (Engl.: The Perfect German Hunter) from 1719. Fleming gives an overview about various hunting and baiting practices that were performed for the amusement of the nobility. Among them is the so-called fox tossing (Germ.: *Fuchsprellen*): In a cordoned-off area, were several people, each facing the other and holding a long cloth at the ends. Animals (for example young boars, foxes, hares) were let into this area. As soon as one of the animals stepped on the cloth, it was tightened by the opposing person and the animal was thrown into the air (see fig. 1). This practice, which from today's perspective would undoubtedly fall under massive animal cruelty, was an integral part of courtly festivities, such as the wedding ceremony between Leopold I (1640–1705) and Margarita Theresa of Spain (1651–1673) on December 16, 1666 in Vienna (Rink 1708: 158).

From the perspective of theater and cultural studies, three fundamental aspects are recognizable here, among others: (1) The spatial arrangement, which was created decidedly for an audience and contains central theatrical elements; (2) The fact that a certain openness to results was present in the process of fox tossing also shows that a quasi-play-

ful element is present here for the human actors; (3) This practice (and others of this kind) demonstrate that in the course of European cultural histories up to the 19th century, a change becomes recognizable regarding the death of animals. The death of tossed animals is hardly related any more to the satisfaction of primary needs, i.e. the acquisition of food, but shifts to the realm of 'secondary pleasures', i.e. a symbolic, representative and thus representational level.

Figure 1: *Von dem Fuchs-Prellen*



In: Fleming, Hanns Friedrich von (1724): *Des Vollkommenen Teutschen Jägers Anderer Haupt-Theil*, Leipzig: Johann Christian Martini, between p. 182–3.

However, animal baiting and fighting were culturally also part of the non-aristocratic milieu. Particularly worthy of mention here are the practices of the historical carnival. A very vivid example of this is

provided by the description of a carnival in Venice in the mid of the 18th century, in which the author describes an oxen and bear baiting that consisted of three parts: firstly, oxen were driven through the streets and alleys of Venice, which also posed a danger to bystanders and pedestrians. In the second part, oxen were taken to squares where they were baited with dogs. This part usually ends with a bear baiting i.e. a tethered bear was also baited with dogs. The end of this carnival section was the oxen decapitation (Köhler 1765: 62). From a cultural history perspective, the striking difference to a large part of aristocratic practices is that here, despite the theatrical aspect, there is a satisfaction of the primary needs. The eating of the killed animals was still an essential part of this festive culture (Weichmann 1999: 178), combined with the sociability of these practices.

In the course of the 18th century, with the emergence of a bourgeoisie class alongside increasing urbanization, these quasi-separate structures or practices (the separation of courtly festivities and people's festivals) seem to merge. Regarding performing arts involving animals, this is aptly illustrated by the example of the baiting arenas (German: *Hetztheater*). These often significantly shaped the architectural townscape in the cities listed and were often designed as circular buildings. Such a theater in Vienna was located outside the city walls in a rather rough district mainly associated with butchers and tanners – and in this district of mainly low buildings, a large, tall, round theater building stood out.

Recalling the assertion that the whole world was a bear-baiting, it becomes obvious that the baiting practices appearing in various socio-cultural milieus and subsequently the round buildings – against the background of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor and in memory of the architecture of Shakespeare's Globe Theater with its universal claim – suggest to us that this practice was much more strongly anchored in the European cultures (in practices and in a symbolic way) than one could often believe from a current cultural-moral or -ethical view.

Theater reforms during the 18th and 19th centuries were instrumental in excluding certain performing practices and arts from the term "theater" (especially in the German speaking areas). As the 18th century

progressed, we see that the concept of theater became increasingly narrowed, ultimately leading to what we currently define as theater – primarily a literature-based spoken theater (Kirchner 1985). Performing practices involving animals, especially the “Hetztheater”, were eradicated from the conventional understanding of theater, making this an exclusive term.

“Mundus inversus” – “mundus mixtus”

Anthropomorphizations and bestializations of animals in the Viennese Hetzamphitheater

The exclusive cultural morality of society is undoubtedly of enormous importance in every era. From a historiographical perspective, however, it can decisively lead to a selection and emphasis of certain historical events and a neglect of others, according to Bertolt Brecht's historical-theoretical assessment, “The victor always writes the history of the defeated”¹ (Brecht 1964: 261) – which probably comes to light not only on a political level but also on a moral one. Thus, it is not surprising that the baiting practices, the multitude of Hetztheater in Europe hardly found their way into common theater and cultural histories.

One of the largest European Hetztheater was in Vienna and was called the “*kaiserlich-königlich privilegierter Hetzamphitheater unter den Weißgerbern*”, it can be translated as the: “Imperial-royal privileged baiting-amphitheater under the White Tanners” (here simply Hetzamphitheater).

¹ Orig.: “Immer schreibt der Sieger die Geschichte des Besiegten” (translation by David Krych).

Figure 2: Hetzzettel: Ein herrlicher Thierkampf



Vienna: k.-k. priv. Hetzamphitheater, October 8, 1786, paper/print, Theatermuseum Wien: reference PA_RaraG196

The dimensions of the Hetzamphitheater convey the importance and popularity of this practice. Even in view of the rise of Vienna's population from c. 175,000 in 1750 to over 230,000 around 1800 (de Vries 1984: 278), the immense size of the Hetzamphitheater is remarkable. It is also remarkable in comparison to all the other theater institutions or entertainment venues that existed in Vienna or in the Viennese suburbs at the time, such as the *Theater nächst der Burg*, *Theater am Kärntnertor*, *Theater in der Leopoldstadt*, *Freihäustheater*, *Theater in der Josefstadt*, *Landsträßner Theater*, or Georg Stuwer's (1732–1802) fireworks. The Hetzamphitheater was built in 1755, modified in 1766 and 1786 and burned down on September 11, 1805.

ber 1, 1796 after a show. In the incident, almost all the animals either burned alive or were shot by the military. With an inner diameter of 42,6 m, an outer diameter of approx. 53 m, a height of 11,4 m and a capacity for 3000 people, it was the Habsburg capital's largest theater at the time (Tatzer 1969). However, the size itself does not directly provide any information about the performing practices that prevailed there. In the end, one has to rely on other documents or contemporary reports of experience. Regarding the Viennese Hetzamphitheater in particular, there is a uniquely diverse collection of documents. On the one hand, there are the playbills, or *Hetzettel* (see fig. 2), an extraordinary source, which will be at the focus of further considerations here. These documents served, among other things, to advertise the baiting events and express a positive attitude towards these practices. On the other hand, there are contemporary descriptions of the Hetzamphitheater that attempted to discredit it. It is precisely through these texts, strongly influenced by morals and ethics, that we obtain more detailed information on baiting practices. Enlightenment thinkers who spoke out decisively against the Hetzamphitheater and described animal baiting, in some cases in great detail to emphasize how undignified such practices were, contributed significantly to the abolition of this performing practice and its suppression from society's cultural consciousness. In retrospect, some of these descriptions are incredibly helpful for gaining any understanding of what animal baiting spectacles were like. They even provide detailed information that make it possible to bring the Hetztheater back into a cultural-historical consciousness.

These contemporary views are thus immensely helpful in understanding certain aspects of the *Hetzettel* and how the animal fights were staged. Only about 10 percent of the *Hetzettel* have been preserved,² but they give us unique insights into how the (linguistic and

² The largest collection of the *Hetzettel* is preserved in the Wienbibliothek im Rathaus (the Vienna Library in the City Hall). Otherwise, isolated copies can be found in the Theatermuseum in Vienna and in the Landstraße Bezirksmuseum in Vienna. Based on the existing *Hetzettel* and the average number of

theatrical) relationship to animals has changed during the last decades of the Hetzamphitheater.

From a certain moment on, the Hetzzettel differ significantly from all other theater announcements. In addition to the usual information about the place, time and ticket prices, they provide remarkable information – although here only the linguistic aspects will be dealt with. For example, from the 1780s onwards, animal baiting took place to the accompaniment of music. It was announced as “Turkish music”; or Janissary music, adopted from the Ottoman army by the military of several European countries. This music accompanied the animal fights and gave the events some oriental exotics. Animal baiting has been announced by titles since the 1780s. The titles always promised an exceptionality and were usually peppered with certain superlatives. The fact is, however, that the multitude of these animal baiting events resembled each other in their basic dramaturgical structure. The organizers of animal baiting mainly expressed the specialness via the linguistic level. Animal baiting followed a (in German so-called) *Nummerndramaturgie* (number dramaturgy). This dramaturgy refers to the organization or structure of a performance based on distinct, numbered elements or scenes, which can be found in circus, variety performance, music or dance theater, where the sequence of musical numbers or scenes plays a crucial role in the overall narrative and dramatic development. There are three types of such a dramaturgy of the Hetzzettel, closely connected with the special linguistic development of these playbills: number-Hetzzettel, number-narrative-Hetzzettel and narrative-Hetzzettel.

With these types of Hetzzettel we can see a change in the description of animals: a twofold relationship of anthropomorphization and bestialization becomes recognizable. This evolution is best seen when comparing animal baiting from the three said types Hetzzettel.

The first announcement, on a number-Hetzzettel, of such fight analyzed here is from August 13, 1775. It was published in the newspaper *Wiener Zeitung*: “Furthermore for the first time, there is a strong boar that

events (between 1755–1796), it can be assumed that about 90 percent of all announcements no longer exist.

has recently been brought here and is caught and held by a beautiful and strong solo-dog.”³

A similar fight is featured in an announcement from March 23, 1794, on a number-narrative-Hetzzettel: “The boar eager to fight enters as a shot the battlefield; full of bad humor about the arriving guests, it welcomes them so rudely that some conspire not to visit this rough pig any more.”⁴ (Hetzzettel 1794a)

Another boar-dog-fight was announcement on May 20, 1782 on a narrative-Hetzzettel, promising a kind of re-enactment of the Trojan myth: “A Trojan whore, as wild as a boar, adorned with fire feathers and hell flowers, also looks at the horse, and immediately gets a hidden warrior as a lover; but who instantly despises her because of her ugliness, and tugs her braid.”⁵ (Hetzzettel 1782)

We see here a far-reaching change in the narrativization of the numbers. While the first example is written in a very sober style, detailing which animals will fight each other (as background information we only learn that the wild boar was newly acquired and the supposed outcome of the baiting), there are fundamental linguistic changes in the following two examples. The second example shows a particular narrative structure: an introduction (the boar “enters as a shot the battlefield”), a human disposition is attributed to the animal, which comes about as a reaction to the dogs. The dogs are no longer referred to as dogs, but as “arriving guests”. Then a specific linguistic inversion takes place: the generic

3 Orig.: “Weiters folgt zum erstenmal ein neu herbeygeschafte starker Wildschwein, das von einem schönen, und starken Solohund gefangen und gehalten” (translation by David Krych).

4 Orig.: “Schießt das kampfbegierige Wildschwein auf den Platz; voll übeln Hums über die ankommenden Gäste bewillkommt es dieselben so unhöflich, daß mancher sich verschwört, dieser groben Sau keine Aufwartung mehr zu machen” (translation by David Krych).

5 Orig.: “Eine trojanische Dirne, so wild, wie ein Wildschwein, mit Feuer= federn und Höllenblumen geschmückt, beschauet das Pferd ebenfalls, und bekommt gleich einen ver borgenen Krieger zum Liebhaber; der sie aber wegen ihrer Häßlichkeit augenblicklich verachtet, und beym Zopfe herumzerret” (translation by David Krych).

designation “boar” or “pig” becomes a human character designation. The first type of Hetzzettel (number-Hetzzettel) consisted of unrelated fight scenes, the short narratives in the second type (number-narrative-Hetzzettel) were self-contained with no overarching narrative. The third example goes even further in this way, offering such an overarching narrative – and only the metaphorical paraphrase (“as wild as a boar”) alludes to which animal it is. Again, the dog is not referred to as such, but as a “warrior.” The fight between the two animals is given a metaphorical euphemism, an ‘act of love’ between a harlot and a suitor.

The double-bind of anthropomorphization and zoomorphization (i.e. humanization and bestialization of non-human actors) is constructed by language, i.e. by insinuating motivations, intentions and narratives. The basis for this narrativization and this kind of linguistic construction is, on the one hand, anthropomorphization and, on the other hand, a human understanding of morality. Anthropomorphization makes it possible in the first place that such narratives can be created. Further, anthropomorphization is accompanied by a moral understanding that makes it possible to bestialize animals – because ultimately, they only become beasts by having anthropomorphic ideas projected onto them.

These examples reveal two relationships, affecting both the linguistic and visual level (the representation and the presentation). On the linguistic level, a zoomorphism of the textual actors is created with adjectives and comparisons. In contrast, the animal-human relationship is reversed on the visual/performative level, because here the animals have been humanized by masking. Such “disguises and travesties”, as Mikhail Bachtin describes them in the “Grotesque” (Bachtin 1995: 239), as well as the creation of human-animal hybrids, provide the Hetzamphitheater with a grotesque or carnivalesque conception. The last example (the narrative-Hetzzettel) presents a doubling of the relationship between anthropomorphization and zoomorphization. The non-human actors (announcements presenting them as humans) are provided with animal metaphors. In this way, proverbial animalization (e.g. “wild as a boar”) is presented visually.

The next example of another Hetzzettel shows what a remarkable theatrical function this had. The announcement dates from June 15, 1794, i.e. during the Revolutionary Wars with France and the uprisings in Poland:

"A great fight worth seeing, where some animals will fight *a la mode de Paris* [original emphasis], but some in good German, but the baiting-master Stadlmann will appear as a German referee mounted on a pucephalus, and teach this rifraff respect. Now the cage is opened to the fat *Santér* [original emphasis], in German brewmaster, and immediately afterwards to a strong Russian, then to two quarreling Poles, to a big *Urs de France* [original emphasis], to a *Petit maitre* [original emphasis], who knows how to dance well, and to two rhythmic Transylvanian bears, to the big, beautiful deer, who is not up to any cunning or deceit, like *Mr. Orleans* [original emphasis] the wolf, a disguised red-clad *Mr. Bœuf* [original emphasis], and the *Madame Sangulier* [original emphasis] who wanted to make this fight extremely twisted, if not the baiting-master on a well-trained Hungarian Ox appeared mounted, who, as a German referee, seeks to preserve the French-minded, with due respect through his fearless courage and bravery, like a true noble German beseemed, and with the charging ox, if he does not have to leave it by force, he takes away all the animals present, and he finally takes up a duel with one of these two oxen, so that the baiting-master leaves the battlefield all alone as the undefeated one."⁶ (Hetzettel 1794b)

6 Orig.: "Ein großer sehenswürdiger Kampf, wobey einige Thiere *a la mode de Paris*, einige aber auf gut deutsch sich herumschlagen werden, der Hetzmeister Stadlmann aber wird als deutscher Kampfrichter auf einen Puzecephalus beritten erscheinen, und dieses Lumpengesind in Respekt erhalten. Jetzt wird die Falle den wampeten *Santér*, auf deutsch Bräumeister, gleich darauf einem starken Rußen, nachgehends zweyen zanksüchtigen Pohlen, einem großen *Urs de France*, einem *Petit maitre*, welcher weis gut zu tanzen, und zweyen taktfesten siebenbürger Bären, dem großen schönen Waldhirschen, der keine List und Trüge im Schilde führt, wie *Mr. Orleans* der Wolf, ein verkappter ganz roth gekleideter *Mr. Bœuf*, und die *Madame Sangulier* die diesen Kampf äußerst verwirrt machen wollten, wenn nicht der Hetzmeister auf einen gut abgerichteten ungarischen Ochsen beritten erschiene, der die Französischgesinnten als deutscher

On the one hand, a total of three actors (most likely bears) are ascribed an anthropomorphic status, namely “a strong Russian” and “two quarrelling Poles”, in that the nationalities are substantivized adjectives. On the other hand, further animals are subjectivized mainly with French terms. With “Santér” (probably meaning *santé*, i.e. “cheers”), alcohol consumption is referred to, which is why the “brewmaster” is also given as an explanation. The “Urs de France” (probably meaning *ours de France*) means something like French bear. The “Petit maître” (actually *Petit Maitre*) stands for a dandy, who was probably also a bear, since the reference to his dancing abilities is given. The wolf participating in the fight, which as usual has a negative connotation, is declared to be “Mr. Orléans”, and further appear gentleman oxen (“Mr. Bœuf”) and a lady boar (“Madame Sangulier”, actually *sanglier*).

About three months before this baiting event, on March 24, 1794, the Polish general Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746–1817) proclaimed an uprising in Kraków, ultimately in response to the second partition of Poland (1793), and historically known as the Kościuszko Uprising. The national nouns of the animals used in the baiting in the Hetzamphitheater, as well as their respective attributions, namely “strong” on the one hand and “quarrelsome” on the other, point to those events condemning revolutionary behavior of the 1790s.

This interpretation becomes even clearer when the anti-French vocabulary of this number in the Hetzzettel is examined more closely. It is obvious that negative connotations are involved here, because French is associated here with alcoholism, dandyism, and deviousness. At the same time, a double devaluation is formulated with “Mr. Bœuf” and “Madame Sangulier”: in this linguistic usage, the oxen and the wild boar do not merely function as a reference to the animals but express an

Kampfrichter im gehörigen Respekt durch seinen unerschrockenen Muth und Tapferkeit, wie es einen wahren edlen Deutschen gezimmt, zu erhalten trachtet, und mit dem stürmmischen Ochsen, wenn er ihn nicht mit Gewalt verlassen muß, alle anwesenden Thiere abschaffet, und er zuletzt erst mit einem dieser zweyen Ochsen einem Zweykampf aufnimmt, so daß der Hetzmeister ganz allein als Unbesiegter den Kampfplatz verläßt” (translation by David Krych).

insult via the anthropomorphization by means of “Mr.” and “Madame.” Thus, a human being is equated to an oxen and a wild boar, respectively. The further decisive indication of a political reference is found in the attributes attached to “Mr. Bœuf”, namely that he appears as “disguised and red-clad.” Here, the adjective “disguised” can, on the one hand, express furtive, clandestine or veiled behavior. On the other hand, the circumlocution “red-clad” refers to a cap, namely to the Phrygian cap or Jacobin cap (*bonnet rouge*), the symbol of revolutionary and republican France.

If other military events of the year 1794 are now considered in this context, then in addition to the Kościuszko Uprising, the Austro-Russian Turkish War and the First Coalition War or First Revolutionary War (1792 to 1797) with Austria, Prussia and smaller German states fighting against revolutionary France were still in the foreground. In this sense, the consequences of the revolutionary events seem to have found their way into the Viennese Hetzamphitheater in a theatrical-propagandistic form, where animals became political actors or representatives on a linguistic level, where the wording provides evidence of an antagonistic position the public of Vienna held towards France and Poland.

The obviously anti-French attitude seems more emphatic here, if the view is directed to the human involvement of the number of June 15, 1794. Again and again, the baiting-master Mattias Stadelmann, who was announced in it, is praised as a “German referee”. With the nouns “bravery” and “courage” as well as the adjectives “undaunted,” “noble,” and “true,” he forms the character antithesis to the “French-minded.” His appearance on the “Pucephalus,” i.e., on the “ox-headed,” expresses a reference to the warhorse *Bucephalus* or *Boucephalas* of Alexander the Great, elevates him both literally and symbolically: thus, seated on the ox, Stadelmann towers above all in height and in historical scope.

Accordingly, the already inflationary attributions of nationality and origin have a double function: on the one hand, they could suggest a multi-national animal gathering under imperial and royal patronage, which also advertised a cultural-political feat. On the other hand, it becomes apparent that this inclusive, suggestive method, could reference current events. But an exclusive character of nationality formations

was possible, too. According to Eric Hobsbawm, it is thus evident that the creation of a nation, namely the German or German-speaking, shimmers through in distinction to France (1991: 19). We could even go so far as to say that such opposition was the basis, for the founding of a German nation, if we consider the Franco-German War of 1870/1871. But considering the linguistic construction, a discourse of superiority emerges here: the “German” baiting-master Stadelmann stands out with a loftiness, superiority, and an extraordinary position in the multinational animal turmoil. Whether it is the obviously negatively connoted Polish and French or positively attributed Russian participants, they are non-human actors. From this perspective this means: On one side the *animala inferioria* and on the other the human Stadelmann as *dominus terrae*, or *dominus nationum*.

By using these linguistic instruments, the non-human actors can become politico-military representatives. Thus, current events could be processed theatrically. It makes a big difference when the boar on the battlefield is referred to as “Madame sangulier” by the audience.

These reversals or linguistic masking show up on another level: with the audience. The paradoxical circumstance has already been noted that it is largely thanks to those who spoke out against such events that we can nowadays understand what animal baiting looked like. Probably the most concise and most detailed example of this is provided by Friedrich Nicolai (1733–1811), the prominent Berlin Enlightenment philosopher who published the record of his journey in 1781 through Europe in book form. This journey led him, among other places, to Vienna, where he also visited the Hetzamphitheater. As expected, his verdict on animal baiting was terrible. But in this description Nicolai also undertakes an inverse reversal to the Hetzzettel. Thus, he describes “vicious laughter [...], which the spectators emit, and the intemperate clapping with the hands, and the stamping with the feet”⁷ (Nicolai 1784: 635). In this

7 Orig.: “[...] das viehische Gelächter [...], welches die Zuschauer ausstoßen, und das unmäßige Geklatsche mit den Händen, und das Getrampel mit den Füßen” (translation by David Krych).

context, he writes about a “ghastly laughter of the spectators”⁸ as well as the “guffawing laughter of the raw crowd that feasted on the death agonies of the animal”⁹ (Nicolai 1784: 635ff.). With these descriptions, rich in imagery, Nicolai inverts the relationship between non-human and human actors by subjecting the animals to be fought to his expressions of pity while at the same time bestializing the audience.

At a first glance, the Viennese Hetzamphitheater seems to represent an inverted world (*mundus inversus*): Animals are anthropomorphized and humans are bestialized. What is more apparent in this context, however, is that this is much more a mixed world (*mundus mixtus*). In every respect, it can be seen that at least two contrary realities met there: the linguistic reality, which anthropomorphized (and thus bestialized) the non-human, met the physical reality, where animals were forced to fight until death. This blending of human and animal culminates on the side of Nicolai’s audience description ultimately follows the logic of the Hetzzettel and transfers it to the entire theater, where humans become the bestial actors in its perception and linguistic reality.

“... ac si cadaver essent”

From external violence to internal obedience

With the 1796 fire of the Hetzamphitheater, not only did this theater form came to an end but during this period we can also observe a general shift or transformation of the animal-human relationship in cultural performances. Twelve years after the end of the Hetzamphitheater, the so-called *Circus gymnasticus* opened in Vienna under the direction of Christoph de Bach (1768–1834).

However, we must not see this development as a direct transfer. Parallel to the Hetzamphitheater, theaters that included forms and practices of the circus existed and established themselves in Vienna, such as the

8 Orig.: “[...] gräßliches Gelächter der Zuschauer” (translation by David Krych).

9 Orig.: “[... das] wichernde Gelächter des rohen Haufens, der sich an den Todesqualen des Thieres weidete” (translation by David Krych).

Landstrasser Theater or the Royal Circuit of the British equestrian artist Johann Hyam (1733–1816). Likewise, the Hetzamphitheater was not only used for baiting performances but also as a guest venue for horsemanship and acrobatics.¹⁰ In this respect, the change was not a sharp break, a caesura suggesting the advent of something ‘new’ (as often depicted in historiography), but took place in parallel with the old.

The *Circus gymnasticus* represents what we would also call a circus today, both conceptually and through the arts shown there. The wooden building with a glass dome designed by the famous architect Joseph Kornhäusel (1782–1860) was built in the Prater (Vienna’s recreation and entertainment area). There de Bach became particularly well known with his dressage of deer: “The circus rider de Bach in Vienna has a deer which obeys his word, prostrates himself at his command, and stands quietly in the fireworks that pop and spray around him. It doesn’t move when a pistol is fired from between its antlers.”¹¹ (Chimani 1820: 175)

The comparison between deer-baiting with dogs in the Hetzamphitheater and trained deer in the *Circus gymnasticus* illustrates a new principle of rule and domination that is emerging through theatrical practices. During the 19th century, this development took on even greater proportions, particularly in Vienna. Initially only active as a touring troupe, the so-called “Großes Wiener Affentheater” (Engl.: Great Viennese Monkey Theater) was established in Vienna from the middle of the 19th century (Krych 2013: 146ff.) under the direction of Heinrich Schreyer (1793–1847). Scenes with animals (primarily monkeys and dogs) disguised as human beings were presented in a number dramaturgy.¹²

Compared to the practices in the Hetzamphitheater in Vienna, we can observe a certain development that affects both anthropomorphiza-

¹⁰ Compare the collection of Hetzzettel in the Wienbibliothek (signatory: C16361).

¹¹ Orig.: “Der Kunstreiter de Bach in Wien hat einen Hirsch, der ihm auf das Wort gehorcht, sich auf Geheiß niederwirft, und ruhig im Kunstfeuer steht, welches um ihn herum knallt und sprühet. Er bewegt sich nicht wenn eine Pistole zwischen seinen Geweihen losgeschossen wird” (translation by David Krych).

¹² Compare the collection of Affentheater announcements in the Wienbibliothek (signatory: D-79738/05).

tion and the domination of nature in general. In the Hetzamphitheater, domination over nature is expressed in an ambivalent relationship: on the one hand, through the relationship between life and death and, on the other hand, through the double-bind of anthropomorphization and bestiality. In contrast, the principle of rule and domination in de Bach's *Circus gymnasticus* or in Schreyer's Affentheater is based on discipline, dressage and control: bestiality is tamed by the trainer, and anthropomorphization (especially of dogs and monkeys) is not only shown by masking but must also be reflected in their actions. In this transformation of the principle of rule and domination over non-human actors, we see a shift from violence to obedience as means of control. On stage, the effects on the non-human actors are shifted from the body to the soul: In this case the animal does not have to die; it should function and serve in blind obedience. In German the phrase "*Kadavergehorsam*" is used, it means "cadaver obedience". Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) provided the most striking formulation. The rules of the Jesuit order he wrote demand that the faithful submits himself, his will and his body to God as if he were a cadaver, "ac si cadaver essent" (Loyola 1998: 740). In this sense, in terms of theater practices, we see a shift towards the animals' inward: they must obey. The spectacle is no longer based on the representation of external violence, ironized or satirized through linguistic anthropomorphization. It is based on both linguistic and representational anthropomorphization, i.e. a congruent relationship between language (the announcement) and the representation (the actual performance). This 'blind obedience' or 'cadaver obedience' implies a form of denaturalization which relegates non-human actors to the realm of mechanical beings.

"Duo corpora animalis"

On the mechanization of life

The history of ideas on the mechanization of life did not first appear in the context of the industrial revolutions in the 19th century. Here too, parallel or synchronous developments took place, which thwarted the pre-

vailing structures and often did not actually develop until later. In this thematic context, one philosopher stands out whose writings were called “*mauvais livres*” by his contemporary Voltaire (Voltaire 1990: X). This is Julien Offray de la Mettrie (1709–1751).

In his book *L'homme machine* (1747), De La Mettrie presented one of the most radical philosophies regarding the mechanization of life. He radicalized and totalized René Descartes' mechanical model of animals. De la Mettrie understood not only the non-human animal as a machine, but also the human animal. And so he comes to the provocative statement that “those haughty, vain, self-praising beings who are marked off by their pride more than by the label ‘men’ – are basically only animals and upright-crawling machines”¹³ (Bennett 2009: 29). And conversely: He believed that self-education were not the sole cornerstone of human dominance over animals. He illustrates this point by focusing on monkeys:

“I am virtually certain, given the ape's similarity to us in structure and operations, that if we went about it in the right way we could teach this animal to utter sounds and consequently to learn a language. Then it would be no longer a ‘wild man’ or an imperfect man, but a perfect man, as small ‘man of the town’ – as against ‘man of the wood’ –, with as much material – as much *muscle* – for thinking and profiting from its education as we have.”¹⁴ (ibid: 9)

13 Orig.: “[...] que ces êtres fiers & vains, plus distingués par leur orgueil, que par le nom d'Hommes, quelque envie qu'ils aient de s'élever, ne sont au fond que des Animaux, & des Machines perpendiculairement rampantes” (Mettrie 1748: 96).

14 Orig.: “[...] que je ne doute presque point, si on exerceoit parfaitement cet Animal, qu'on ne vînt enfin à bout de lui apprendre à prononcer, & par conséquent à savoir une langue. Alors ce ne seroit plus ni un Homme Sauvage, ni un Homme manqué: ce seroit un Homme parfait, un petit Homme de Ville, avec autant d'étoffe ou de muscles que nous-mêmes, pour penser & profiter de son education” (Mettrie 1748: 30).

If we think now of the practices of the Große Wiener Affentheater, where monkeys had to perform small scenes disguised as human beings, then it seems that almost 100 years after the publication of these ideas from *L'homme machine*, they have been presented theatrically.

De La Mettrie's mechanistic conception puts culturally formed hierarchies, which present themselves as ontological, in the background, since there is now no difference between human and non-human actors. He defines the constitution of a human superiority from a lack of instincts, so that we could say here that the human characteristics of education and knowledge are simply based on a deficiency: "So nature made us to be beneath the animals, or at least to exhibit vividly the great achievements of education, which is the only thing that can remove us from that level and eventually place us above the animals."¹⁵ (ibid: 15)

Knowledge of mechanization seems to be the basis of human dominance (not only education). With this knowledge, there is also a progressive strengthening of economic-capitalist and bourgeois structures. That means: the increasing displacement of a festival culture, where animals were not only viewed as mere economic beings. This method of domination over nature does not mean that there were no animal trainings before the 19th century, but it shows a progressive economization with capitalist-industrial transformations.

The course from Beast-Machine to Man-Machine, which is historical in terms of ideas or philosophy, as described by Leonora Cohen-Rosenfield in her study of the same title on the animal-soul problem from Descartes to La Mettrie (1940), is not fashionable in such a teleology with other cultural-historical practices. In a temporal parallel to the baiting-events in Vienna, to those popular culture elements in which the dividing lines between human and non-human actors were partially dissolved, a further dissolution of the animal-human difference is shown in the sense of de La Mettrie: this was achieved by means of

¹⁵ Orig.: "La Nature nous avoit donc faits pour être au-dessous des Animaux, ou du moins pour faire par là même mieux éclater les prodiges de l'Education, qui seule nous tire du niveau & nous élève enfin au-dessus d'eux" (Mettrie 1748: 48).

mechanics performed. With Jacques de Vaucanson's (1709–1782) "Le Canard digérateur", a mechanical duck, a technical implementation of such a mechanistic idea has taken place (D'Allemande 1900: 222). Wolfgang von Kempelen (1734–1804) attracted attention with his "Schachiturken" (Engl.: "Chess Turk") so that he also appeared with it at the Viennese court (Wiener Zeitung, August 16, 1775): A chess-playing, orientalized, anthropomorphic mechanical figure, which, however, was operated by a human hidden in the case underneath the chessboard. From the 1810s onwards there was an increasing spread of these forms in Vienna, which was dubbed "Automatentheater" (Engl.: "Automata Theater"). Matthias Tendler (1753–1825) became particularly well known in this context. This is how it was reported about Tendler's creations: his "mechanical artists and their horses" do "everything that any vivacious circus rider company is able to do; they imitate in the most natural way all and every admirable art, jumps, turns and vaulting, which have been presented by the most famous English riders."¹⁶ (Jassoy 1819: 215f.)

The statement "*plaisir superbe de forcer la nature*" made by Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825) with regard to the Versailles Garden, i.e. "the magnificent pleasure to do violence to nature" (Laurent 1818: 75), could suggest that an external impact of violence describes the pleasurable experience (the cutting of plants, the external, representative arrangement of nature, i.e. dominance by means of external force), such as the aristocratic hunting events with thousands of animals killed, the carnivalesque forms of a carnival ox or the Hetzamphitheater with the killings of animals based on economic reasons. But here the aforesaid shift to the inward becomes apparent.

Already shimmering through the 18th century was the increasing separation of so-called real value and the show value (in German *Realw-*

16 Orig.: "[die] mechanischen Kunstreiter und deren Pferde [...] leisten] alles dasjenige, was nur irgend eine belebte Kunstreiter=Gesellschaft zu leisten im Stande ist; sie ahmen auf das natürlichste alle und jede bewunderungswürdige Künste, Sprünge, Wenden und Voltigirungen nach, welche von den berühmtesten englischen Bereitern vorgestellt worden sind" (translation by David Krych).

erte and *Schauwerte*), with the latter dominating in the following century. The aristocratic hunting events, animal baiting in the Hetzamphitheater may have been characterized by a spectacular and staged character, but there were still moments of real value. Certain killed animals were ceremoniously eaten after the hunt, and the Hetzamphitheater participated in subsidizing the poor fund (Tatzer 1969: 112). Real and show values still belonged together, even if the real values only functioned as a means of social and moral compatibility with the show values, so that one can assume a double value for certain animals. With regard to the dressage animals, this is no longer an option. The mechanization of life and the shift to the inside with the anthropomorphic coherence it brought about (Schreyer's monkeys were announced as human beings and appeared disguised as human beings) seem to have played a decisive role in the separation of a physiological and psychological consumption, as described by Alfons Paquet in *Das Ausstellungsproblem in der Volkswirtschaft* (Engl: *The Exhibition Problem in Economics*):

“[...] T]he enterprises created for the amusement of wide circles of people, some stationary, some wandering from place to place, for the presentation of objects worth seeing in exchange for direct equivalents. This category includes establishments that serve exclusively to satisfy lower and higher psychological consumption needs, such as show booths, circuses, panopticons, panoramas and theaters.”¹⁷ (Paquet 1908: 38)

The double value of animals or non-human actors is thus dissolved because the use value of the performers is linked to a symbolic equivalent, which is exclusively determined by the show value. The dissolution of

17 Orig.: “[... D]ie zur Belustigung weiter Volkskreise geschaffenen teils stationären, teils von Ort zu Ort wandernden Unternehmen zur Vorführung sehenswerter Gegenstände gegen unmittelbare Äquivalente. Als in diese Kategorie gehörig erscheinen die ausschließlich der Befriedigung der niederen und höheren psychologischen Konsumationsbedürfnisse dienenden Betriebe, wie Schaubuden, Zirkus, Panoptikum, Panorama, Theater” (translation by David Krych).

the double value, the double body of the animal (*duo corpora animalis*) also means stricter social classifications of animals. Animals intended for the physiological consumption of humans, such as an ox or a bull, are reduced to a pure real value, for slaughter or for work. And those animals that can perform dressage or are not intended for physiological consumption are reduced to a show value. In all cases, the *raison d'être* of animals seems to be based solely on value categories assigned to them by humans.

The dissolution of the double value is also accompanied by the division of the double body of the animals. While there was an increasing linguistic-discursive anthropomorphization of the animals in the Hetzzettel (fictional level of reality), this being contrary to the baiting practices themselves (physical level of reality), the double value of oxen and bulls manifesting both a show and real value body are reduced to only one body due to changes in theater practices during the 19th century. In the connection of real and show value, of an anthropomorphization and bestialization, of a contrast between written application and actual baiting practices, a double structure is revealed in the Hetzamphitheater: the physical and fictional levels of reality do not seem to be separated in such a clear way. The physical level is not removed completely, so that the double body of the animals still shows up.

The night of September 1 to 2, 1796, i.e. the fire of the Hetzamphitheater, and the subsequent ban on baiting events in Vienna give reason to assume that a historical rupture took place that banished this institution not only from the cityscape but also from cultural memory. Despite the popularity of baiting theaters such practices were selectively separated from an increasingly hegemonic form of literature-based spoken theater. Hetztheater were excluded from the lofty ranks of theater history since they did not reflect progress nor function as moral institutions. If this supposedly Enlightenment desire existed or continues to exist to see history as a steady upward movement, a look at 18th century Hetzamphitheater reveals how the human relationship to animals changed and how the practical ethics associated with it are each a child of their time.

These changes include the mechanization of life, i.e. the progressive economization and industrialization of being, it ascribes very clear roles

and functions in society. The changes within the principle of domination over nature, as we have seen it in performing practices with non-human actors/animals, seem to be an expression of the maintenance of power, of violence required to maintain it. The *dominium terrae* as obedience simply conceals violence in the cloak of discipline, which corresponded to a bourgeois understanding of the world.

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