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The human zoo after Abu Ghraib:
Performance and subalternity in the 'cam era'

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Abstract

The 'human zoo' can be productively used as a heuristic tool to explore and deconstruct contemporary performances in which 'actors' are exoticized or otherwise 'othered' by an exploitative, subjugating gaze. Human zoo subjects are typically caught up in a predicament that is made up of three false promises concerning (a) protection/destruction, b) mobility/incarceration, and, (c) performance/absence of inter-subjectivity. Distinguishing between panopticism and post-panopticism, and between different forms of (de)humanization, enables us to explore subalternity and performance in contemporary settings of mediatized subjectivation in the 'cam era'. Instances of this can be found in (a) the mediatization of torture at Abu Ghraib and (b) the flourishing genre of 'exotic' reality television.

Keywords:

Cultural anthropology, human zoo, panopticon, new media

Literary allegations

In his unforgiving book *Les Bienveillantes,* Jonathan Littell (2006) recounts the fictitious war memoirs of an SS Obersturmbahnführer.[i] In 1944 the latter attends a meeting of senior SS officers in the South Polish city of Krakow during which Hans Frank, the Governor-General of the Occupied Polish Territories, informs SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler that he is about to set up a human zoo. In the *Menschengarten* which he plans to offer to Hitler as a birthday gift, Frank wants to exhibit living samples of all European peoples who have been earmarked for total eradication by Hitler's infamous genocidal *Generalplan Ost*. The human zoo, Frank explains, will be modeled on Carl Hagenbeck´s late 19th century *Völkerschauen*. Frank intimates that, in similar vein to Hagenbeck´s 'Red Indian', 'midget' or 'cannibal' shows, the entertainment factor in his project will be key, but that scientific and educational objectives will not be neglected. To enable future scientists to study the peoples that will have 'disappeared' by then, Frank asks Himmler to be lenient towards a handful of individuals of each genus of inferior people in his eradication program. For educational reasons, samples of 'Ostjuden', 'Bolsheviks from the Kolkhozy', 'Ukrainians' and other *Untermenschen,* will be exhibited in reconstructions of their conventional habitats in which they can engage in their archetypical activities. Frank reassures Himmler that the human pens of, for example, the Galician Jews reciting the Talmud, will of course be regularly disinfected and their occupants submitted to medical checks so as not to endanger the health of the visitors (Littell 2006: 976-979).

Contrary to what Littell hints at above, it appears that Nazi Germany was not at all eager to reintroduce human zoos or freak shows of any kind. The example of the midget villages such as *Märchenstadt Lilliput* is illuminating in that respect. In *De grote wereld* (The big world) Arthur Japin (2006) suggests that the Nazis rather tended to abolish midget villages which offered inhabitants shelter and a source of income. After dissolution, the occupants often ended up in concentration camps, more often than not in Auschwitz, in the hands of Dr. Mengele who used them for so-called anthropological observation and medical experiments (Koren and Negev 2004). As a matter of fact, the barracks of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp where Mengele kept his twins, midgets and other 'exotic' human varieties, was called 'the zoo'.

Taken together, just like the ill-fated midget villages which Japin reports, the associations of the Nazi extermination plans with the ethnographic showcases of the imperialist and colonial period, underlines a notion of the human zoo that present-day observers/audiences find abhorrent. The above literary sources highlight the extent to which human zoos have lost all credit as *loci* of scientific research, popular edification, or ordinary entertainment. One of the main reasons, perhaps, is that human zoos are so expressly situated in contexts of the threat of eradication or disappearance. Whether it is the *Endlösung* — as in the case of Nazi Germany — or ruthless modernization — as in the case of imperialism and colonialism —, human zoos seem to find their *raison d'être* in working against developments that are seen as inevitable or imperative. However, they do so only on a very limited scale. Human zoos create the illusion of a safe haven which mimics the familiar surroundings of the preserved human species but, at the same time, marks their occupants' life habitat as unsustainable in a world which is pursuing the annihilation of the species. Human zoos thus combine the virtuality of staged authenticity with the realism of a cruel endgame. Whether it is the flagrant illusion of freedom within, or the ruthless destruction outside of its protective walls, or its association with brutal epochs such as that of colonialism or Nazi Germany, it is clear that 'human zoo' has become a powerful invective in the post-war and post-colonial world. Two examples suffice to illustrate this point. They both concern African expositions, one in the zoo of Augsburg (Germany) in 2005 and the other in a natural park in Yvoir (Belgium) in 2002. Examining the protests against these projects, provoked by the exhibiting of human cultures in an animal zoo, shows how initial statements of denunciation are

further developed through the semantic associations of human zoo with colonialism and/or Nazism. Looking deeper into the objections, particularly in the Yvoir case, helps us to identify mobility (and its counterpart, immobilization) as another major dimension of the human zoo, in addition to the 'protection/destruction' pairing indicated above.

'Show beasts': the colonial human zoo as swear word and the issue of (im)mobility

In June 2005, Augsburg Zoo launched *African Village*, a four-day event where Africans showcased their art, cuisine, and music in stalls and on stages situated throughout the zoological garden. As soon as news of this initiative reached a broader audience, a tidal wave of protest ensued. The protests, coming from, among others, the African–German association *Initiative schwarze Menschen in Deutschland* (Black People's Initiative in Germany), focused extensively on the similarities of this African village with the early colonial *Völkerschauen* while also recalling the fate that befell people of African descent under the Nazi regime (Glick Schiller, Dea, and Höhne 2005: 5).

The other instance of contemporary anti-human-zoo protest took place in Belgium and was documented by myself in collaboration with the different disputing parties (Arnaut 2005). In the summer of 2002 eight Baka 'Pygmies' from the Cameroon rainforest took up residence in the *Rainforest* natural park in the Walloon village of Yvoir. Apart from underscoring its educational ambitions the exhibition presented itself as a humanitarian project which included building water wells, schools, and dispensaries for the Baka people. In order to raise public attention, the organizers set out to provide a fair amount of spectacle as well. One eye-catching section was an exhibition in a greenhouse of the *Rainforest* in which a series of allegedly typical scenes from the Baka's daily life were represented by child-size shop-window dummies. In another section, the Baka themselves could be seen in action. In a meadow near a wooded slope, the eight Baka had built several leaf huts where they spent the mornings cooking and eating. In the afternoon, when the park was open to the public, the Baka moved to the courtyard of a nearby compound where they were ready to perform 'traditional Baka dances' at the request of the visitors.

Three weeks after the show opened, a storm of protest broke out, fuelled as in the case of Augsburg, by organizations of Africans and migrants. Among the leading organizations, the *Mouvement des Nouveaux Migrants* (Movement of New Migrants - MNM) launched the slogan 'human zoo' after the title of an academic volume (Bancel et al. 2002) which had just been published and had received coverage in the popular press (Blanchard and Joignot 2002). As an example of a human zoo, MNM argued that the Baka project was as archaic and morally reprehensible as its colonial predecessor in the Tervuren Universal Exposition of 1897. The phrase 'human zoo' was quickly snapped up by the national and international media — numerous newspapers and journals, radio and TV stations covered the protest which only died down when the exposition was prematurely closed and the Baka repatriated.

The exceptional fact that the Yvoir animal park featured human beings was accentuated by the public announcement on several notice boards in the park that all animals had been temporarily evacuated. The conspicuous anxiety of the organizers over the contamination of human beings and animals, was strengthened by the public's apprehension of the fact that the Baka as 'Pygmies' or 'midgets' have a long history of being staged in tourist attractions and human zoos of different sorts (Frankland 2001). However, by denouncing the Yvoir Baka show as a 'human zoo' the protesters did more than score an easy goal. They went further and attacked the project in a way that reveals a second dimension of the human zoo: its multiple aspects of social and physical mobility. To support this line of attack, the migrant organizations could call upon many years of experience with their clients´ predicaments of

relocation, confinement, and subjugation: trans-Saharan migration and detention in closed centers in Belgium and elsewhere in Europe (e.g. Italy), homelessness and exploitation by slumlords, joblessness and illicit employment in sweatshops or hazardous sites, etc. Ironically, the Baka show at Yvoir was trying to convey exactly the opposite message of mobility and liberation. It proclaimed that for the first time in their history, the Baka, had left the rainforest and come to the heart of Europe in order to denounce their predicament of poverty and marginalization in Cameroon. In response, the protesters argued that the project was in no way a case of rediscovered mobility but entailed inadmissible limitations to the Baka's freedom of movement. The protesters argued that not only was there no labor contract specifying working hours, holidays, and remuneration, but also the Baka had to hand in their passports upon arrival at Yvoir and received neither a subsistence budget nor any funding for travelling. In effect the Cameroon visitors were forced to spend their days in Yvoir and were delivered to the whims of the organizers and the visitors alike (Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en voor Racismebestrijding 2002).

In conclusion, the above debate helps us to identify a second pair of contradictory concepts (after protection/destruction) which typify the human zoo: mobility/immobilization. Indeed, human zoo subjects often travel long distances away from their familiar environments, but their migration is an exodus without liberation. The dramatized relocations merely lead the *émigrés* into successive situations that are as oppressive and destructive as the ones they left behind. There is movement without escape or, at best, escape without deliverance. Parallel to being caught in a vicious double game of protection and destruction, the subalternity of the human zoo travelling troupe of 'actors' is constituted by the false promise of resettlement: in actual fact they merely effect a 'voyage out' without, in Said's words, a 'voyage in' (Robbins 1994) or, stated otherwise, they are engaged in deterritorialization without proper reterritorialization (Bonta and Protevi 2004: 78-79).

The next section will pursue these issues of subalternity in human zoo performances further by examining historical evidence of debates surrounding early colonial human zoo manifestations. More particularly, I will explore one of Belgium's emblematic *Völkerschauen* at the Brussels Universal Exposition of 1897 which endorsed the imperial aspirations of King Leopold II (Wynants 1997). By looking deeper into the issue and the modalities of mobility, the next section finds that human zoo performances lack reflexivity. This makes the distance between the actors' self and their performance collapse while it strengthens the distance and inequality between actor and public/spectator. In the subsequent section it is argued that these are the main ingredients of a panoptical setting.

The early critics of the African villages and the false promise of inter-subjectivity

The radical rejection of the human zoo in contemporary fiction and social protest, might obscure the fact that the early colonial human zoos also encountered fierce protest even at a time when they were attracting millions of exalted visitors. Such was the case for the Brussels World Fair of 1897 which included three 'African villages' set up in a royal park in the nearby village of Tervuren. As in Augsburg and Yvoir, this human exposition took place during the summer holidays — matching the leisure time of the visitors with (expectations of) warm weather for the exotic guests — but of course 'Tervuren 1897' was much grander in its design. No fewer than 267 Congolese villagers were transported on a steamboat from the Congolese port of Matadi to Antwerp from where they travelled by train to Brussels and on to the Tervuren park where the Royal Museum for Central Africa was soon to be built (Couttenier 2005; Wynants 1997). The heavily mediatized crossing alone attracted tens of thousands of spectators, whereas the show counted more than 400,000 admissions.[ii] If this success demonstrates how the Congolese human exposition was generally appreciated, it makes the scarce voices of bitter criticism at that time all the more interesting.

The harshest public critics of the Congolese villages in Tervuren were the catholic twinned newspapers *Le Patriote* and *Le National* (precursors to the present-day *La Libre Belgique*) who vented their criticisms of Leopold's colonial projects in sharp and sometimes sarcastic comments on the ethnic showcases. Their criticism addressed simultaneously the protection/destruction and mobility/immobilization dimensions of the human zoo as spectacle.

> "In general, even though the natives do not look either hideous or repulsive, they have been arranged like animals that are up for inspection, a spectacle for the white spectators' eyes to behold, whose curiosity does not lack a certain element of cruelty. I repeat: our 'future black brethren' are closely inspected by their own brethren — their Albini guns slung over their shoulders." (*Le Patriote* 5/6/1897)[iii]

The quote above identifies two groups of spectators: not only the unmistakable European visitors but also the group of Africans who belonged to the colonial security force, *Force Publique.* The latter group which amounted to one third of the African villages' inhabitants were on duty while being submitted to the same detention regime as their fellow 'villagers'. In other words, the members of the *Force Publique* and their interventions aimed at their fellow Congolese, were an integral part of the show and, at the same time, were a continuation of the 'white' observation and surveillance from beyond the village fence. The critical journalists draw attention to both aspects of this power-play. By referring to the large-scale presence of the *Force Publique* they highlight the ubiquity of repression — almost a prefiguration of the 'decentralized despotism' which Mamdani (1996) observed in colonial indirect rule. Furthermore, by emphasizing the physical barrier that separated viewers from actors, readers were invited to reflect on their own position. […] "In Tervuren, blacks are separated from Europeans by a double fence", writes *Le National* (26/08/1897). This double fence corresponds to the widespread conception that the Congolese and European groups constituted a mutual threat: the former were a menace because of their alleged wildness and cannibalism while the latter abused the Congolese guests on display and hurled objects at them — evidence, according to *Le Patriote* of the whites' cruel curiosity. In all, the double fence was the linchpin of an apparatus which segregated spectators and display subjects whose interrelationship was reduced to mere visual 'contact' and radical scopic asymmetry (see Mitchell 1991).

Related to this characterization of the Tervuren African village dwellers as dangerous cannibals was the typical human zoo situation that the Congolese on display were earmarked for extinction as exponents of 'primitive' peoples. *Le Patriote* argued that the 'cannibals' of now would be 'our future black brethren' precisely because of taking part in the colonial project that they were promoting in Tervuren. But this idea which is constitutive of the human zoo could also be used against it. In a series of articles, the two critical newspapers not only condemned the physical confinement but also the 'mental' immobilization of the Africans on display. Their total isolation was denounced as extremely degrading and a source of inhumane boredom (*Le Patriote* 14/08/1897). How visible this boredom was cannot be derived from the reports in these or other newspapers. However, one can safely speculate that there were hardly any special performances or attractions: by and large the Africans were simply play-acting 'themselves'. Their behavior was their *performance* and their only role was their true racial/ethnic character. Ultimately, occupation coincided with identity. This leads me to suggest that in the human zoo mere *acte de présence* replaces full performance as 'a highly reflexive mode of communication' (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 73). This can be illustrated further by the testimony of the African American artist Sammy Davis Jr. (1925-1990) who in a documentary (Joseph, Roberts, and Coulter 2001) describes the racial segregation in the US show business of the 1950s. Echoing a point made by Gilroy (1995) before, Davis explains that this meant that black musicians were treated as part of the musical scenery and not as artistic performers in their own right.

Sammy Davis Jr. explains that he tried to break through this racist gridlock by either of these seemingly banal interventions: directly greeting the (white) audience or imitating fellow white artists. In theoretical terms, these interventions can be seen as attempts to re-establish inter-subjectivity in the sense of coevalness (Fabian 1983), dialogism (Holquist 1990), or simply performative reflexivity (Turner 1987).

Back in Tervuren 1897, an analogous situation is reported in a short article in *Le National* (14/08/1897) about the way certain actions by Africans are seen as interrogating the overly exoticized spectacle and form the basis for critical reflections on the boredom, isolation, and stereotyping of the Africans. One article tells about the visit of a *Force Publique* delegation to the Brussels city hall and the dinner speech held by a Congolese sergeant. The journalist found that this speech demonstrated the sergeant's irrefutable rhetorical and intellectual capacities and was proof of a susceptibility among Africans which clashed with their confinement and isolation back in their villages at Tervuren.

> “In any case, it is surprising to note how people who are so virtuous and open to the refinements of civilization are locked up behind bars like wild animals” (*Le National* 14/08/1897)

Nevertheless, the journalist did not go beyond simply making this point. Perhaps it was felt to be out of bounds to actually conduct an interview with the sergeant in question, probing him about his experiences in the African village, the World Fair, or 'the colonial situation' at large. The indignation of *Le National* is therefore nothing more, but also nothing less, than a hairline fracture in the otherwise solid balance of power that constitutes the human zoo as imperial spectacle (Apter 2002). As much as the African performers are not capable of extending the success of their public appearance beyond the confines of the city hall, the critical journalists are unable to actually break through the double 'fence' that separates the exalted, loud-mouthed 'white' spectator from the introverted, silenced 'black' subject on display.

The above examination of the debate on the physical, social, and we should add, discursive mobility of the actors in the African villages at Tervuren, helps us to characterize the nature of the performance of the human zoo subjects which fits their double predicament of protection/destruction and mobility/immobility. The main point is that the denial of performative reflexivity, coevalness, or dialogism, has the double effect of widening the gap and reinforcing the inequality between actors and spectators. One of the outcomes is that the actor's playground is turned into a stable, enclosed — sheltered as well as fenced-in — microcosm. Thus the stage is turned into a cage — at best 'a golden cage' if one wishes to stress the aspect of protection. Many of the elements of a typical human zoo performance were skillfully captured by the 'Two undiscovered Amerindians' performance of Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco in the early 1990s in which the primitiveness, muteness, and confinement of the actors was meant to provoke racist reactions or reflections (Fusco 1994). Seeking to connect with imperial and colonial human zoo phenomena, the artists integrated two 'zoo guards' in their performance. The latter, Fusco (1994: 145) explains 'would be on hand to speak to visitors (since we could not understand them), take us to the bathroom on leashes, and feed us sandwiches and fruit'. In the terms introduced above, the guards are part and parcel of the 'double fence'. By protecting/restraining the actors and blocking direct communication and interaction with the spectators, the guards play a crucial role in the truncated inter-subjectivity of exotic entertainment. The artists' attention for the internal boundaries of the human zoo performance is pertinent: it reveals how it is constantly in danger of lapsing and demands permanent policing. Their insights corroborate the suggestions made earlier that the panopticon is about regulation and inspection and that subalternity of

the human zoo subjects actors resides in tenacious deception on the part of the organizers/spectators based on three false promises of self-realization: that of protection, mobility, and (full) performance.

The human zoo: from panopticon to post-panopticon

Several authors such as Fabian (1983), Corbey (1993), and De Cauter (1993) have noted that colonial human zoos, or more generally, the 'exhibitionary complex' (Bennett 1995) of imperial fairs, expositions, and museums of which they were part, and the ideologies and sciences that informed them, can be characterized as instances of panopticism. The concept of panopticon is defined by Foucault (1975) as a scopic technology and a regime of power/knowledge in which an all-seeing viewer and a defenselessly exposed and 'blind' target meet each other in a context guaranteeing maximum transparency to the spectator and inaccessibility and immobilization for the performer. For our purposes, it is useful to follow Kevin Haggerty's definition of the panopticon in terms of performance and subalternity:

> “The types of surveillance accentuated in the panoptic model typically involve the monitoring of people who reside at a lower point in the social hierarchy; with physicians monitoring patients, guards watching inmates and supervisors keeping an eye on workers. In this, it is reminiscent of the functioning of a microscope, where specific marginalized or dangerous groups are situated under the unidirectional gaze of the powerful who can watch while remaining unseen by their charges.” (Haggerty 2006: 29)

While it seems all too obvious that the colonial human zoo fits the above ideal-typical description, it is imperative to puncture these generalizations and scrutinize their actual historical form and evolution throughout the colonial and post-colonial period (see Bayart 2009: 20-21). Taking my lead from De Cauter (1993), it is critical to observe how world fairs tried to realize the panoptic gaze in a grand and exhaustive manner, but quickly succumbed to decay. 'The world expositions tried to show a picture of the world, but [this view] […] quickly became cluttered', De Cauter (1993: 42) writes. 'Static viewing pleasure was gradually replaced by the enthralling sensation of the moving image [and] by mobilizing spectators [using rollercoaster rides and the like].' In the 19th century world fairs, De Cauter detects the origins of the crumbling “panoptic […] space of modernity.” (ibid.: 44).

Similar shifts can be detected in some of the comments on the Tervuren ‘African villages’. In the above-mentioned critique of the physical and mental immobilization of the Congolese one can at the same time sense the rising proclivity for 'movement' as well as a budding request for more interaction. Both heralded, according to De Cauter, the emergence of the ‘post-panopticon’. The ultimate question is to what extent the post-panopticon and the mobility/interactivity that it brings, affects or destroys the main conceptual parameters of the human zoo as set out above: if and how deep differences and asymmetries between the participants disappear in the seemingly shared spectacle.

The concept of the ‘post-panopticon’ has been the object of intense discussion and a source of considerable confusion, not least because it has been applied to, and seeks to elicit parallels between such diverse domains as governance, knowledge systems, and media use (Haggerty 2006; Maguire 2009; Kaplan 1995; Weibel 2002; Mathiesen 1997). In media studies post-panopticism relates to the omnipresence of digital technology and mobile communication, and looks at how deep mediatization is changing the classic ‘panoptical’ relations between spectator and target (Koskela 2004; Kammerer 2008; Andrejevic 2006). Two principal shifts can be argued to make up the post-panopticon: (a) the shift away from neatly hierarchized media transfers between senders and receivers towards the capillary dissemination and emerging ubiquity of media production and consumption (Andrejevic

2005; Hand and Sandywell 2002), and (b) the shift from static to hyper-mobile media use (Corner 1997).

The first shift consists in the radical democratization of the use of media, not only for inspection 'from above' but also as 'self-surveillance' from below. Video and surveillance cameras (CCTV), the internet, webcams, cell and camera phones, etc. produce still as well as moving images, and circulate them at great speed over large distances. On the consumption side the post-panopticon is embedded in a generalized viewing appetite (*scopophilia*) which resides in a widespread internalization of surveillance as a combination of voyeurism and exhibitionism (Koskela 2003; Koskela 2004; Lyon 2006). While the authorities (i.e. police, security companies, etc.) can rely on the multitude's large-scale mediatization for checking on and penalizing people, the camera is also a 'weapon of the weak'. For Boyne (2000: 301) 'the machinery of surveillance is now always potentially in the service of the crowd as much as the executive'. Increasingly, covert sound or video recordings of, for example, *off-the-record* comments of politicians, expose otherwise difficult to prove behavior like corruption or police misconduct. This horizontality and reciprocity of the post-panopticon stands in contrast to the hierarchical verticality of the panopticon as described by Foucault (1975: 256). However, it remains to be seen whether and how this shift affects the inequality between viewers.

A second aspect of the post-panopticon is related to the fact that media devices become ever more compact and mobile enabling media-users to increasingly encroach on each others' personal/private spaces (Fetveit 1999: 791; Prøitz 2007). This not only applies to individual cam phone or webcam recordings, but also to the professional media such as television series which make abundant use of 'scopic mobility and interplay of image with speech' (Corner 1997: 15). One of the eminent exponents of this development is the multifarious genre of *reality television*. Dovey (2000: 26) calls this 'first person media' because it relies on the 'constant iteration of "raw" intimate human experience'. The degree of personal identification, of intimacy and direct involvement engendered by all kinds of fly-on-the-wall documentaries is a case in point. In this mediatization of intimacy 'para-social interaction' occupies an increasingly important place: viewers develop pseudo-interaction with the people they are monitoring, such as the celebrities they regularly see on TV (Ho 2006; Papacharissi and Mendelson 2007). The deep 'sharing' that comes with the relative media mobility stands in sharp contrast to the encapsulation or compartmentalization which (together with verticality) Foucault (1975: 256) identified as one of the two basic characteristics of the panopticon.

The shifts towards reciprocity and mobility have been situated in more general transformations which other authors have described as the merging of the panopticon proper — in which 'the few inspect the many' — with its apparent counterpart, the synopticon in which 'the many inspect the few' (Lyon 2006), or more broadly, the conversion of the 'disciplinary society' into the 'control society' (Deleuze 1992). In these newfangled forms of the 'viewer society' (Mathiesen 1997) 'viewing subjects', according to Slavoj Žižek (2002: 225) 'need[s] the camera's gaze as a kind of ontological guarantee of his/her being'. In other words, subjectification in the post-panopticon is accompanied by the existential fear of not being seen — doubt over one's existence and identity in situations where one falls outside of the other's field of perception and curiosity (see Burgin 2002).

Žižek's observation's on post-panoptical subjectivation should not obscure the fact that the classic panopticon and the historic human zoo phenomena presented above, were/are inherently character-shaping apparatuses. So far, I tried to demonstrate how the human zoo claims to offer its 'actors' the ideal (reconstructed) habitat for their self-realization. Critical in this set-up is the illusion that such exotic 'selfing' takes place without 'othering' (Baumann and Gingrich 2004), unaffected by interaction with the spectator. In contrast, the panopticon as conceived by Foucault, entails interaction in that the

subject internalizes the corrective or normative gaze of the viewer as inspector/assessor. For Foucault (1975: 237) the panopticon thus operates in a double/analogous way: (a) as a *menagerie* ('zoo') which differentiates and classifies its subjects by eliciting their typical behavior, and (b) as a 'laboratory' ('reformatory') which modifies and normalizes its subjects by eliciting proper human behavior from them. In this terminology, the classic *Völkerschau* is a menagerie-without-a-reformatory, but this is merely the case for the human zoo actor, not for the spectator. Colonial human zoos in particular and 'ethnographic showcases' in general, had unmistakable reformatory effects for their visitors — the new publics of mass edutainment in which class, gender, and racial differences are cross-articulated in discourses of progress and self-regulation (Stocking 1992: 123, 213-4; see also Bennett 2005; Dibley 2005). The inequality in corrective potential for actors (who are stuck in their tribal or racial 'character') and the visiting public (which is claimed to be engaged in self-edification through encounters with 'others'), merely accentuates the fact that the character-building which takes place in panoptical apparatuses such as the human zoo, relates to radical others — far removed from each other both in time and in space — and counts its success or failure in terms of self-realization as *human* beings (Corbey 1993: 361, 364). To return to the issue initiated before, the question is how this works out in post-panoptical apparatuses of mediatization which by definition are run in a much more horizontal and mobile modus.

Reciprocity, interactivity, and the penetration of private spaces among spectators and spectatees, are all ingredients of post-panopticism that can be found in *Big Brother,* the emblematic reality television series which was launched in 1999 by the Endemol production company. *Big Brother* is set up as a standard panoptical situation which combines isolation from the outside world with extreme mediatization of what happens on the inside. The interaction between inside and outside consists in the fact that the occupants are constantly nudged by interdictions and assignments which firmly establish the authority of 'Big Brother' together with the subalternity of its internees. While the principal objective of this overbearing stance may be seen as staving off the risk of boredom both for the participants and the viewers, it is presented as providing the opportunities by which participants can shape their personalities, sometimes explicitly phrased as 'showing who they really are'. In that respect, the scientific counterpart of *Big Brother* is the reality-television series *Human zoo* (Curwin 2001). The latter was co-designed by the popular American psychologist Philip Zimbardo and was allegedly meant to "highlight aspects of human behavior and social interaction" albeit in a "positive and constructive way" (Mason 2001). This stands in stark contrast to Zimbardo's earlier 'Stanford Prison Experiment' of 1971 (Zimbardo 2007) — a video-recorded psychological experiment that was prematurely terminated because the volunteers became so engrossed in their assigned roles of inmates and guards that they indulged in increasingly violent and otherwise destructive behavior. That, in turn, is very much the idea behind Desmond Morris' *Human zoo* book (1994/1969) which tries to illustrate that humans who leave their 'natural' rural habitat for an urban one display the same deviant behavior as caged animals in a zoo. A similar exploration of the dehumanizing effects of human zoos is for instance explored in George Orwell's novel *1984.*

In a recent essay on the possibility of politics, Sloterdijk (2009: 15) reflects on the issue of humanization and its counterpart dehumanization, and distinguishes between 'bestializing' and 'taming'. A parallel distinction can be found in Haslam (2006: 256) who distinguishes between the achievement of 'the uniquely human' — in relation or in distinction to animals — , on the one hand, and the mere fulfillment of 'human nature' — the maximization of that which is essentially or exemplarily human, on the other hand. The counterparts of these operations are, respectively, animalistic and mechanistic dehumanization (ibid.: 260).

Returning to reality television formats, Endemol's *Big Brother* appears to hold the middle ground between human zoo projects that are expressly constructive such as Zimbardo's *Human Zoo* (allegedly bringing out certain aspects of 'human nature' — in Haslam's terminology — on a scientific basis), and those like Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment, that are disturbingly more deranging (straddling humanity and bestiality in Sloterdijk's words or resulting in dehumanization of some kind). Without denying that human zoo projects can tend more to one or the other side, it appears that they are all to some extent hybrid in the sense that (self)-expression goes hand in hand with repression or that entertainment melds with punishment. That was the case for the more classic panoptical forms of human zoo such as Littell's *Menschengarten* or the Tervuren's African villages, but, this article argues, it is also the case for the more radically post-panoptical forms of human zoo. My general argument is that the post-panoptical horizontality/mobility does not eliminate the threat of dehumanization neither in its destructive nor in its constructive mode, neither in its animalistic nor its mechanistic variant.

In the remainder of this article I will examine two instances of post-panoptic human zoo projects that differ considerably but are juxtaposed here for heuristic purposes. The first case is that of the side activities of the military intelligence section of Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, more particularly of their mediatization by its perpetrators, the US guards in 2003-2004. The second case is that of exotic reality TV programs which were produced and broadcast in Belgium and The Netherlands between 2004 and 2007. Since they were positively received as instructive about other cultures' way of life, these programs received financial support from the Belgian Development Cooperation Agency. In between the brutality of the American war on terror and the cultural sensitivity of the Belgian foreign aid one can discern the operation of similar post-panoptical processes. I will try to show how the dehumanizing performance and mediatization which is so blatant in the Abu Ghraib case is not radically neutralized in the case of exotic reality television.

Dehumanizing intimacies of a different kind: Abu Ghraib and exotic reality television

In April 2004, it became sadly clear how omnipresent cameras were helping to blur the boundaries between repression and expression or between punishment and entertainment, when a series of photos from the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq began to circulate in the global media. Using digital cameras, staff members of the prison's Military Intelligence (MI) hold sections had taken pictures of inmates and circulated them among themselves and friends and family members. The MI tiers 1-A and 1-B housed prisoners who were being interrogated and tortured in a situation devoid of rules and standards of operation in as far as the treatment of the detainees was concerned (Gourevitch and Morris 2008: 90-92) or what Caton and Zacka (2010: 210) call "systematized arbitrariness". The images that shook the world, show prisoners who are being or have been subjected to various kinds of torture, very often in scenes staged by the soldiers-photographers. The pictures show naked, scared and/or wounded prisoners, individually or in groups and sometimes in positions suggesting sexual (inter)action. What adds to the images' shocking effect is that they present staged scenes including more often than not the laughing faces of certain guards who appear to enjoy playing a more or less active role in these gruesome *tableau vivants*.

"My reaction was that this must be a piece of performance art", writes Žižek (2004), "the positions and costumes of the prisoners suggest a theatrical staging". According to Susan Sontag (2004), the photos are so horrific because the torturers look upon the prisoners' humiliations with such beaming faces. For Susan Douglas (2004) this is sufficient reason to link reality television with the pictures of Abu Ghraib in which the photographers appear themselves or capture their fellow guards on film: "it exhorts us to be a voyeur of others' humiliation and to see their degradation as harmless, even

character-building fun." This leads Mick Hume (2004), among others, to the conclusion that in the Abu Ghraib photographs, reality television culture has reached its inglorious zenith.

Beyond the superficial similarities with reality television, the mediatization of cruelty at Abu Ghraib must be understood as embedded in a messy post-panoptical setting of scopophilia, synoptic subjectivation, and (albeit flawed) control pitched both from above *and* from below. For all their media exposure, the soldiers featuring in the photographed torture-related scenes are most often neither the commanders nor the main executioners of the abuse. Behind the scenes operate a multitude of torturing actors employed by one or the other private security firm or 'OGA' (Other Government Agencies — CIA, FBI, special taskforces, etc.). In fact, as Gourevitch and Morris (2008) and the documentary film *The Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* (Kennedy 2007) try to explain, some of the soldiers-photographers took the pictures either to cover themselves against future accusations of torture or as evidence of their strenuous working environment in case they wanted to claim post-traumatic stress disorder compensations. In order to enhance the indexicality of the photographs-as-evidence in future court cases, several soldiers chose to take part in the scenes. At the same time, their smiling faces and thumbs-up gestures softened the evidential nature of the pictures whose authors/actors tried not to alarm colleagues and superiors by giving them the appearance of casual snapshots. Finally, as time went by, for a small group of soldiers taking pictures meant simply fun apart from anything else, and the pictures became deeply embedded in social interaction and exchange of feelings and memories with lovers, family, and friends nearby as well as on the home front (Kennedy 2007; Caton and Zacka 2010).

This complex configuration of fake authenticity based on reflexive make-believe and counter-framing pro-activity, accounts for most of the difference with the Foucauldian panopticon which was modeled on Bentham's eighteenth century 'ideal prison'. What we have observed is how a series of post-panoptical operations turn subjugation at a correctional facility into an object of performance and a media spectacle with far-reaching effects of subalternity. "Torture is represented as entertainment", Morris (2007: 105) explains, not just for the torturers but also for the tortured — displaying poses and positions of sexual gratification. The enacted, faked, or forced erections, masturbations and fellatios, according to Morris (idem) indicate how the prisoner 'is made to perform his own (self-) abuse and to perform that abuse as enjoyment in a grotesque parody of consent'. (idem). In this setting, the hierarchy and compartmentalization that are so characteristic of the panoptical disciplinary institutions, are radically punctured by people who encroach on each other, disrupting, as it were, each other's scenes while participating in joint performances and sharing in each other's intimate spaces, corporality, and emotions. While these post-panoptical maneuvers make the separations and distinctions between the guards and the detainees seem almost to disappear, it is clear that the subjugation of one by the other is harsher than ever. Surely, a crucial aspect of the extreme depersonalization which this post-panoptical setting endorses is that inmates lose control over their most intimate (sexual) sentiments, but what does that represent in terms of dehumanization?

Haslam (2006: 258) classifies the degradation and humiliation of the mediatized prisoners at Abu Ghraib as 'animalistic dehumanization' in the sense that the photographs 'remind us of our animal nature — death, excretion, and sexuality'. In a recent review of the research on the Abu Ghraib scandal, Caton and Zacka (2010: 207) first flirt with a similar idea by bringing in Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque as it relates to the 'bodily imagery, especially genitals and the buttocks', before taking a more fruitful analytical path traced by Agamben (2005) who argues that 'the war on terror has abolished the political status of those who are presumed to be terrorists or insurgents' (Caton and Zacka 2010: 209). When developing this further in the sense of Agamben's concept of 'bare life' (*homo sacer*) (Agamben 2005; see also Caton 2006), the authors describe the prisoners as — to put it

simplistically — subsisting in the deprived condition of the depoliticized human being. In addition, the authors clarify their stance by evoking a parallel (economic) reduction of human beings to *homo oeconomicus* by capitalism (ibid.: 210). Overall, both types of human degradation fit into Haslam's category of 'mechanistic dehumanization' which indeed consist in the incomplete or hampered realization of full human nature. Finally, Caton and Zacka (2010) try to make the general point that this dehumanization is not so much the result of the workings/malfunctioning of an all-embracing — panoptical, we would say — power apparatus than it is the arbitrary outcome of performance and reflexive interaction (however unequal) — post-panoptical, in the analytical idiom developed in this article. In the preceding section I have situated the latter in a post-panoptical configuration of reciprocity and mobility. Presently we are going to explore a rather different post-panoptical configuration, one that is (in Zimbardo's words) infinitely more constructive and shows no obvious traces of 'animalistic dehumanization'. The following case, however, is an even more clear-cut case of 'mechanistic dehumanization' (in Haslam's terms), which may entail processes of depersonalization and objectification.

Far beyond the confines of detention centers and interrogation rooms, in the vastness of rural Africa and South-East Asia, flourishes an entertainment and travel industry whose main products are cultural 'others' and the exotic scenery — a mixture of natural and built environment — which they inhabit. Over the last ten years many countries around the world have produced or broadcast different formats of exotic reality television. Typically, these revolve around the ideas of geographical distance of the geo-economically peripheral 'local' and of cultural distance of the technologically 'primitive'. This supposedly results in a 'culture shock' for the Western visitor who wants to bridge the gaps with this reinvented, post-colonial 'native' (Kuper 2003; Arnaut and Seyssens 2007; Caplan 2005). These meanings are conveyed by central signifiers such as 'the tribe', as the series' names like Tribe, Tribal Wives, *Perdidos en la Tribu* (Lost in the Tribe), Ticket to the Tribes, and The Tribes are Coming, indicate. In Belgium and The Netherlands some of the main television production houses such as Endemol, Eyeworks, and Kanakna have been producing series with a certain *couleur locale.* Two of these are *Toast Kannibaal* — 'Cannibal Toast' is a Flemish dish with spiced raw minced beef on toast — and *Stanley's Route* which recalls the adventurous travels of Henry Morton Stanley to Central Africa under the reign of Leopold II.

The two television shows under consideration feature Flemish and Dutch families or groups of individuals who are brought into direct contact with people from allegedly radically different cultures situated in remote areas of the globe, most often in Sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia. The 'culture shocks' which are so central to the plot of these programs and which produce photogenic frustrations and personal tragedies, thrive on the premise that culture is a set of rules which are dogmatic and non-negotiable. This reified notion of culture that the two television series intimate is endorsed by the fact that the local residents and the European visitors suffer from systematic misunderstandings, largely due to the hidden interdiction imposed by the organizers on the participants to use any *lingua franca* such as English or French to make themselves comprehensible.

The cultural/communicative divide constitutes the main game element in both programs: the degree of adaptation of the European visitors to the local conditions is assessed and rewarded by the locals — mostly those who qualify as genuine keepers of traditions such as chiefs and elderly 'tribesmen'. Successful integration is often a rather superficial affair and amounts to dressing up like the locals and participating in whatever bizarre customs are presented as traditional and as conditional for group membership and tribal identity. The implicit counterpart of the superficiality of integration is that 'deep sharing' among people across the barriers of cultural difference is difficult if not impossible.

The overall image that arises from this contest in cultural adaptation is a messy blending of interaction and alienation — realized with a mixture of panoptical and post-panoptical techniques. Among the two, *Stanley's Route* is the most panoptical in that the distance between the European travelers and the Central-African 'tribes' is persistently kept up. Moreover, this distance is situated in a hierarchical matrix: with each episode the travelers are said to meet an even more 'primitive tribe'. This verticality is seemingly absent from *Toast Kannibaal* which follows the adventures of different families (commonly two heterosexual parents, and their two or three children/teenagers) who settle down for a number of weeks in a remote village. The degree of 'horizontality' can be measured from the first contact between the two groups when, after an allegedly long and arduous trip, the European visitors join their host 'tribe'. Although by definition both groups are perfect strangers this initial meeting is usually staged as exceedingly affectionate including boisterous singing and drum beating which accompanies the hugging, kissing, and crying of the 'tribespeople' and their visitors from the Low Countries. Moreover, these expressions of emotions and exchange of affection are filmed in an extremely dynamic way, with a degree of scopic mobility which Corner (1997: 15) designates as 'proactive observationalism'. Nevertheless, this formal flexibility stands in stark contrast to, on the one hand, the cultural immobility of the 'tribespeople' who are bound by their traditions — a dogmatic set of age-old customs and taboos — and, on the other hand, the idiosyncrasies of the European visitors — in the form of peculiar phobias and unconditional predilections. Out of the confused mix of cultural distance and social interaction, arise two groups of people who explore the boundaries of their shared humanity albeit on an unequal footing. One of the main forms this unequal footing takes is the 'inequality of corrective potential' which I mentioned earlier. As in the historical human zoos of imperial and colonial Europe, the exotic subjects are largely stuck in their tribal nature and cultural dogmas, while the Europeans are less 'tribal' than individual subjects and capable — with variable degrees of success — of learning and adapting, in other words, of changing.

So far, we have identified the two main ingredients of the human zoo in these post-panoptical forms of mediatized performance. The element of protection/destruction resides in the complex metaphor of 'tribe' which is so central to these media formats. In general, 'tribe' characterizes its subjects as members of a pre-contact or simply pre-modern societal relic — a forgotten or temporary untouched location which, together with its 'locals' is earmarked for annihilation by the onslaught of modernization and globalization. The element of mobility/immobility does not so much reside in the contrast in physical mobility between the travelling Europeans and the sedentary 'natives', but in their unequal 'cultural mobility', the aforementioned difference in corrective or adaptive potential. Finally, it becomes clear how the performances observed above relate to the third key-element of the human zoo, its humanizing/dehumanizing capacity. Again, it does not seem to be helpful to look at the interaction, more particularly the abundant expression and sharing of emotions as 'animalizing'. Instead the 'mechanizing dehumanization' can be seen at work in at least two relevant ways: as, again, depolitization — this time through accentuating pure emotionality — and 'objectification' by way of a sustained, racializing culturalism.

Firstly, when scrutinized, exotic reality television appears to deny entirely the historical and contemporary politics of cultural difference and racial segregation into which the mediatized encounter between the Europeans and the 'locals' takes place. Alluding to the explorer's adagio that 'these people have never seen a white person before', allows the program makers and the European participants to conceal the century-long history of discriminatory, stereotyping, and sometimes destructive if not lethal encounters with Europeans. One striking example is that of the Himba of Namibia. In the *Toast Kannibaal* series of 2005 the Beernaerts family from Belgium is sent over and joins the Himba 'tribe' in which every little detail of the village habitat, dress, and speech is

'traditionally' and 'primitively' Himba. This setting which frames the Himba actions as instances of age-old, unchanged tradition — a point to which I will return when dealing with the second aspect of dehumanization — and absolve them of their particular historical situatedness. Instead, one can observe how, in line with the first encounter, the subsequent interaction of hosts and guests is heavily sentimentalized. This drastically negates the politics and political-economy of the interaction between 'black' and 'white' — forgetting in the process (a) the German colonial and genocidal confrontations in Namibia (Gewald 1999), (b) the experience of subjugation by South-African 'whites' and the racialization and ethnic violence this entailed, and (c) the current predicament of marginalization and the compulsory commoditization of one's ethnic image for the sake of 'white' tourists and self-proclaimed explorers (Sylvain 2005). If some of these stories and experiences had been taken on board, for instance through simple 'camp-fire' stories told by some of the Himba hosts in question, the latter would irresistibly have appeared as political beings. Instead, politics is replaced by depoliticized emotions. The overall effect, I argue, is not so much that boisterous emotional expressions 'animalize' the Himba, but that the denial of politics, makes them appear as less than full human beings. Using the 'mechanical' metaphors of Haslam, the Himba in *Toast Kannibaal*, and by extension the 'tribespeople' that are discursively produced by the exotic entertainment and travel industry, are automata of emotional expression, not full human subjects who manage their encounters with (white) strangers in a moral economy and politics that has been built up over many generations of often tragic experiences.

Secondly, as much as the interaction with the 'exotic locals' appears to be directed by a 'mechanics' of emotions rather than a 'politics' of accumulated experience, the locals are also framed as automata of cultural expression: as mindless or rather, single-minded, containers and transmitters of cultural dogma and as monomaniacal in their insistence on the orthopraxis of traditional customs. In the culturalist game that ensues, the inflexibility of traditional culture of the exotic locals is compensated for by the flexibility of the European guests. The latter are challenged to adapt to the strange but unconditional ways of their hosts, overcome personal resistances, thereby pushing their personal limits — the ultimate proof of their superior 'cultural mobility' which stands in stark contrast to that of their hosts.

Elsewhere, I have looked into the racializing effects of presenting culture as dogma and rule-governed (Arnaut 2004; Arnaut and Ceuppens 2009; see also Silverstein 2005), here I have tried to demonstrate its dehumanizing capacity. Indeed, the process of 'othering' which takes place in the exotic entertainment industry, resembles the one identified in contexts of war, army training, and extreme nationalism, that is: 'depersonalization-through-objectification' (Ben-Ari 1998: 86). In this case the objectification concerns the local culture of the exotic hosts who appear as automata of cultural expression. However, as Verrips (2004: 151) shows this dehumanizing process, like any other, is double-edged in that it not only leads to exclusion but also to 'the radical inclusion of the self into an overpowering 'us'. In other words, overcoming the culture shocks which the exotic travel and leisure industry offers for sale, does not so much lead to global understanding or cultural cosmopolitism, but to a mutual albeit unequal dehumanizing objectification.

Endgame: performative subalternity after Abu Ghraib

With a few notable exceptions from ethology (Morris 1994/1969), philosophy (Sloterdijk 2009), and history (Blanchard 2002), most of the scholarly literature limits human zoo phenomena to the presentation of subjugated others in the context of European imperialism and colonialism (19th and first half of the 20th century) (Forsdick 2008; Corbey 1993; Bancel et al. 2002; Blanchard, Bancel, Boëtsch, Deroo, Lemaire et al. 2008). This paper is an attempt to transcend this dominant historicizing approach and to use human zoo as a heuristic tool to explore the mediatization of subalternity-in-

performance in different genres and epochs since the 19th century until today. This is not to negate let alone reject the very useful historical work that has been done. I refer more particularly to the research launched in the early years 2000 by a group of French researchers who brought together a wealth of new and existing data on human zoos and have demonstrated their importance for understanding the European imperialist and colonial enterprises (Bancel et al. 2002). The present article relies heavily on this material but takes another stance by exploring the comparative potential of the human zoo format. Since 2002, the French authors have increasingly opted to limit 'human zoo' to its historical manifestations. Such was not the case at the very beginning of their project. In their first major publication of 2002, the researchers still sought to connect historical with contemporary forms of human zoos, but this ambition was gradually abandoned. First, in the 2004 paperback edition of their human zoo edited volume — also in French — the authors replaced the original subtitle 'from Hottentot Venus to reality shows' (Bancel et al. 2002) with 'in the time of the human exhibitions' (Bancel et al. 2004). The 2008 English extended edition (Blanchard, Bancel, Boëtsch, Deroo, Lemaire et al. 2008) went even further in that respect. Not only did the editors (now joined by Charles Forsdick) choose a subtitle which specified the exclusive historical focus on 'the age of colonial empires', a series of five chapters which featured in the final 'beyond human zoos' section of the original French volume was left out. Hence the more comparative focus of chapters such as that of Liotard (2002) on contemporary sports events or the one of Blanchard (2002) on pornography and reality television (Loft Story) disappeared.[iv] The limited comparative scope of the latest edition is explained as follows:

> "It would certainly be simplistic to propose a continuous line from ethnic shows to modern forms of the display and perception of the Other. It is, nevertheless, still possible to propose that there are thematic threads in the representation of the Other which extend across the century. As a consequence, all contemporary representations of the Other (in the cinema, live performances, advertising, the tourism industry, sport, media images, ethnographic exhibitions and museums of world culture) should be subjected to a long-term empirical analysis which, alone, can allow us to understand their ancestry and their transformations." (Blanchard, Bancel, Boëtsch, Deroo, and Lemaire 2008: 39)

In contrast to this modest, rather empiricist approach which seeks 'thematic threads' between then and now, this article's comparative aspirations can be summed up in three points. Firstly, the historical line which is relevant for human zoo research does not lead unidirectionally from the past to the present. The references to contemporary literary representations of human zoos as well as the cases of Augsburg 2005 and Yvoir 2002 demonstrate complex intertextual links between contemporary human zoo literature, reconstructions of the past, and the apprehensions of the 'human zoo' organizers as much as those of the participants and the protesters — jointly operating in new transnational configurations of labor migration and diasporic activism. One of the co-editors of the 2008 human zoo volume, Forsdick (2008: 385) claims that the historical cases in themselves provide the 'vocabulary and conceptual apparatus' for later comparative studies. In contrast, I hope this article indicates that present-day reinventions and (public) critiques of human zoos may add substantially to the construction of a comparative vocabulary and analytical toolkit.

Secondly, seeking 'thematic threads' may not suffice for any comparative endeavor which needs to be based on the isolation of certain guiding characteristics. In this article I chose to work with three pairs of characterizing aspects: protection/destruction, mobility/immobilization, and humanization/dehumanization. These are not new. Already in the early critiques of the late 19th century cited above, as well as in the contemporary scholarly volumes of Bancel *et al.* of 2002 and Blanchard *et.al.* of 2008 these characteristics are mentioned — without for that matter sustained

attempts to begin to theorize and interrelate them (but see Forsdick 2008). Most surprising of all, perhaps, is that 'zoo' is among the terms which remain most conspicuously under-thematized, although this can be expected to help re-articulating protection/destruction and mobility/immobilization in relation to a more firmly theorized concept of (de)humanization. The relative neglect of the zoo concept is perhaps also caused by the overall historicist stance that I argue against above. The origins of the human zoo and the modern animal zoo date back to the same period and to the same figure of Carl Hagenbeck (1844-1913). Since the latter is not only one of the leading European characters in the invention and widespread commercialization of 'zoological-anthropological shows' as he preferred to call the ethnic shows, but also the father of the modern animal zoo (Thode-Arora 2008), the contamination seems self-evident both *in personam* and *in rem*. However, this article argues that it is not because this human-animal contamination has been denounced or self-reflexively treated, that the 'dehumanizing incarceration of subjugated performers' (i.e. the human zoo) is no longer at stake. In general, we need to move beyond the merely depreciating/degrading connotations of the animal zoo in order to render it analytically helpful. Situating 'zoo' in a broader problematic of (de)humanization enables us to look beyond animalization into processes of 'objectification' of culture, tradition, socialities, and identity. Such objectifications articulate in a promising way the processes of subjectification which are at issue in past and present forms of human zoos. No analysis of human zoo phenomena therefore can escape the dialectics of self- performance: of mediatized character building and self-typecasting which take place within the confines, and in the intimacy of, 'cultures' or 'tribes', sun-baked islands or stuffy lofts, 'Big Brother houses' or 'Jenny's bedrooms', etc. This leads me to the final point.

Thirdly, the historical forms of human zoo share a number of certainties which no study of their contemporary counterparts can have. This may thus hamper a sustained future comparative undertaking. One of these certainties is that the 'Other' (often capitalized) of 'colonial empires' is — warranted or not — often quite straightforwardly 'the' colonized. In the post-panoptical setting described above the selfing/othering is an infinitesimally more complex constellation of positionings in which different degrees of subalternity are at play. I hope to have sufficiently substantiated the suggestion that a seemingly rough, bipolar notion of human zoo may be an apt heuristic tool to start to explore this often mesmerizing combination of super-diversity (Vertovec 2007) and hyper-reflexivity.

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[ii]. In total the colonial exposition at Tervuren counted four villages: three ‘primitive’ and one ‘civilized’ village. The latter was called the ‘Gijzegem’ village, was set up by a missionary, Father Van Impe, and was populated by Congolese youngsters in school uniform who showcased the results of their schooling in musical performances and the like (Wynants 1997: 129; Couttenier 2005). In total, the Brussels World Fair received well over five million visitors (Bergougniou, Clignet, and David 2001: 44).

[iii]. All translations from French newspapers are mine.

[iv]. In his afterword Forsdick (2008) justifies this historicist reduction of the English 'more international' edition, by claiming that (a) the references to contemporary human zoo formats in the 2002 edition

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were inspired by a particularly French concern of the original researchers with post-coloniality, and (b) the historical cases presented in the current version in themselves provide the 'vocabulary and conceptual apparatus' for later comparative purposes.