

STAGED OTHERNESS

Ethnic Shows in Central and Eastern Europe
1850–1939

Edited by
DAGNOSŁAW DEMSKI and DOMINIKA CZARNECKA



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Figure 1.1. A map of the routes of non-European troupes across Central and Eastern Europe. Graphic design by Eliza Królak.

CHAPTER
ONE

Introduction: From Western to Peripheral Voices

Dominika Czarnecka and Dągnostaw Demski

Ethnic/ethnographic shows (both terms are used within this book) are a cultural phenomenon that developed on a massive scale in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. This form of entertainment involved displaying members of non-European communities to the public of the Old Continent, which regarded these people as “exotic.” The popularity of shows with non-European people reached its peak between the 1880s and the outbreak of World War I, and many chapters in this volume pertain to this period. In practice, though, the evolution of the phenomenon was dynamic in nature and occurred over a much longer period of time. This fact has been reflected in the timeframe of the present study, which encompasses the years between 1850 and 1939.¹

This period was defined at the stage of preparing a research project on ethnic shows in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), from which this book arises. It was selected because the 1850s marked the start of an increase in the frequency of exhibitions involving non-European peoples in colonial countries. The Great Exhibition in London, where George Catlin’s Ojibwe and Iowa “Indians”² were put on display, took place in 1851. We did not know at the time (it was established in further research) that ethnic shows were only organized in CEE countries much later. Currently available data suggests that the first one took place in 1874 in the Budapest zoo. The closing

1 The same timeframe was used in the research project entitled *Inscenizowana inność. Ludzkie odmierności w Europie Środkowej, 1850–1939* (*Staged Otherness: Human Oddities in Central Europe, 1850–1939*), funded by the National Science Centre Grant No. UMO-2015/19/B/HS3/02143. Work on the project started in 2016; the present publication constitutes its final result.

2 The quotation marks are used deliberately. Aware of the negative connotations the term “Indians” carries today, we nonetheless decided not to forgo its use in order that we can indicate the phraseology employed in the discourse of the day.

date is 1939. The last performances of non-European people in CEE took place in the 1930s (with the exception of displays in Nazi Germany). World War II put a definitive halt on the further development of such enterprises in the region.

The study of ethnic shows in Western Europe and the United States has been systematically conducted for at least several decades (Schneider 1977; Thode-Arora 1989), resulting in a truly impressive number of relevant academic publications (e.g., Abbattista 2015; Ames 2004, 2008; Andreassen 2015; Bharathi Larsson 2016; Blanchard et al. 2008; Corbey 1993; Lindfors 1999; Qureshi 2011; Sánchez-Gómez 2013). Conversely, the research conducted in this field in Central and Eastern Europe is still at an early stage of development. With very few exceptions (e.g., Tomicki 1992), the works describing ethnic shows in the region were mostly written in the last few years (e.g., Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020; Czarnecka 2018, 2020; Czarnecka and Demski 2020; Demski 2018a, 2018b, 2019, 2020; Herza 2016; Kontler 2020; Leskinen 2018, 2019; Novikova 2013; Savitsky 2018). Scholars from CEE are now collecting and systematizing data, retracing routes, and constructing general frameworks that would allow the phenomenon to be analyzed in specific contexts. This process poses numerous challenges and problems.

Not the least of them is the fact that only a small portion of archival material (both visual and textual) pertaining to ethnic shows in Central and Eastern Europe has survived to the present day. For instance, the entire archive collection on the performances of “exotic” Others in the Warsaw zoo was lost in 1939 when a bomb fell on the Ethnographic Museum, where the documents were held. A similar fate befell the archives of the zoological gardens in Moscow and Saint Petersburg (see Leskinen in this volume). Furthermore, extant materials are scattered around Europe, which makes the task of locating them particularly difficult and time-consuming. Private journals, letters, or diaries containing mentions of ethnic shows are also very rare (e.g., on the Warsaw performances see Prus 1953–70; Galewski and Grzeniewski 1961). In this context, press reports prove a valuable and helpful source of information, which is why many scholars use them as the basis for their study of this phenomenon in the region.

It should be noted that in most Central and Eastern European cities that are of interest to the present study (i.e., those that hosted organized shows with non-European people in the latter half of the nineteenth cen-

ture and the first half of the twentieth century), local periodicals were published in different languages and dedicated to different audiences. For instance, the ethnic shows taking place in Poznań (Ger. Posen; then a part of German territory) were commented on simultaneously in the Polish-language and German-language press (Demski 2020). In Riga, information regarding the performances of non-European people appeared in Russian-, German-, and Latvian-language periodicals (Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020); in Upper Silesia in Polish- and German-language titles and in the regional Upper Silesian press (see Baraniecka-Olszewska in this volume); and in Slovene-inhabited lands of the Habsburg Empire in Slovene-, German-, and Italian-language newspapers (see Mesarič in this volume). In Banat and Transylvania, advertisements announcing the arrival of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show were printed in Romanian, Hungarian, and German newspapers (see Barabas in this volume). Although in many cases the same descriptions and announcements were reprinted in several different periodicals in an almost unchanged form, a careful study reveals the existence of numerous dissimilarities. Different papers put emphasis on different things. In periodicals published in languages used by national or ethnic minorities, descriptions of ethnic shows were often connected with attempts at expressing local political views and accentuating the circumstances in which these minorities were then living (e.g., in the part of Poland annexed by Prussia, where an intense Germanization policy had severely limited the freedom of speech, ethnic shows provided Poles with an opportunity to pronounce their arguments concerning defending the Polish language; Demski 2020). What is more, due to preventive censorship (in lands under German rule and the Russian Empire), certain messages could not be expressed directly. Consequently, to fully understand the meaning of the information disseminated with the help of the press, the readers of the day (and modern scholars) needed to be able to decipher and interpret linguistic, cultural, and social codes and know the context in which these descriptions were written and received.

In such circumstances, comparative studies aimed at reconstructing this cultural phenomenon on the basis of data from various sources become even more valuable. Analyzing the entire body of press materials is a multilevel process, often exceeding the competence of a single researcher. The fact that, at the present state of research, many scholars from the region base their

analyses solely on information found in periodicals published in one given language clearly indicates the need for further and continued study.

One must also remember that the analysis of press materials pertaining to ethnic shows needs to be conducted with extreme care and caution. There is little doubt that many descriptions (especially press announcements) were written upon the instigation of entrepreneurs from the entertainment industry. They paid the newspapers for printing and distributing these texts, quite often deliberately misleading the audience. Examples include the practices employed by the Hagenbeck company (see Thode-Arora in this volume), the advertising campaign for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show (see Barabas in this volume; Baraniecka-Olszewska 2020), or circuses (see Baraniecka-Olszewska in this volume). The principal aim of a successful advertising campaign was to engage the imagination and fantasies of potential spectators and to promote shows rather than provide a faithful description. Thus, any doubts regarding the informative value of such sources are highly justified. Although reports and comments written by local journalists are considered to belong to a slightly different category of press materials—aiming to present the reader with “truthful” information about the show—the fact-related value of such materials is also questionable for a number of reasons. For instance, in 1884 the German-language *Posener Zeitung* (*Posen Newspaper*) reported the death and burial of a Sioux chief: “Father Yellow Smoke, the old leader of the Sioux-Omaha tribe, has died in Posen and was buried by the members of his tribe, with large crowds in attendance, on foreign soil. He was taken by an internal illness” (April 27, 1884). Polish-language press from that time made no mention of the event. Interestingly, later in the tour, that same Native American troupe performed in Warsaw. Polish-language press in the city mentioned the chief a number of times, referring to him as a living member of the group: “One of such indigenous chiefs (Yellow Smoke) is among the individuals currently presenting themselves in Warsaw” (*Kurier Warszawski* [*Warsaw Courier*], May 15, 1884). Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain whether the information about the chief's death was false, or perhaps some other member of the group started to play the chief for the purpose of the show. The latter seems probable, given the fact that, in the context of ethnic shows, individuals were much less important than the characters they portrayed. In any case, the example illustrates that a comparison of press descriptions published in different

periodicals and different cities may reveal certain contradictions and call into question the credibility of some information.

In his analysis of the Samoyed shows in Vienna in 1882, Evgeny Savitsky in this volume points to yet another possible cause of inaccuracies in press descriptions and also to the immense influence the press had on the process of creating an image of reality. It has already been ascertained that the “names” of the Samoyeds in the troupe mentioned in the press were in fact terms defining their kinship relations and social status. In Europe, these words began to function as “stage names” due to a combination of different factors, such as the customs of the Northern peoples, the strategies employed by entrepreneurs, and the state of anthropological knowledge at the time.

In practice, the extant press materials provide information not as much about the “exotic” peoples and cultures performing in Europe, but about the local communities, their attitudes toward non-European people, and the roles ethnic shows played in specific political, cultural, and social contexts.

Researchers interested in ethnic shows in CEE countries sometimes face communication problems while conducting archival queries. In our search for sources in archives, museums, and other institutions in Poland, Latvia, and Ukraine, we used terms such as “ethnic shows,” “ethnographic shows,” *Völkerschauen*, or “human zoo” only to discover that, in many cases, the employees of these institutions did not understand what sorts of materials we were looking for. It was much easier to obtain relevant information by inquiring about circuses with ethnic programs, *balagans*, or freak shows. Consequently, the first queries—which included the terms mentioned above—usually yielded negative results; institutions claimed not to have any such materials in their collection or asked further questions to get a better idea of our search objectives. Only descriptive explanations of the factual nature of ethnic shows brought the desired result and made it possible to proceed. István Sántha (this volume) puts clear emphasis on these types of problems, which he encountered during his archival queries in Saint Petersburg.

In her chapter about ethnic shows in Moscow and Saint Petersburg in the years from 1879 to 1914, Maria Leskinen (this volume) asks the rhetorical question of whether the development of this phenomenon in Russia could be described as “a century of elision.” Wondering whether this is due

to ignorance or perhaps the significant absence of the topic in the Russian context in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, Leskinen remarks that contemporary research on ethnic performances in Russia is still at a very early stage. To a greater or lesser extent, the analyses presented by both Leskinen and Sántha reveal very contemporary problems associated with the fact that scholars in a given place and time focus on or disregard certain issues. Consequently, it becomes clear that key aspects of understanding certain phenomena (in this case—ethnic shows) in different contexts lie not only in information found in archival material but also in the circumstances in which research is now conducted and in the scholars' sensitivity to the nuances that surface in the course of their study.

The contributors to this book often started their research nearly “from scratch,” as the topic of ethnic shows had not yet been tackled in most countries in the region. This meant they had no relevant academic literature to fall back on to acquire even such basic information as the dates of visits made by “exotic” Others in a given city, or the names of impresarios. In these circumstances, the findings of American and Western European scholars proved truly invaluable. Becoming acquainted with these works was not only a choice motivated by the wish to explore academic publications pertaining to ethnic shows. In practice, it was a *sine qua non* condition for initiating research on the Central and Eastern European iteration of this cultural phenomenon. Apart from providing data on the routes through Europe taken by “exotic” troupes (which rarely mentioned lands east of the River Oder and Austria), the works of Western European and American scholars contain important information regarding the evolution of ethnic shows in colonial countries, describe the theoretical and methodological frameworks used by researchers representing different academic fields, and outline the context of the period in which this type of performance was invented. These findings contributed to the emergence of the basic framework of interpretation of the phenomenon, which has, in turn, shaped how scholars from Central and Eastern Europe thought about ethnic shows. However, after that first crucial stage, each author was faced with the challenge of verifying these known models of interpretation (on the basis of the source material acquired through their own study) and attempting to “move beyond” them. We leave it for the reader to judge whether such

attempts have indeed been made and to what extent they were successful at the present stage of research.

From Western to Peripheral Voices

Although many contemporary scholars believe us to have entered the era of “multiple modernities” (Sachsenmaier, Riedel, and Eisenstadt 2002), there can be no doubt that the first form of modernity emerged in Europe. The basic institutional constellations and the cultural program of modernity as it developed in the West were absorbed by all modernizing societies. The project of modernity, with its homogenic and homogenizing tendencies, reached all countries that underwent the same processes—urbanization; industrialization; the development of trade and tourism; the emergence of new institutions such as museums, galleries, and zoos; and many more. New visual sensations, participation in new types of events (e.g., world’s fairs), the migration of people from the countryside to urban centers, the development of new academic disciplines, and changes in lifestyles and social norms were experienced as much by residents of London, Paris, Rome, and Berlin as by people in Vienna, Budapest, Warsaw, Prague, and Saint Petersburg. In this sense, the transformations of the modern era created a certain general framework in which ethnic shows developed; they were only one of the many manifestations of the changes taking place at the time.

Naturally, this general framework established in the West is impossible to avoid when analyzing ethnic shows in Central and Eastern Europe. Elements of Western colonial and imperial discourse, scientific rationality, faith in progress and in Western cultural superiority, and practices of discipline and classification were all absorbed by inhabitants of CEE cities as a way of experiencing and understanding the modern world. However, it should be remembered that this basic framework created the right conditions for the development of different types of ideological and institutional dynamics; for continuous competition between metropolises; and finally, for a clash of interdependent global and local (or universal and particular) forces. In this respect, the contexts in which ethnic shows functioned in various countries in CEE were neither identical across the region nor closely similar to those observable in large colonial empires. The fact that the countries of the region did not hold any dependent territories overseas and had

evolved in the course of different historical processes and reached different levels of international status were not the only factors responsible for these local particularities.

From a non-European point of view, the Europe of the modern era was a single unit, displaying a specific attitude toward peoples and cultures from other parts of the world—possessed of a kind of “continental identity.” However, regarded “from within”—that is, from a continental perspective—Europe was divided. In many aspects of life, the achievements of the modern era (such as technological innovations, certain cultural ideas, and new lifestyles) were only developed in Western countries. CEE countries adopted many of them, if not always immediately. This being said, some Western solutions were criticized in the East, especially in Russia. Significantly, however, CEE countries generally recognized the superior status of the West, while being treated by the colonial empires of the day as somewhat “peripheral cultures,” “small nations,” or “minor countries” (see Baár 2010). In a broader context, how various groups positioned and defined themselves in relation to one another was of key importance in the emergence of the dichotomy of domination and submission (cf. Barabas in this volume).

From the very beginning, the project of modernity was firmly rooted not only in the idea of progress or development of knowledge but also in power (conquests, exclusion, domination) and identity formation. Aside from theories of race and practices aimed at upholding racial hierarchies (as the new form of entertainment for the masses, ethnic shows fit this trend perfectly), the largest countries in Western Europe were building their new national identities on the basis of the colonial-imperial experience and constructed the “new imperial history.” Processes associated with the experience of modernity, including the emergence of new national identities, were also observable in Central and Eastern Europe. Although the countries in this region had no overseas colonies (with the exception of Germany—but these were acquired relatively late, between 1880 and 1900, and were ultimately lost in 1918 in the aftermath of World War I), the societies of Central and Eastern Europe, most of which became independent nations in 1918, adopted many racial theories (and prejudices) pertaining to non-European peoples and developed in colonial countries.

The empires that stretched across Central and Eastern Europe in the period analyzed here (Austria-Hungary, the Second German Reich, Russia)

were all multiethnic mosaics. Their metropolitan centers and dominant nations coexisted with ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities. Imperial policies and goals defined by central authorities were often at variance with the aims and consolidation processes of the nondominant groups. There was a multitude of “local voices”—some dominant, some lacking in power. As regards the phenomenon of ethnic shows, it is important that the status specific groups held in the internal hierarchies present within any given CEE country influenced these groups’ attitudes toward non-European people.

For instance, in Budapest, which aspired to become a great metropolis, ethnic shows were an instrument used by municipal leaders to achieve specific aims. Many liberal patriots in Hungary wished Budapest to eventually replace Vienna as the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The ambitions of the urban establishment and the continuous competition between metropolises made it necessary to participate in the changing world—to be included in trading networks, to be open to cultural exchange, to engage in geographic exploration, and so forth. In order for Budapest not to “fall behind” in this competition, which was strictly related to the emergence of local metropolitan identity, the city needed to organize ethnic shows. They became an indispensable element of the urban landscape, as did the zoological garden in which they were staged (designed as an emulation of the Viennese zoological garden in Schönbrunn; see Kontler 2020). Moreover, ethnic shows involving Finno-Ugric people (due to their linguistic kinship with Hungarian) played a part in the development of the national consciousness in Hungary. This is all the more significant given that, in contrast with most scholars from colonial countries—who were using the performances of “exotic” Others to illustrate the assumptions of an “imperial science” (where the issue of race was of key importance)—Hungarian researchers focused on matters connected to national identity, thereby, presenting an alternative mode of interpretation (Kontler 2020).

In the Czech lands (Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia), the situation was different. The Czech- and German-speaking nationalists in that part of the Habsburg Empire were engaged in a continuous rivalry, in which language had a central role. In addition, members of both groups succumbed to varied and numerous “colonial fantasies” (see Křižová in this volume). The ambition to equal the most dominant European nations prompted Czechs not to

reject colonial ideas and accept the tenets of the inferior status of non-European people, the need to carry out the civilizing mission, and their own superiority to “exotic” Others. Since the discourse of Czech-speaking nationalists revolved around the persecution they were experiencing from the Austrian state—and the persecution of the entire Slavic race at the hands of the German Empire—they showed more compassion than German-speaking nationalists did in their attitude toward non-European people. Nevertheless, their aim was not to reject colonial ideas but only to accentuate that Czech people in their colonies (that is, if they had any) would conduct themselves in a much more civilized manner than the colonial powers of the day.

The Slovene-inhabited lands of the Habsburg Empire (the regions of Carniola, the Austrian Littoral, and Lower Styria) presented yet another outlook on the issue of race. Andreja Mesarič (in this volume) refers to these regions as a “double periphery”—the borderlands of Europe and a geopolitical and linguistic periphery within the Habsburg Empire. This example clearly illustrates that ethnic shows were an instrument for colonial authorities to distribute their ideas and projects in territories that Western empires regarded as peripheral. In this case, the inhabitants of the southwestern periphery of the Habsburg Empire accepted the assumption that non-European people were somehow inferior. However, from the local perspective, given the dominant position of German and Italian nationalists, ethnic shows reaffirmed the Slovene speakers of their cultural and racial “Europeanness” without requiring them to replace their language and culture with that of Germany or Italy.

In Latvia, which was then a part of the Russian Empire, shows featuring “exotic” Others were involved in the development of Latvian national consciousness. According to Ilze Boldāne-Zeļenkova (2020), aware of the dominant position of Baltic Germans and Russians, Latvians as a nondominant nation expressed compassion toward non-European peoples, as they partially identified with their situation. Although Latvians were convinced of their own civilizational superiority to non-European peoples, due to internal threats the Latvian-speaking population was facing and the fact that it harbored no colonial ambitions, the role ethnic shows played was mostly associated with identity formation.

Relations of the European colonial powers with Russia developed differently than their relations with the rest of the countries of Central and

Eastern Europe. Western empires could not reduce the Russian Empire to the status of a “peripheral culture” or a “minor country,” even though it lay in the East and did not possess overseas colonies. Importantly, Russia implemented its own policy of colonial conquest—only in this case, the conquest was directed toward Asia. As a result, the Russians created “their own Others” (e.g., the Arctic peoples of the Russian Empire). Various dominant and nondominant nations functioned within this multiethnic and multi-confessional state. In this complex configuration, the approach to non-European peoples was not homogeneous; it depended on the position a particular group occupied in the framework of relations in the empire.

Russia accepted many European ideas and technological innovations that emerged in the modern era, but as a rule it did not aim to imitate Western states, often condemning them or even developing alternative visions, including pan-Russian nationalism or Russian Orientalism (see Tangad 2019). The fact that the development of Russian identity was influenced by the country’s position between Europe and Asia was a significant factor in this context. Russia’s conquests in the East resulted in the Russian experiences being different from those of Western countries. Ultimately, however, Russia adopted many Western perceptions and world constructions, including those that pertained to the issues of race, ethnocentrism, and the subordinate position of non-European peoples: “The European concept of race arrived in Russia in the mid-nineteenth century. However, its dimension turned out peculiar in relation to Asia, due to historical and territorial ties between Russians and Asians” (Bukh 2014, 178). The fashion for ethnic shows reached Russia, where it turned out that Russian scholars and entrepreneurs were by no means insensitive to the development of this cultural phenomenon. The Russians, too, began to export their own Others (who were not only members of the Northern peoples, such as the Samoyed, but also members of the Tatar, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, and Kalmyk communities) to the West. Interestingly, while in Western and Central and Eastern Europe those groups aroused great interest among the public because they were “exotic,” in Russia their performances were not considered special. The Russian public was impressed by shows given by non-European peoples from overseas colonies, especially those from Africa, who were considered “exotic.”

Changes brought about by the revolution of 1917 and the construction of the Soviet state resulted in a strong condemnation of ideas developed in the

Western world; criticism of “Western science,” including the issues of race (see Sántha in this volume), was connected with the development of anti-colonialist rhetoric. As Alexander Bukh (2014, 194) put it: “The Russian nation was created as the opposite of Europe and as a collective individual, formed by primordial factors and characterized by the enigmatic ‘Russian soul’ through the deployment of dichotomies such as rational/emotional, materialistic/spiritual, and individual/communal.” Francine Hirsch (2005, 187) described the shift that occurred at that time as a “shift from an ‘exotizing’ to a ‘modernizing’ discourse.”

In conclusion, it is impossible not to notice that performances given by “exotic” Others in the latter half of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century represented a very particular phase of Europeans’ contact with otherness. Being an instrument of imperial-colonial power—which, while generating new divisions, at the same time sanctioned the new world order—this contact was based on creating hierarchies, exclusions, and the dichotomy of domination and submission. A key role in this context was played by racial theories of the day and by effective civilizing and nationalizing instruments, including the “Western-looking regimes” (Griffiths 2002, xxviii), which were adopted, to a greater or lesser extent, by all the societies of Europe then undergoing modernization. Yet within these general frameworks there existed certain local particularities based on variations in the experience of certain groups (relevant examples of which are presented in the chapters of this book). This, of course, had an impact on the ways in which ethnic shows were perceived, understood, and consumed.

Performed Others

The development of ethnic shows was inextricably connected to the evolution of nineteenth-century visual culture (see Schwartz and Przybylski 2004) and to the system of entertainment “that took the form of complex conglomerates of sights broadly referred to as ‘shows’ or ‘spectacles’” (Biskupski 2013, 78). The modernizing cities of Europe offered an increasingly varied array of visual experiences, which not only affected the shape of visual imagination but also contributed to the “discovery” of historically located observers (Schwartz and Przybylski 2004, xxii). The new model of

spectating, in which the audience itself became a part of the show (Bennett 2004), was a form of talking about the world as well as transforming reality into “collective imagery” (see Demski in this volume). The crucial factors affecting the developing society of spectacles (cf. MacAloon 1984) that offered a wide spectrum of protocinematic attractions were gaze, imagination, and context.

The latter half of the nineteenth century saw the development of a type of perception Anne Friedberg (1993, 2) described as “a mobilized ‘virtual’ gaze”—virtual because it was mediated through representation and mobilized because it was “rooted in other cultural activities that involve walking and travel.” In the context of ethnic shows, this type of gaze is exemplified by the way European city dwellers looked at “native villages.” According to Friedberg (1993, 37), even in the case of a temporary immobility of the spectator, this immobility was “rewarded by the imaginary mobilities that such fixity provided.” In this understanding of the term, gaze denoted not only the physical act of looking but also the “instrument” used to engage the spectators’ imagination. Preconceptions (some of which strayed into the realm of fantasy) were based on meaningful images that reminded people of a wider world and reality. In the case of ethnic shows, it was “exotic” Others that constituted the principal subject/object of these images. The audiences’ perception of non-European peoples was constructed, among other things, on the basis of paintings, travel literature, press descriptions, photographs, and exhibitions presenting life groups and material items from faraway lands; thus, mental images had begun to be shaped long before the development of the forms of direct contact with “exotic” Others that became widespread in the nineteenth century. In practice, it was the mental image of non-European people that fueled the mass consumer interest in forms of direct live contact and created the framework for their reception. Individual mental concepts intertwined with and fed collective imagery, which, in turn, constituted a part of a cultural complex (Kurz 2015, 3). As far as ethnic shows are concerned, the process of intertwining had at least two major consequences. Firstly, the Other (a living person) as a performed character was associated with images that functioned in the imagination of local communities—and therefore also with stereotypes or idealized representational types. Secondly, due to the fact that the different societies of nineteenth-century Europe developed different versions of collective imagery (even if

some were more universal or transcultural in nature), the reception of ethnic shows could also vary, as did the attitude toward non-European people harbored in a given country or even a given city. As noted by Dana Weber (2016, 164), “any community confronted with an alien element transforms it and makes it *functional* according to its own cultural logic.” Thus, although the collective imagery pertaining to non-European people that was constructed and perpetuated in colonial countries did reach Central and Eastern Europe and was adopted (to a greater or lesser degree) by the different societies in the region, it also coexisted and was interwoven with local preconceptions. There is reason to believe that this was an important factor affecting the differences in how ethnic shows were received in various Central and Eastern European countries (as compared to one another and to Western Europe). It should also be remembered that displays of non-European people belonged to an era in which Europeans believed in a world order that placed them at the very center. In each case, non-European peoples were positioned within existing hierarchies created on the Old Continent.

Significantly, individual and collective preconceptions about “exotic” Others were not fixed but evolved over time and were shaped by new experiences and changes taking place in the world. The changes in perception observable in Europe after World War I were described by James Clifford (1988, 120):

Unlike the exoticism of the 19th century, which departed from a more-or-less confident cultural order in search of a temporary *frisson*, a circumscribed experience of the bizarre, modern surrealism and ethnography³ began with a reality deeply in question. Others appeared now as serious human alternatives; modern cultural relativism became possible. As artists and writers set about after the war putting the pieces of culture together in new ways, their field of selection expanded dramatically. The “primitive” societies of the planet were increasingly available as aesthetic, cosmological, and scientific resources.

3 The term “ethnography” as used by Clifford differs from the empirical research technique of humanist sciences and denotes a more general cultural predisposition. The “ethnographic” label implies “a characteristic attitude of participant observation among the artifacts of a defamiliarized cultural reality” (Clifford 1988, 121).

The gradual changes in the collective imagination of Europeans that were taking place after the end of World War I manifested themselves in a number of ways. For instance, objects brought from outside Europe began to be exhibited in European museums not only as items of “primitive” material cultures but also as works of art displayed because of their formal and aesthetic features. In the context of live shows, “exotic” Others entered European stages with increasing confidence, this time not only as members of a “primitive” culture but also as speaking subjects (e.g., the New Woman, exemplified by Josephine Baker). This, however, did not preclude their objectification or commodification.

As far as ethnic shows are concerned, the significance of the physical presence of non-European people is impossible to miss. It was crucial in creating what Walter Benjamin dubbed the “aura” generated by the “here and now” of the place or object, where “here and now” stands for the immediate, embodied presence of the object or place typical to the era of pre-image (Benjamin 1968). The “aura” was an unintended effect of the presence of the authentic Others (in this case, the Other took the place of Benjamin’s “object”).

The third significant factor influencing the evolution of ethnic shows was their context (or circumstances). In each case, non-European people gave their live performances in a different cultural context. The original framework would cease to matter. This change of context also transformed the meaning of the restored behaviors. The new context defined the situation as a show (and not as, for instance, a ritual).

The consensus among modern scholars is that “performance” entails putting an event/image outside its typical context or “frame” (e.g., Carlson 2015). In this case, the “frame” comprises the social actions defined by the context. According to Erving Goffman (1986), context is what causes, or generates, events and transforms actions into forms that are conventional or recognizable (or not) in a given culture. If communication occurs above and beyond its referential content (Bauman 1986, 3), as was the case with ethnic shows, it is regarded as a type of performance even if it involves an on-stage execution of forms occurring in real life. Ethnic shows did not aim to present the perspective of “exotic” Others or to make them understandable. Neither did the shows try to achieve complete detachment from reality, characteristic, for example, of circuses, in which greater significance was given to illusion.

These shows belong in the category of performances (understood as actions made by a participant in the interaction, aimed at influencing Others in a certain way); the restored behaviors presented by Others were continuously transformed by the changing context (travels in different European cities). The essence of this phenomenon lay in the so-called binocular-vision reality or, rather, a double relationship to the subject matter. As Marvin Carlson (2015, 53–54) argues, performance involves a process of moving from reality to regarding it as a signifying image. The “frame” functions as an image yet does not completely remove the awareness that a given object is a part of the real world. This means that audiences do not join in an illusion but in a certain kind of stage reality.

Thus, it may be argued that when “exotic” Others reenacted specific behaviors in a new context (or, to be more precise, in many different local contexts) that began to define them, the process of transforming them into performed Others was initiated.

Entrepreneurs of the entertainment industry wished to transform the behaviors performed on stage by non-European people into forms that Europeans would recognize—that is, ones that were accordant with their preconceptions. As a rule, onstage performances featured certain embodied abstract types (rather than individuals with distinctive features) placed in a setting that was ahistorical and thus different from the (historical) reality of the audience. Organizers of ethnic shows strived to portray otherness but did not aspire to transcend their own cultural contexts. The point was rather to evoke “images of recognizable exoticism.” These images could be different depending on whether the group “on stage” hailed from Africa, Asia, or the Far North. The performing Others generally followed and adapted to these “scripts,” which became more suited to the local contexts as time passed and ethnic shows developed further. Non-European people often played the role of active agents, joining the organizers in their efforts to replicate images that fit the collective imagination of local communities. This means that they not only had to learn to recognize these images but also started to use them as a means of achieving their own goals (see Warsame in this volume).

Performed Others could also affect the audience through activating collective images rooted in European minds. Elements taken from other cultural frameworks certainly played a crucial role in new contexts. Local con-

texts imbued them with new meanings and functions. Many ideas and collective preconceptions regarding “exotic” Others were “exported” to Central and Eastern Europe from Western European countries. However, since these elements intermingled with local perspectives, the resulting voices and images differed slightly from the iterations known in colonial countries. Consequently, the same groups of Others or ideas underlying the performances presented during ethnic shows could elicit very different reactions, depending on the region. One of the aims of the present volume is to show these differences and draw attention to certain subtle nuances we regard as significant and instrumental in understanding the phenomenon of ethnic shows in CEE.

On the Trail of “Exotic” Peoples

Retracing the routes through Central and Eastern Europe taken by various non-European peoples in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century is a long, painstakingly difficult process that requires the cooperation of scholars across many countries. The data collected in the last four years by researchers from Poland, Germany, Russia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, and Latvia (who began their collaboration under the supervision of Dagnosław Demski from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw⁴) prompted us to present the first reconstruction of the main itineraries of “exotic” performance troupes in Central and Eastern Europe. We are fully aware that the image presented in this work is incomplete, riddled with questions and blank spaces. Although the data we have at our disposal is fragmentary, we are gradually systematizing and synthesizing it into a more complete picture. We are still uncertain where many of the “exotic” troupes came from and where they were headed after completing their performance run in a given locality. Consequently, in many cases, even knowing where some group of non-European people stayed at a given point in time, we are unable to situate it within a broader network. It is, however, very apparent that at this stage of research we do not have access

4 It should be emphasized that the data used to retrace the specific routes presented on the map (fig. 1.1) goes beyond the information provided in the chapters of this publication.

to all relevant sources that would provide comprehensive data, particularly pertaining to smaller towns.

For the sake of clarity, it must also be emphasized that the reconstruction of itineraries for specific ethnic groups does not mean retracing the steps of a single troupe that traveled through Europe. In many cases the same regions were toured at the same time by many groups of “exotic” performers originating from the same part of the non-European world. Consequently, the reconstructed itineraries are based on mentions (corroborated by sources) of visits made by members of a given ethnic group in a given place, with the general reservation that—in practice—these mentions could have pertained to different groups of “ethnographic actors.” Thus, this first attempt at retracing the routes of “exotic” troupes in Central and Eastern Europe serves to delineate the framework, which will hopefully be used as the basis for future research. Instead of “reinventing the wheel,” future scholars will be able to concentrate on gradually filling in the gaps on the “map” and working toward a fuller understanding of the analyzed phenomenon in the region. The pages that follow also contain a summary of the data presented in the subsequent chapters of the publication, which ultimately served to establish a more large-scale travel map of non-European troupes in the region (see fig. 1.1).

The known routes were retraced by compiling information regarding “exotic” groups originating from nine non-European regions, which traveled through Central and Eastern Europe with the highest frequency between the 1870s and the end of 1920s and whose performances were widely commented on by local communities. These were (1) Nubians (1876–1914),⁵ (2) Zulus (1879–85), (3) Samoyeds (1879–1914), (4) Sioux “Indians” (1884–90), (5) Mahdi warriors (1885–1914), (6) Somalis (1885–1928), (7) Sinhalese (1884–1928), (8) Ashanti (1888–99), and (9) Dahomeans (1889–1909). It should also be noted that the same groups of “exotic” Others could sometimes perform under different names—for example, troupes from Sudan could be labeled as Mahdi warriors, Sudanese people, or tribes of the Nile Valley, and Somali troupes as Somalis, Abyssinians, or Ethiopians (see also Warsame in this volume).

5 The dates in brackets represent the period between the first and the last performance of a given group of non-European people in Central and Eastern Europe (according to our research). Many groups visited the region more than once.

We deliberately chose not to include the 1906 route of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, which has already been retraced and analyzed in detail.⁶ We also decided not to mark the stay of many "exotic" groups that toured Central and Eastern Europe (as corroborated by source material) but whose itineraries largely remain a mystery. These include (1) Kalmyks (1883–84, 1897), (2) Australians (1886), (3) Papuans (1882), (4) Bushmen (1886), (5) Bedouins (1890–91, 1904, 1908, 1912), (6) Arabs (1888, 1891, 1928), (7) Wakamba (1890–91), (8) Suaheli (1891–93), (9) Shilluk (1899), (10) natives of Guinea (1895), (11) people from Senegal (1896), (12) people from Ghana (1896), (13) people from Togo (1901), (14) Malabar people (1900), (15) Kyrgyz and Tatars (1898), (16) Sami people (1874, 1878, 1888, 1894, 1913), (17) Dinka (1892, 1894), (18) Samoans (1895–97, 1900, 1901, 1910, 1911), (19) Chinese people (1896), (20) Bella Coola "Indians" (1886), (21) the Aztecs (1897–98), and (22) the Ostyak group (1913). A *Neger Karawane* (this was the only term of reference used in the local press; see also Demski 2019) appeared in 1893 in Toruń (Ger. Thorn) and Gdańsk (Ger. Danzig) and in 1895 in Riga. This was not the only instance of a troupe being mentioned in the press that did not specify which ethnic groups were expected to appear on the stage (other examples include the 1930 East Africa Show in Wrocław [Ger. Breslau]) (figs. 1.2–1.5).

In the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, members of non-European groups recruited by the dynamically developing entertainment business were transported to Europe and back by boat (with very few exceptions, such as the Samoyeds). Port towns such as Trieste, Marseille, Le Havre, Rotterdam, and Hamburg thus played a significant role in the history of ethnic shows. They marked the starting point (and the conclusion) of European tours that lasted months or even years. Numerous press comments describing attempts at communicating in various European languages made by non-European people provide important clues that indirectly testify to prolonged stays of "exotic" groups in different countries. Periodicals in Poznań, for instance, noted the following in connection with the stay of Mahdi warriors in 1899 and the Sinhalese in 1928:

6 "Map of 1906 Season of the Second European Tour. Buffalo Bill's Wild West. Tour of France, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Germany and Belgium." Accessed February 7, 2020. <http://library.centerofthewest.org/cdm/ref/collection/BBOA/id/1719>. See also Barabas in this volume.



Figure 1.2. Hagenbecks' Malabar people in Prague, 1900. In the foreground, non-European people of the Malabar Coast in India and their impresario. Particularly noteworthy are the bamboo-pole artists. European spectators of the show are visible in the background, behind a fence. The reconstructed village (huts and a replica of a Hindu temple) stands among European plant life in late fall or winter. Clemens Radauer's collection.

Figure 1.3. Suaheli caravan in Vienna, 1891–92. The group performed in Eastern Europe, yet the photo was taken in a Viennese atelier. Clemens Radauer's collection.





Figure 1.4. A *Neger Karawane* from the Nile Valley in Lviv, July–August 1893. The photograph, conventional in terms of composition, contains information on the persons depicted. They were marked with handwritten lowercase letters “a” to “f.” The image is captioned: “The caravan of Negroes from Africa by the source of the Nile performed in Lviv in late July and early August 1893 in the garden by the Kieselka pond, a. chief, b. his first wife Alina (he has 4, and between 1 and 4 children by each of them), he is 28, his first wife 22, they have been together for 11 years, c. (woman), d. man playing harp, married couple, musicians, f. the heaviest and ugliest Negro with protruding [illegible] lips, e. his wife.” Archive of Ethnographic Museum in Kraków.

It appears they have been traveling through Europe for a long time now, as some of them understand a little Russian and German. They are gentle in spirit, approach the visiting white guests with cordiality and express their amiability as best as they can. (*Wielkopolanin* [*Resident of Greater Poland*], June 4, 1899)

Two sorcerers clamor to announce wonders in a strange mixture of German and English. (*Dziennik Poznański* [*Poznań Daily*], July 21, 1928)

Since the organizers of ethnic shows brought to Europe not only members of non-European groups but also items of foreign material cultures and animal species typical of a given region, acclimatization centers started to appear near some ports. One such facility for exotic animals operated in the



Figure 1.5. The crowds in the Wrocław (Breslau) zoo during the Bedouins' ethnic shows, 1912. Crowds at the entrance to an ethnic show; a bird's-eye view. Some of the spectators were unaware of being photographed, others stopped to pose. Archive Zoo Wrocław.

Brijuni Islands⁷ (14 islands in present-day Croatia) on the way to Trieste. Non-European people were often employed to care for these animals, as they were much more familiar with their needs than any local—Andreja Mesarič (this volume) mentions “negro keepers” [*Negerwärten*]; István Sántha writes of “animal caregivers,” who tended to the exotic animals kept by the Russian tsar in Saint Petersburg (fig. 1.6).

7 In 1815 the islands became part of the Austrian Empire (from 1867, the Austro-Hungarian Empire). After the end of World War I they were incorporated into the Italian state. In 1893, the Brijuni Islands, which had for many years been struggling with a high incidence of malaria, were bought by a private entrepreneur from Vienna named Paul Kupelwieser (1843–1919), for 70,000 gold forints. Inviting Robert Koch to the islands helped curb the problem of disease; Kupelwieser later transformed them into one of the most fashionable holiday and spa resorts for the upper classes. The first guests arrived in Veliki Brijun in 1896, but their numbers started to grow rapidly after 1903—that is, only after malaria was completely eradicated on the islands. Aside from hotels, pools, and parks, local attractions included an ostrich farm and elephants, brought to the island in 1900. In 1911, Carl Hagenbeck opened a zoo on the site of an old quarry. After consulting Kupelwieser, he also decided to construct an acclimatization station for animals transported from Africa. The Brijuni Islands had excellent connections to Pula and other ports on the Adriatic Sea. The outbreak of World War I put an end to tourist traffic; Veliki Brijun was transformed into a military fortress (Fatović-Ferenčić 2006; <https://www.np-brijuni.hr/en/brijuni/cultural-and-historical-heritage/quarries>).



Figure 1.6. Animal caregivers. Carl Hagenbeck's Galla troupe, 1908. Many troupes performed alongside exotic animals. This photo was taken during feeding time, outside regular performance hours, as evidenced by the empty seats in the audience and the animal "chaos" inside the arena, among the tents in which the performers lived. A group of spectators behind a fence may be seen on the left; to them the so-called daily life of Others was as much of an attraction as the staged performances. Clemens Radauer's collection.

As far as ethnic shows organized in Central and Eastern Europe are concerned, the two most important ports were Trieste and Hamburg. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Trieste had already become the largest port of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and one of the biggest transport hubs between Europe and Africa. The Southern Railway, completed in 1857, provided a direct connection to Vienna. Trieste was, for instance, the starting point of the journey to Hamburg made by Hagenbeck's first "Nubian caravan" in 1876 (Gleiss 1967, 34). In February 1880 a group of Zulus set out from Trieste, passed through Gorizia and Ljubljana, and arrived in Vienna (see Mesarič in this volume). Interestingly, ethnic shows were probably not organized in Trieste itself. The "exotic" Others arriving in the seaport traveled north toward Vienna and other European cities.

In contrast with Trieste, the residents of Hamburg, the other port that proved hugely important to the story of ethnic shows in Europe, had many opportunities to see a performance of non-European people. In 1874, six

Sami people were brought to the city to take part in the first ethnic show organized by Carl Hagenbeck. The tour of the Sami troupe was of groundbreaking significance to the development of such shows in Central and Eastern Europe (which will be discussed later). Hamburg was also the destination of many transports of wild animals that Hagenbeck company would later sell to zoos and circuses across the continent (such as the Warsaw zoo). Hamburg's role increased to new heights after Hagenbeck's Tierpark, a private zoo in Stellingen, opened in 1907. However, by then Hagenbeck had already (for almost twenty years) been following the practice of sending non-European people back to their homelands and placing exotic animals "for safekeeping" in his animal park in Neuer Pferdemarkt in Hamburg (Ames 2008, 84).

After the ships carrying people and animals from all over the world docked in Hamburg, the troupes of "exotic" Others traveled west, east, north, and south. As regards ethnic shows in Central and Eastern Europe, it is the eastward and southward routes leading to Vienna that are of particular interest. Since non-European people usually traveled through Europe by train, most of their tour routes followed major railway lines. There can be no doubt that the technological progress witnessed in the modern period was of paramount importance in the development of ethnic shows (for more on the first railway connections in present-day Poland, see Demski 2020; for those in Russia, see Leskinen in this volume).

Eastern routes often led from Berlin to cities under German rule which are now within Polish territory. It should also be remembered that some urban centers that belonged to Germany in the period under analysis are currently a part of Poland (e.g., Wrocław). A direct railway connection between Berlin and Wrocław was completed in 1846; the one between Wrocław and Poznań, in 1856. Some eastward routes ran along the Warsaw–Bydgoszcz Railway (1862), in practice leading from Berlin (Bydgoszcz was a stop both on the Warsaw–Bydgoszcz Railway and the Prussian Eastern Railway), Bydgoszcz, and Toruń to Warsaw (then under Russian rule). From there, "exotic" troupes could continue northeast, to visit such cities as Vilnius, Riga, Saint Petersburg, and Moscow (trains from Warsaw to Saint Petersburg through Vilnius started to run in 1862) or south, for example to Łódź (then under Russian rule) and other towns and cities along the Warsaw–Vienna Railway (1848).

Another transport hub in the travels of non-European people was Vienna. Owing to the well-developed railway network, it was possible to set out from Vienna in practically every direction. Consequently, there was hardly a troupe that did not visit that city.

The following section presents data pertaining to selected “exotic” groups, touring Central and Eastern Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. This was our basis for retracing travel routes marked on the map (fig. 1.1). The tours will be discussed in chronological order, to show the evolution of the phenomenon in successive decades and the level of interest in performances observed in the region. It should be noted that, according to our current knowledge, the first ethnic show in Central and Eastern Europe took place in Budapest in 1874 (Kontler 2020, 189). Its audience watched a performance by the Sami, organized by Carl Hagenbeck. The event marked the beginning of the story of modern ethnic shows in Central and Eastern Europe. However, due to the amount of available information, we ultimately decided against including the routes of Sami people on the map.

As far as the selected “exotic” groups are concerned, the first to arrive in Central and Eastern Europe were Nubians. Since ethnic shows were virtually unknown in this part of the continent at the time, local audiences reacted to performances by African people with considerable enthusiasm. Thus, “Nubian caravans” were organized in succession in 1876, 1878, and 1879. Each of them performed at the zoological garden in Wrocław (Czarnecka 2018, 189). The Nubians’ spectacular procession through that city in the year 1876 was described in Carl Hagenbeck’s memoirs (quoted in Solski and Strehlow 2015, 32). As noted above, the first caravan arrived in the port of Trieste and headed north to the Hamburg zoo (Gleiss 1967, 34). In 1877 Nubians staged performances in Vienna, giving rise to a “Nubian craze” among the spectators. The following year, the African troupe appeared in the Budapest zoo (between June 28 and July 7, 1878; Kontler 2020) and then in Prague (see Křížová in this volume). After performing in Berlin and Munich late in 1878 and early in 1879 (Thode-Arora 1989, 169), the Nubians came to Poznań. The local press wrote of a performance in the Poznań zoo on August 14–15, 1879 (Demski 2018a, 203). One year later, the Nubians entertained spectators in the Saint Petersburg zoo (see chapters by Leskinen and Sántha in this volume). There is also evidence that they performed in Prague in February

1901. In 1911, a Sudanese group billed as Nubian came to Ljubljana. Their shows were staged between May 22 and June 5. The Africans traveled there from Gorizia, where they had performed between May 7 and 14 (see Mesarič in this volume). Further clues as to their itinerary were found in materials dated 1914 and pertaining to performances by peoples of the Nile Valley.

The next group to arrive was the Zulus. Their stay in Central and Eastern Europe was noted in the press between 1879 and 1885. It is a relatively well-known fact that Guillermo Antonio Farini's Zulu group was presented to the audience in London in early 1879 (Peacock 1999, 89).⁸ Although their exact itinerary remains a mystery, it has been established that the Zulus arrived in Saint Petersburg in 1879 (see Sántha in this volume). In February 1880, a five-member Zulu Kaffir troupe came to Ljubljana from Gorizia. Having staged a few performances there, they set off to Vienna (see Mesarič in this volume). In the summer of 1881, the Zulu group performed in the Saint Petersburg zoo (see Leskinen in this volume). The next trace of their presence is dated 1885 (May 12–17), when a “Zulu caravan” performed in the zoo in Poznań (Demski 2018a, 203).

The tours by Nubian and Zulu troupes were associated with the first phase of development of such shows in the region. To audiences in Central and Eastern Europe, these performers exuded an air of “exoticism”; very often fascination with the troupes resulted from the fact that they were the first Africans with which the audience had come into contact.

In contrast to the above examples, the itineraries of Samoyed troupes progressed westward from the East. The popularity of ethnic shows observable in the latter half of the nineteenth century prompted Russian entrepreneurs to seek opportunities for making profit. They recruited members of ethnic groups inhabiting the fringes of the Russian Empire, including Siberia. While residents of Russian cities did not perceive the Samoyeds as anything “exotic”—in Saint Petersburg, for instance, Northern peoples and their reindeer could be seen almost every winter (see Leskinen in this volume)—for spectators from Western and Central and Eastern Europe they were an exciting novelty. It has been established that a Samoyed group was shown at the

8 It should also be noted that the first Zulu people were brought to Europe by Charles Henry Caldecott. They arrived in London in March 1853. It was their performances, entitled the “Zulu Kaffir Exhibition,” staged in London between mid-May and mid-August 1853, that inspired Charles Dickens to write his famous essay “The Noble Savage” (see Lindfors 1999).

Anthropological Congress in Moscow in 1879 (see chapters by Leskinen and Savitsky in this volume). They traversed Europe numerous times; one of the longer tours took place in 1882–83 (see Savitsky in this volume). Between January and April 1882, the Samoyeds performed in Warsaw, where they had arrived from Saint Petersburg. Afterwards, the troupe headed for Kraków and Vienna for shows staged from April 9 to 26. In June 1882, the troupe began performing in the Budapest zoo (see Kontler 2020), and by August, in Prague. Data discovered so far indicates that in 1883 the “caravan” traveled through Germany (stopping in Poznań), Switzerland, and France, only to return to German cities in winter (e.g., to Wrocław).

In February 1889, the Samoyeds were again performing in Riga (see Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020). Ildikó Sz. Kristóf (personal communication) established that the troupe performed in the Budapest zoo in 1896. In 1914, they performed in the zoo in Moscow (see Leskinen in this volume).

A new wave of interest in ethnic shows could be observed in the 1880s, prompted by the arrival of a succession of non-European groups. Materials studied to date suggest that Sioux “Indians” first delighted audiences in the towns of Central and Eastern Europe in 1884 (see Tomicki 1992). Their journey began in Hamburg. In February 1884, the troupe was performing in Castan’s Panopticon in Berlin (Weber 2016, 316). It has been established that performances by Sioux “Indians” were also organized between April 18 and 29, 1884, in the Poznań zoo (Demski 2018a, 203). On May 9, the Native Americans arrived in Warsaw and appeared in the Ciniselli family circus for a week, between May 10 and 18 (see Czarnecka in this volume). Their stay was widely noted in the Poznań and Warsaw press. The troupe then traveled northeast to perform in Saint Petersburg (see Sántha in this volume). Their itinerary also passed through Budapest, where they appeared in 1886 and in 1890.

Mahdi warriors performed in the region between 1885 and 1914. In June 1885, a “Sudanese caravan” gave a few performances in Ljubljana. It was on its way to Trieste with the intention of boarding a ship to Antwerp, where the world’s fair was taking place at the time (see Mesarič in this volume). In 1886, Mahdi warriors appeared in front of audiences in several German towns. In 1898, they performed in Basel and Berlin and between June 1 and 10, 1899, in the Poznań zoo (Demski 2018a, 203). Interestingly, in 1914 several ethnic and tribal groups from Africa, including Mahdi warriors and Nubians, performed



Figure 1.7. Sudanese women, 1909. A cover of a special issue of *Zoologischer Garten* published by Wrocław (Breslau) zoo. One of the many special issues of the illustrated newspaper published by the zoological garden, focusing entirely on the ethnic shows taking place in the zoo grounds. Archive Zoo Wrocław.

together in Carl Marquardt’s show entitled “Performances by Peoples of the Nile Valley” (there were several versions of its German title; see Demski 2018a, 204). It was staged between July 10 and 23, 1914, in the zoo in Poznań. The troupes went to Wrocław, to perform in the city’s zoo between July 31 and August 23, 1914 (Czarnecka 2018, 190) (fig. 1.7).

As regards Somali shows in Central and Eastern Europe, data indicates that they took place between 1885 and 1928. Naturally, this involved several troupes, the largest (and one of the most famous) of which was managed by Hersi Egeh Gorsch (see Warsame in this volume). By the end of the nineteenth century, Somali performers had already established close cooperation with Hagenbeck company. Consequently, from 1907 onward they made very frequent guest appearances in Hagenbeck’s Tierpark in Stell-

ingen. This private zoo also served as their base camp, from which they embarked on journeys to various locations in Western Europe with only a few “incidental” stops in Central and Eastern Europe. As established by Ildikó Sz. Kristóf (personal communication), Sudanese Somali people performed in the Budapest zoo as early as 1885. In 1895, aside from London, Hamburg, and other German cities, Somalis also visited Vienna. As “Abyssinians,” they performed in Prague in 1908. The audience in Vienna was able to see them again between May and October 1910. The same opportunity was given to the residents of Schweidnitz (now Świdnica in Poland) in 1911, and one year later to spectators in Luna Park in Saint Petersburg. In 1928, an “Abyssinian/Somali village” was on display in Budapest.

The Central and Eastern European tours by the Sinhalese are relatively well documented. Their visits usually sparked numerous comments in the local press. Although Sinhalese performers appeared before audiences in Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, and elsewhere in 1884 (Thode-Arora 1989; Kontler 2020), it is their tours in the late 1880s and early 1890s that prove of greater importance in the study of ethnic shows in the region. The group of natives from Ceylon (today's Sri Lanka) that began their tour of Central and Eastern Europe in 1888 arrived in Hamburg by sea and left the continent via that same port (*Dziennik Łódzki* [*Łódź Daily*], September 19, 1888). After being divided into several smaller troupes in Munich, the group managed by John Hagenbeck arrived in Warsaw (from Wrocław) on August 23, 1888. On September 11, the Sinhalese took the train to Łódź and returned to Warsaw once more on September 19. Their next destination was Riga. The German-language press began to report on the Sinhalese troupe's performances in Łódź in late August (*Düna Zeitung* [*Daugava Newspaper*], August 29, 1888). Latvian-language periodicals did so in early September (i.e., almost a month before the troupe's arrival in relevant territory (*Mājas* [*Home*], September 3, 1888; see also Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020). This served to prepare the residents of Riga for the visit of non-European people. While it is impossible to ascertain the exact date when the Sinhalese entered the city, the last advertisement for their performance was published on September 24, 1888, in the *Düna Zeitung*. Riga was the final stop in their 1888 tour. The Sinhalese returned directly to Hamburg and sailed back to Ceylon.

The next tour of Sinhalese performers began in 1889. The troupe came to Warsaw by the Warsaw–Bydgoszcz Railway and presented its shows in the local zoo between August 2 and 18 (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 2, 1889). The next stop on their journey was Riga. Information about the Sinhalese performances appeared there in the German-language press (*Düna Zeitung*, August 19, 1889); Latvian-language periodicals made no mention of them (Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020). The troupe also passed through, for example, Vilnius, Saint Petersburg (Zefeld 1890), and Moscow. The direct railway from Moscow to Warsaw via Brest (Warsaw–Terespol Railway) was completed in 1866.

The 1891 tour of Sinhalese performers took a slightly different course. In April that year, a Ceylonese troupe traveled through what is now Austria. On May 1 they staged their first show in Kraków (*Czas* [*Time*], April 30, 1891); the next stop on their journey was Lviv (May 12–24) (fig. 1.8). In both these



Figure 1.8. Sinhalese and Tamil performers in Lviv, 1891. A very rare shot, juxtaposing a conventionally arranged group of non-European people posing behind a fence in the foreground, and an interested European spectator observing the act of photographing from the window of a nearby building, and thus from above. It remains unclear whether the composition of the frame was accidental or deliberate, yet it aptly portrays the constructed boundary between two worlds and a symbolical attempt at “breaching” it in the act of peeping. The right side of the image bears the handwritten inscription: “(pronounce: Symglz —[crossed out] Tamil:) A Caravan of Sinhalese and Tamils of Ceylon Island—taken around Europe by Karol Hagenbeck of Hamburg. Lviv 24/5 91.” Archive of Ethnographic Museum in Kraków.

cities the troupe was advertised as a caravan of Sinhalese and Tamil people. The railway connection between Kraków and Lviv had existed since 1861. While it is certain that the group that had performed in Warsaw arrived in Vilnius in August that year, the Polish-language press in that city reported that the troupe was to be present in Kiev in mid-June (*Słowo [Word]*, June 16, 1891). At this stage of research, we have yet to find any Ukrainian source that would corroborate the information about performances in Kiev. However, if the Sinhalese did indeed make a stop in that city, it would have taken place after their run in Lviv (for more on the performances and routes of Sinhalese troupes in the 1880s and 1890s, see Kopania in this volume).

Sinhalese entertainers also visited the region in 1901. From August 27 to September 10, their shows were staged in the zoological garden in Poznań

(Demski 2018b, 301). The Sinhalese arrived in the city together with a group from Togo. Their last European tour of considerable length began in 1926. Having performed in London, Berlin, Milan, and elsewhere, Ceylonese artists headed to Prague (June 1928) and then to Poznań. For the period from July 19 to August 1, 1928, the grounds adjacent to the Poznań zoo were transformed into a “Ceylonese village” (Demski 2018b, 302–6).

Another group of performers enjoying immense popularity during their tours of Central and Eastern Europe were inhabitants of the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana). Owing to Peter Altenberg’s (2007 [1897]) collection of thirty-eight autobiographical sketches entitled *Ashantee*, in which he described his relations with the residents of this former British colony, the Ashanti were among the most welcome entertainers on European shores. Altenberg’s accounts were connected with the Ashanti shows staged in the Vienna zoo (then still located in the Prater), organized between July and October 1896. The performances, which drew an audience of about 500,000 people, resulted in a veritable *Aschanti-Fieber* (Ashanti fever) among the city’s residents (von Hammerstein 2005, 3). The Ashanti show was the first one in Europe to use on a large scale the concept of a “native village,” which the visitors could roam freely. It was an immense success, and the format was soon copied by other organizers of ethnic shows (Thode-Arora 1989, 111). In 1896, the Ashanti also made a visit to Budapest, at the time of the millennial exhibition (Kontler 2020).

It should, however, be noted that the Ashanti had already visited Central and Eastern Europe in 1888 (fig. 1.9). In Warsaw, an Ashanti troupe performed in Schumann circus in January 1888 (*Kurier Codzienny* [Daily Courier], January 20, 1888). That same year the Ashanti also delighted the audience in Budapest. In June 1889, the Ashanti staged shows in Vilnius (*Baltijas Vēstnesis* [Baltic Tribune], June 3, 1889). Next, they headed to Riga, where they performed in July in Thorensberger Park (today, in Latvian, Arkādijas Park). The group, managed by an impresario named John Hood (cf. the Dahomey shows below), comprised eight (or nine—the data presented in newspapers differed) Ashanti men, nine Dahomey women, and a child; it was therefore ethnically heterogeneous (*Düna Zeitung*, July 14, 1889; *Zeitung für Stadt und Land* [Urban and Rural Newspaper], July 18, 1889). Advertisements indicate that the *Aschanti Karawane* (as the group was officially named in the promotional material) performed in the seaside town



Figure 1.9. The Ashanti troupe in Schumann circus. Drawing by Stefan Mucharski, who, as the caption below indicates, drew “from nature.” *Wędrowiec*, January 26, 1888.

of Jūrmala near Riga in the last days of July 1889: the last advertisement for their shows appeared in the German-language press on July 29, 1889 (*Düna Zeitung*, July 27, 1889; *Zeitung für Stadt und Land*, July 29, 1889; see also Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020).

The success of the 1896 shows earned the “exotic” troupe another invitation to Vienna. They were brought there in 1897 (von Hammerstein 2005, 3; Mesarič in this volume). The role of the impresario was taken by one Victor Bamberger. In May 1897, the African performers were on exhibit in the Vienna zoo; in August that year they appeared in Prague (Herza 2016, 97). Bamberger organized another visit to Vienna in the autumn of 1898. From there, the Ashanti troupe traveled to Dresden, Königsberg, Hamburg, and Leipzig (*Breslauer Morgen Zeitung* [*Breslau Morning Newspaper*], June 23,



Figure 1.10. The Dahomey caravan, Vienna. Clemens Radauer's collection. The photograph reflects a convention of presenting Dahomey people popular at the time, in which armed Dahomey women were depicted as icons of "savage" Africa in the local imagination.

1899; *Breslauer Zeitung* [*Breslau Newspaper*], June 15, 1899). Their shows in the Wrocław zoo were staged between June 13 and July 19, 1899 (Czarnecka 2018, 190), while the ones in Prague were staged in August of that year (Herza 2016, 97).

Many Central and Eastern European cities were also on the itineraries of Dahomey Amazons. One of the more significant tours was organized by John Wood (whom the press frequently referred to as John Hood). It began in 1889 and lasted for several years (see Czarnecka 2020). In January 1889, people from Dahomey performed in Oslo and then in Helsinki⁹ but had already moved on to Riga by June (it was probably the troupe mentioned above, composed of both Dahomey and Ashanti people). The local press there had started to advertise the shows at the beginning of the month (*Baltijas Vēstnesis*, June 5, 1889; see also Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020). In Warsaw the "caravan" performed between June 19 and July 3, 1889. On the day following their last show, the non-European troupe set off to Lublin (then under Russian rule; Czarnecka

⁹ We extend our thanks to Johanna Berg for providing information on Dahomey Amazon performances in Oslo, Helsinki, and Munich.

2020). It has also been established that the troupe performed in Umlauff's Weltmuseum in Hamburg in late June/early July (Thode-Arora 1989, 171). In February 1891 it visited Paris; in August that year it stopped in Berlin and Frankfurt. Unfortunately, there the trail is lost again. The next set of information on the troupe's performances is dated 1892. The audience in Poznań had the chance to see the Amazons between June 26 and July 3 (in the local zoo). The troupe was then headed to Kraków, where it performed between July 5 and 18 (Czarnecka 2020). In August 1892, the Amazons staged shows in Budapest and Vienna (fig. 1.10) and visited Prague in September (Herza 2016, 97). In November 1892 the audience could see them in Munich.

The next time Dahomey people visited Central and Eastern Europe was in the late 1890s. It is certain that a troupe was performing in Riga in March 1896 (Novikova 2013, 583). A group of Dahomey people (comprising twenty-four women and eight men) stayed in Warsaw in April and May 1896 (*Kurier Warszawski*, April 30 and May 15, 1896).¹⁰ In February 1897, an Amazon troupe arrived in Vienna, where their shows were staged in the Schumann circus (Herza 2016, 97; see also Czarnecka 2020). In 1898, the troupe entertained the audience in the zoo in Budapest. In July the Amazons were in Brno (*Lidové Noviny [People's Newspaper]*, July 5, 1898); in August, in Prague (Herza 2016, 97); and in winter, in Wrocław (Czarnecka 2020).

Dahomey Amazon shows were also staged in Moscow in April 1901. In June and July that year, the troupe was performing in Riga, as a part of that city's seven-hundredth anniversary celebrations (Novikova 2013, 583; Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020). The Moscow audience had another chance to see the Amazons in August 1909 (see Leskinen in this volume).

In conclusion, even this brief selection of examples indicates that the itineraries of performance troupes touring Central and Eastern Europe followed the main railways. Since non-European people invariably traveled by train, they could only reach cities and towns with a railway connection. As the network of train lines became more developed with every passing decade of the nineteenth century, the phenomenon of ethnic shows grew in scope, and the distance traveled by "exotic" groups increased accordingly. However, this does not mean that every city or town with a railway station organized

10 We extend our thanks to Ludomir Franczak for providing information on Dahomey Amazon performances in Warsaw in 1896.

ethnic shows with the same frequency. In Bucharest, for instance, researchers conducting archival queries have found no mentions of standard ethnic shows (apart from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and the "exotic" Others to be seen in circuses).

The majority of "exotic" troupes visited the same urban centers, often stopping there during each of their tours. This was probably due to numerous practical concerns (aside from transportation), such as the need to be provided with an appropriate venue and the promise of a suitably large audience. All other functions aside, ethnic shows were—first and foremost—commercial events and, as such, needed to generate a specific amount of profit. No strictly defined rules for transporting performance troupes across Europe existed at the time, which makes it harder to retrace the routes they had taken. In practice, non-European people often traveled in different directions along the same route. The direction was largely dependent on the starting point—that is, the port of arrival or (e.g., in the case of the Samoyeds) the eastern city from which the troupe set off. Entrepreneurs were not bound by any specific principles in this respect. Thus, what counted was the expected profit, the existing infrastructure, and the network of connections with local businesspeople (e.g., owners of zoological gardens), in which respect the Hagenbeck company was the uncontested leader (see Thode-Arora in this volume). Although the first encounters between residents of Central and Eastern Europe and members of the various non-European ethnic groups took place later than had been the case in Western Europe, the existing data indicates that such contacts were numerous, while the network of cities organizing such entertainment was vast.

This book adopts a multiperspectival approach to the study of ethnic shows, "exotic" Others, and turn-of-the-century Central and Eastern European culture. Our use of case studies across disciplinary and geographical boundaries is intended to suggest the quality and substance of the debates that cut across the heterogeneous forms, meanings, and understanding of ethnic live displays.

Ethnic shows offering popular ethnographic knowledge or spectacles can be read simultaneously as colonialist propaganda; as dominant and desiring gazes upon objectified non-European people; as a historical form of mass entertainment; as a subject of anthropological research; as one of

the period's "instruments" of creating European, regional, and local identity; as a modern exhibitionary arena; as a manifestation of the particular power structure; and/or as a form of intercultural contact. The chapters in this book indicate that the same ethnic/ethnographic spectacles could carry different meanings to audiences who were dissimilar in terms of citizenship, ethnicity, and social background. Ethnic shows were subject to constant renegotiation by audiences and exhibitors and, in time, also (though to a much lesser degree) by non-European people. By approaching ethnic shows from the perspective of a variety of local Central and Eastern European voices, this book seeks to contribute to a more nuanced and diversified understanding of the nature and effects of this cultural phenomenon.

The book is organized into three parts. The first part, presenting the methods of recruitment and organization of ethnic shows and their reception in local communities, puts emphasis on an actor-centered approach. Each of the first four chapters analyzes the motives and strategies that guided the actions of European entrepreneurs, recruiters, and impresarios of ethnic shows but also the actions of non-European people. Despite the inherent imbalance of power observable throughout the development of the phenomenon under study, all four case studies present various examples of manifestations of indigenous agency.

The second part is centered around ways of constructing performed Others and the role these played in the evolution of the social and cultural horizon of the period. Each of the three chapters attempts to clarify *whose* reality we are talking about when looking at both the performer and the audience as part of the same spectacle. All three articles indicate that the essence of ethnic shows lay not in reflecting any readymade reality but in manufacturing meanings. One of the phenomena characteristic of the modern era involves combining the real world with "stage reality"—the way things are and the way they might be.

The third part examines in detail some of the ethnic shows in four local contexts: Slovenia (under Habsburg rule), Russia, Poland (under Russian and Habsburg rule), and Banat and Transylvania (under Habsburg rule). The first four chapters concentrate on the complex outcomes following the emergence of ethnic shows in particular localities. The selection of varied examples provides interesting material for comparative studies of ethnic shows. Despite still being connected to a specific local context, the fifth chapter, which concludes

the book, differs significantly from the other contributions in the volume. It only discusses the issue of ethnic shows in a brief fashion, focusing instead on nineteenth-century freak shows in Saint Petersburg and public shaman performances in the Soviet Union. The chapter presents the latter as a later stage in the development of live performances of Others in Russia. Bearing these differences in mind, we nevertheless decided to use our editorial privilege of shaping the structure and content of the volume and include the chapter. We regard its different nature as added value, believing that even though the text does not pertain to ethnic shows in the strictest understanding of the term, it offers new and interesting insight into the evolution of live performances of Others in the Soviet period. Furthermore, the chapter presents the details of the process of searching for source material on ethnic shows in present-day Saint Petersburg and the problems the author encountered, describing the process from an individual perspective.

As editors of the volume, we sincerely hope that this volume forms a worthwhile contribution to the study of ethnic shows in Europe and will fill in some gaps in our present understanding of the phenomenon, and that each of the chapters will provide interesting information, encourage further reflection, and inspire scholars to ask new questions.

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Introduction: From Western to Peripheral Voices

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PART
ONE



**European versus
Indigenous Agency**

CHAPTER
TWO

**The Hagenbeck Ethnic Shows:
Recruitment, Organization, and Academic and Popular Responses**

Hilke Thode-Arora

Based on an actor-centered approach and thorough research in the Hagenbeck archives and the private papers of Johan Adrian Jacobsen, one of Hagenbeck's impresarios, which consists of more than 5,000 letters, diaries, photos, and other archival material, this chapter provides an overview of the way the Hagenbeck shows were recruited and organized, how they worked behind the scenes, and how they were received by the public, the press, academia, and visitors. The research also sheds light on the motives and strategies of the non-European ethnic-show travelers and shows the personal expertise and continuity from ethnic show to filmmaking in creating a popularized "exotic" Other.

Terminology and Sources

This chapter is a summary of research spanning more than thirty years, resulting in a book and numerous articles focusing on the Hagenbeck ethnic shows (see for example Thode-Arora 1989, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2014, 2017, 2019). Although the catchy term "human zoos" has been propagated by the French researcher Pascal Blanchard (e.g., Bancel et al. 2002), I strongly prefer the term "ethnic shows" (*Völkerschauen* in German). In my opinion, although both were similar phenomena about othering, ethnic shows were conceptually different from freak shows in which people were staged due to their physical difference. Ethnic shows were much more about cultural differences and always included a staged performance of cultural pursuits considered characteristic of the subjects. Much more importantly, though, the term "human zoos" suggests a unilinear power relation and makes non-European ethnic-show participants into powerless victims, denying them

any agency, and screening out an entangled history. Although there were some shows where the participants were kept like captives, and although most ethnic shows took place in a colonial setting of structural inequality, indigenous agency in the sense of capacity to act and negotiate was definitely an important factor in many of them, as this chapter and the contribution by Bodhari Warsame in this volume will show.

The Hagenbeck family was large and ramified. Carl Hagenbeck (1844–1913) had half-brothers, brothers-in-law, sons-in-law, and nephews, who, like him, worked part-time or full-time in the animal trade, as animal tamers and trainers, in the circus business, as collectors and dealers of ethnographic artifacts, or as taxidermists. Many of them were involved in the organizing of ethnic shows or acted (occasionally) as impresarios, partly or mainly at their own expense, running companies of their own at times. Rather than disentangling this fuzzy pattern of family members and staff crossing permanently or occasionally between companies, helping out with certain chores for a limited time or repeatedly, working for Carl Hagenbeck but also independently, in this chapter, all ethnic shows organized by members of the Hagenbeck family and employees of the Hagenbeck companies will be subsumed under the term “Hagenbeck ethnic shows.” This makes sense as there seem to have been long-term relations¹ between the protagonists in the Hagenbeck realm, and arguably this flexible network could be drawn on to make Hagenbeck ethnic shows as commercially successful as they were.

The body of primary sources used for this chapter encompasses more than 5,000 letters of business and private correspondence, diaries, hundreds of photos, advertisement placards and bills, postcards sold with the shows, newspaper coverage of the shows at many different tour stops, and other archival material. In addition, oral history interviews with different members of the Hagenbeck family were conducted.² Many, though by no means all, of the archival sources

1 Evidence for this is the extensive correspondence between these protagonists, kept in the Hagenbeck and Jacobsen papers, encompassing decades and geographic areas across continents. Furthermore, these sources show repeated collaboration between Carl Hagenbeck’s company and, for example, Josef Menges, Johan Adrian Jacobsen, John Hagenbeck, and Heinrich and Johannes Umlauff. Furthermore, Carl Hagenbeck seems to have employed persons from his network when in situations of need after they had left the company: Johan Adrian Jacobsen, for example, was offered the management of the zoo restaurant in 1907 and held this position till his retirement—two of his ethnic-show recruitment journeys (1910 and 1926) actually took place during this period.

2 Interviews were conducted with Eva Bremer-Hagenbeck (1985), Gisela Bührmann (1991), Caroline

were found in the Hagenbeck archive and in the private papers of Johan Adrian Jacobsen, one of Hagenbeck's recruiters and impresarios of ethnic shows. All these sources allowed for a detailed analysis of recruiting and exhibiting criteria. Apart from these primary sources, there are published autobiographies of Hagenbeck family members, city chronicles at the tour stops of the shows, and literature on the show and circus business of the times.

All sources have to be carefully contextualized and information taken with a grain of salt, however. It has to be kept in mind that Carl Hagenbeck was a masterful advertiser who strategically used the media of his day. Before an ethnic show even reached a tour stop, Hagenbeck's marketing team would position favorable or exciting articles in the local newspapers, outdoing competitors by sheer manpower or financial resources. Similarly, the Hagenbeck family members' autobiographies, some of them produced in high print runs and translated into different languages, gloss over some events and exaggerate others to create a positive image of the company (Dittrich and Rieke-Müller 1998, 237–43).

Johan Adrian Jacobsen (1853–1947) was a Norwegian who alternated in his professional life between working for Hagenbeck in different functions and going on long-term collecting trips for the Royal Ethnological Museum in Berlin. Having started a family and settled down in Germany for good, he was keenly aware of his insufficient command of written German and lack of professional qualifications. Seeking to capitalize on his rare experiences as a recruiter of ethnic shows and as a well-traveled collector of ethnographic artifacts in unexplored areas, his diaries, with the exception of the beginning of the very first one, were all written in (broken) German and meant to be the basis for publications later on. This becomes evident from marginal notes clearly added later and from some publications referring to his diaries. Although his private papers are among the most valuable sources on the Hagenbeck ethnic shows, Jacobsen's letters and diaries should be read with this background in mind (e.g., Jacobsen, *Tagebuch* 1877–81, 5; Jacobsen, *Tagebuch* 1884–85, 14; Hoffmann 1880).

Hundreds of newspaper articles have been part of my analysis. Apart from sample press coverage from many of those towns and cities at which

Hagenbeck (1985), Claus Hagenbeck (1985), Anita Umlauff (1991), and Martin Jacobsen (1985), Johan Adrian Jacobsen's grandson.

the Hagenbeck shows made tour stops, a systematic study of the Hamburg newspapers was undertaken, scanning every morning and evening edition of every newspaper issued between 1875 and 1932,³ the period during which the Hagenbeck shows took place. On the one hand, when journalists made the effort to investigate on their own, such a systematic coverage reveals unique and valuable details on the shows that cannot be found in any other sources. On the other hand, as mentioned above, a number of articles seem to have been pushed by the Hagenbeck advertising team, and when comparing show reviews with the program brochures, journalists often seem to have just copied the press or program brochure texts for their articles. Furthermore, there is evidence that in midseason, targeted press releases were issued at the different tour stops to rekindle the public interest with “inside stories” or even “scandals.”⁴

Keeping those caveats regarding the sources in mind, a closer look will be taken of the organization and reception of the Hagenbeck ethnic shows.

The Hagenbeck Ethnic Shows

Carl Hagenbeck had grown into his father’s animal trade and started running it on his own while still in his teens (fig. 2.1). Over the years, he managed to expand the business and to outcompete a number of rivals. The founding of more than thirty zoological gardens in Europe, as of 1880, and also the demand by traveling menageries, circuses, and wealthy private collectors resulted in an increasing market for wild animals. The spread of large circuses and traveling shows in the United States, in particular, provided new and regular customers.

The Hagenbeck company used several commercial strategies. In 1863, Carl’s father had bought the spacious St. Pauli’s estate of the Hamburg-born, but mainly London-based, Jamrach family, who were very successful

3 For a complete list of the newspapers studied, see Thode-Arora 1989, 203–4.

4 How carefully newspaper articles as sources should be analyzed is revealed by the coverage of two ethnic shows in Hamburg that took place at the same time. In 1890, a Bedouin troupe of the Egyptian Exhibition was constantly in the media, but it was the Amazon troupe from Dahomey, hardly ever mentioned, that was much more successful (Thode-Arora 1989, 137).

5 St. Pauli was a suburb just outside Hamburg’s city gates, well known as a place where fishermen would sell their catch and also as an area of entertainment, with small theaters, show booths, penny museums, circuses, a hippodrome, small shops with “curiosities” brought by sailors from overseas, and so forth. In 1894, St. Pauli became a quarter of the city of Hamburg.



Figure 2.1. Carl Hagenbeck, after 1900. Postcard. Private collection of Hilke Thode-Arora.

dealers in animals. The property was already well equipped with cages and other facilities. Furthermore, the Hagenbecks managed to make a contract of guaranteed purchase with Lorenzo Casanova, a regular trader of animals imported from northeast Africa and owner of a traveling menagerie. At the same time, Hamburg as a harbor city offered the opportunity of buying smaller animals that sailors had brought with them on their own initiative. Moreover, the harbor facilitated the reception of animals ordered from overseas and of their quick transport to customers via train or ship (Dittrich and Rieke-Müller 1998, 18–29, 34–46, 53–119). An (undated)

advertisement for Hagenbeck's menagerie, which put animals on display for a paying public before they were sold, mentions "10 African elephants, 1 giraffe, 1 Kudu antelope, 12 spotted and striped hyenas, 2 lions, 2 zebras of rare beauty, 1 gepard, 2 sacred baboons, 3 giant baboons, and several hundred other living mammals and birds" (Thinius 1975, 42). The 1870s European financial crash, a decreasing demand for wild animals, and the political instability of northeast Africa—one of the company's main catching areas—with the rise of the millenarian Mahdi movement, led to a drop in the Hagenbeck animal trade and called for additional lines of business. The written history of the Hagenbeck company is riddled with anecdotes, but it seems to have been a family friend, the painter Heinrich Leutemann, who suggested having the next transport of reindeer be accompanied by a group of Sami⁶ people: they could present their work with reindeer and their mobile dwellings to the paying German public and at the same time offered a picturesque subject for

6 The Sami are historically known by outsiders as Lapps or Laplanders—these terms are considered derogatory by Sami, however.

the painter (Hagenbeck 1909, 42–45, 80–83, 89–91). Although this might be true, the idea of ethnic shows was probably not new to Carl Hagenbeck: when he was a boy, a troupe of Zulus had a tour stop with extra performances for pupils in his native St. Pauli in 1854, and the American “circus king,” Phineas Taylor Barnum—who had ethnic shows among his multiple attractions—was one of Hagenbeck’s animal-trade customers.⁷

When the Sami show opened its gates at the Hagenbeck menagerie in 1875, it was an immediate success with audiences: the spectators were fascinated by what they took to be the unsophisticatedness of the Sami and were under the impression that they were witnessing a completely “unstaged” image of real life in Lapland (Hagenbeck 1909, 80–83). As a result, though interrupted by a one-year break following the demise of six Fuegians in 1881 and by a much longer break due to World War I and its impact, ethnic shows became a permanent business branch of the Hagenbeck company until 1932. In 1907, Carl Hagenbeck opened his zoo in Stellingen, at that time a suburb of Hamburg. This meant no more space limitations for ethnic shows, and until World War I, ethnic shows in Hagenbeck’s Tierpark would become ever more sophisticated and grandiose, at times encompassing troupes of several hundred people housed in large “villages” with artificial backdrops. When the spectacles were gradually restarted in the mid-1920s, it became increasingly difficult to recruit people who were unacculturated enough to Western ways to still be seen as an attraction by the paying audience. Furthermore, silent and, later, sound film, especially when set in exotic environments, would become a strong competition for spectacles like ethnic shows in creating exotic dream worlds (Thode-Arora 1997). Finally, the Nazi regime, on coming to power in 1933, prohibited ethnic shows, as friendly and especially sexual contacts between Germans and ethnic show participants, contrary to Nazi ideology, could never be effectively prevented.⁸

About seventy Hagenbeck ethnic shows were staged between 1875 and 1932. Participants were recruited from all five continents. Adding the

7 Notizen, 1854, 8, and letter from A. Heinrich to director Damm, April 4, 1854, both in Patronat St. Pauli II C 3515 Vorstellung von Zulu-Kaffern 1854, StaHH; Fox and Parkinson 1969; Hagenbeck 1909, 430–32.

8 With the exception of the *Deutsche Afrika-Schau* (German Africa Show), between 1936 and 1940, in which Africans living in Germany after World War I and black Germans were meant to be concentrated to rekindle interest in the lost German colonies. Ironically, the show organized only very few performances but formed a safe haven for its participants, keeping them from forced labor or concentration camps (Forgey 1994).

number of participants documented for all these shows suggests at least 2,650 performers during the course of nearly sixty years.⁹ This figure can only be a very rough estimate, however. Especially with the Somali performers who monopolized all shows with a northeast African theme or label (cf. Warsame's chapter in this volume) between 1885 and 1929, it can be expected that a certain number of the same individuals took part in several shows. The Sinhalese-Indian shows, which were another recurring feature in the Hagenbeck entertainment business, also had a certain degree of fluctuation and crossovers: members of the troupes split off during some seasons to become part of the Hagenbeck circus; and highly specialized participants such as mahouts or bamboo-pole artistes joined other shows and circuses.

Recruiters and Recruiting

In France and to some degree in Britain, even small ethnic shows at country fairs seem to have been very much embedded in a colonial-propagandistic context (cf. Blanchard et al. 1995; Bergougniou, Clignet and David 2001). By contrast, only very few shows in the history of the Hagenbeck enterprises actually came from the German colonies: it was mainly through the long-established, worldwide network of the animal trade that the Hagenbeck company recruited its troupes. Most recruiters and/or impresarios were family members or had been in contact with the company as animal catchers, for example. Some of them were very knowledgeable and experienced about the area in which they recruited. Josef Menges (1850–1910), for example, had specialized in northeast Africa; he traveled and researched there repeatedly during his lifetime. Apparently, he could communicate with the Somali ethnic-show troupe members without a translator. John Hagenbeck (1866–1940), Carl's younger half-brother, settled down in Ceylon in 1891 and became a successful planter and dealer in animals. From that point (at the latest), all the successful Ceylon-India ethnic shows were organized by him. By his own account, his command of Sinhalese and Tamil was such that he could communicate without a translator. John had a son with his high-ranking Sinhalese wife: John George Hagenbeck (1900–59) was even more integrated in Ceylonese society and arguably the impresario most responsive to the ethnic-show participants'

9 See the list of Hagenbeck ethnic shows in Thode-Arora 1989, 168–75.

wishes and needs. Some recruiters made ethnic shows their profession; others brought the troupes with them as a sideline, so to speak, from their journeys as sailors, merchants, or game catchers. There is no doubt that both the professional careers and the personalities of the men had an impact on the ways cultural contact took shape both in the home countries of the troupes and in the venues of the shows (Thode-Arora 1989, 40–58).

Recruiting Criteria

According to Carl Hagenbeck, in 1910 an average ethnic show would cost approximately 60,000 marks,¹⁰ a considerable sum that had to be recouped by the box-office takings. Consequently, the planning was done very carefully: ethnic shows, although the organizers never failed to stress the educational value of their enterprises, were a business and needed to turn a profit. From the 1880s on, ethnic shows were so common in many parts of Europe that they really needed to offer something special to be able to compete. Hence the criteria for selection reflect the ideas of the entrepreneurs about qualities of ethnic shows in terms of public appeal and, thus, profitability.

With regard to selecting specific “ethnic groups” for ethnic shows, there were some limitations from the very beginning. Permission of the respective government was needed when recruiting troupes from non-German colonies or from the territories of other nations. Sometimes a deposit had to be made to cover expenses for the return journey of the participants and their fees. Recruiting ethnic-show troupes in the German colonies, which the Hagenbeck company only rarely did, became prohibited in 1901 and could only be done in exceptional cases with a special permit. During World War I, recruitment in foreign countries was almost impossible.

Keeping these limitations in mind, three main criteria for recruitment can be extracted from the sources (Thode-Arora 1989, 59–90). Firstly, the ethnic group¹¹ and the individuals selected had to be not too similar in

10 Letter by Carl Hagenbeck to Senator Diestel of November 6, 1910, StaHH C1. IV Lit. No. 4, Vol. 2 a Fasc. 2 Inv. 16 i Conv. 1 Blatt 80.

11 The terms “ethnic group” and “ethnic unit” will be used interchangeably in this chapter for readability reasons. Strictly speaking, in the social sciences, a group is defined as consisting of members interacting with each other and, thus, is usually smaller than an ethnic unit.



Figure 2.2. “Characteristic figures of folk life”: Indian and Ceylonese professional artistes, as usually recruited by John Hagenbeck. Postcard. Private collection of Hilke Thode-Arora.

culture and looks to Central Europeans. They could come from Europe’s fringes—Lapland, for example—but better was an overseas background. On the other hand, contact with Europeans in their region of origin had to be established to a certain degree so that the organization of the show could run smoothly (efforts to recruit troupes among the reclusive Wedda in Ceylon or Andaman Islanders from India failed). Secondly, the physical appearance of potential recruits was of utmost importance: special beauty or ugliness in the eyes of the European beholder or cultural deformations were considered an asset, as they promised to make an ethnic unit interesting for the paying crowds: the tall and slender Somali with their Caucasian features, ease, and experience in dealing with Europeans (cf. Maow 1985, 12; see also Warsame’s chapter in this volume); the small-boned, gracefully built Sinhalese; Kwakwaka’wakw (Kwakiutl) women with their artificially elongated heads; or Sara women with their huge lip plugs are discussed in the sources. Thirdly, it was of advantage if the potential recruits’ material culture—for example, clothes and dwellings—or their customs held the potential of being “picturesque” or even “spectacular,” which again can be translated as “very different” from the spectators’ everyday world. The alleged

“guard of the King of Dahomey” or “Dahomey Amazons” (cf. Blier 2008), consisting of supposed female warriors, falls into this range, as do the many Indian-Ceylonese troupes comprising professional performers, such as snake charmers, magicians, bamboo-pole artistes, and bear trainers, whom recruiter and impresario John Hagenbeck claimed to be the “characteristic figures of folk life” (Hagenbeck 1922, 49) (fig. 2.2).

Johan Adrian Jacobsen as Recruiter

Once the ethnic unit had been decided on, there were a number of criteria for choosing the individuals, many of which I could deduce from the material of the Jacobsen papers.¹²

Johan Adrian Jacobsen (fig. 2.3) acted as recruiter for the Greenland “Eskimo” show of 1877–78, for a Sami troupe from Norway (1878–79), for an Inuit¹³ troupe from Labrador (1880–81), for a Kwakwaka’wakw troupe from America’s northwest coast (who did not materialize in the end) (1882), for a Nuxalk (Bella Coola) troupe from America’s northwest coast (1885–86), for an Oglala Sioux/Lakota troupe from Pine Ridge Reservation in the United States (1910), and for a Sami troupe from Norway and Sweden (1926–27). Although Jacobsen thus was responsible for the recruitment of less than 10 percent of all Hagenbeck ethnic shows, his correspondence and diaries give a detailed, day-to-day insight of the recruiting process and, during certain intervals, span nearly the complete history of the Hagenbeck shows. They thus allow for an analysis of the considerations and challenges of recruiting. Apart from the Sami recruitments—as Jacobsen was familiar with the Scandinavian surroundings and could converse with the recruits in Norwegian—he relied on local European or American traders and colonial officials for his first contacts and on translators. There were detailed instructions from the Hagenbeck company on whom to recruit (or not to recruit), how many animals to purchase, and what kind of ethnographic equipment to bring.

12 John George Hagenbeck 1932, 12, 46–47; letter by Carl Hagenbeck to Jacobsen in English of January 5, 1910, HA; letters by Jacobsen to his wife, Hedwig, of January 30, February 13, and February 25, 1926; two letters by Heinrich Hagenbeck to Jacobsen of January 21, 1926; Jacobsen 1877–81, 22 (quoted after translation from the Norwegian by Henning Freudenthal), insertion pp. 30, 44, 48; Tagebuch Pine Ridge: February 3, 9, 11, 16, 22, March 6, 12; idem, *Anwerben von Sioux-Indianern* 2; idem, 1926, January 29, February 12, 20, 23; idem, 1929, 91; idem, 1924–25, 5; Woldt 1884, 130.

13 The term “Inuit” is not synonymous with “Eskimo” but denotes a smaller cultural and linguistic unit.



Figure 2.3. Johan Adrian Jacobsen at the age of twenty-four. Carte de visite. Museum am Rothenbaum, Kulturen und Künste der Welt.

Quality-minded organizers like Hagenbeck and recruiters like Jacobsen took extra care to select only those persons who looked like the physical “ideal type” of the chosen ethnic unit. Thus, Jacobsen is known to have refused contracts to Sioux “Indians” who had cut their long hair short or to a red-haired Sami from Lapland. One of his standard complaints in his diaries and letters was the “untypical” appearance of persons willing to work in a show whom he thus had to reject.

Furthermore, whenever possible, people of different ages and genders were to be represented among the troupe, “as the audience is eager to see family life among the so-called savage peoples” (Jacobsen 1924–25, 5)

and “I moreover believe that the entire camp becomes too lifeless without a few young people to liven it up” (Jacobsen 1926, March 6).

Original clothing, dwellings or housing material, and equipment considered typical of the respective ethnic group were of utmost importance. If Jacobsen could not buy pieces to his liking, their manufacture had to be commissioned to local specialists.

Perhaps even more important were the performative skills of the participants in staging the “typical” activities. Before taking “Eskimo” under contract, Jacobsen is known to have tested their abilities by paying for a competition in doing the “Eskimo roll,”¹⁴ and in Pine Ridge he treated the Oglala to a feast to see them dance.

As most of the tour stops were negotiated only when the shows had already arrived in Europe, planning and matching the number of partici-

14 A 360-degree flip of a kayak whereby the occupant turns the boat upside down and himself headfirst into the water, then brings himself and the kayak back into the starting position.

pants and the equipment of a show when recruiting with the size of possible future stages or performance grounds could be quite a tricky task.

Carl Hagenbeck attached much importance to keeping contact between the troupes and the audiences to a minimum: ideally, only just enough troupe members should have a command of a European language as was necessary to guarantee the smooth running of the show. In addition, it was important that potential participants had no bad reputation with regard to heavy drinking or other bad habits and, after the sad demise of the Inuit from Labrador and many of the Fuegians, that they were in good health: a medical test was standard procedure.

Jacobsen's personal papers show a careful and constant balancing of all these selection criteria. His diaries and letters make very clear that recruiting was not a straightforward process, but involved several changes of mind on the part of the potential recruits and also compromises on his part; for example, in the case of the Sami show in 1926, Jacobsen had been instructed to keep the costs low even if this meant that he would bring along "types" that were "less good."

Depending on the "quality" of an ethnic show based on the above-mentioned criteria,¹⁵ it was thus necessary to budget for higher or lower costs, in the hope that the entrance fees would cover the expenses and yield a profit.

The Organization of the Shows

The Hagenbeck company concluded contracts with the ethnic-show participants in which, among other details, travel costs, board and lodging, medical treatment, fees, and the nature of the actual performances were defined.¹⁶ Ideally, the recruiters saw to it that living animals of the area¹⁷ and raw materials for building authentic houses at the showgrounds or, in the case of mobile dwellings like yurts, originals were brought to Europe to equip the shows (figs. 2.4 and 2.5). If the climate allowed, these structures served as accommodation.

15 That these criteria were shared by other organizers and impresarios becomes clear, for example, from a letter written by Eduard Gehring when referring to "a solid ethnic show," as opposed to the "motley crowd of riff-raff" of other shows (Gehring to Jacobsen, February 28, 1915, JA).

16 All the primary sources used for this chapter on organizing the shows are given in Thode-Arora 1989, 91–119, fn. 50–66, 183–85.

17 For a detailed account of the catching, transporting, and keeping of elephants for the Hagenbeck ethnic shows (and for the animal trade and circus business), see Thode-Arora 2019.

The Hagenbeck Ethnic Shows



Figure 2.4. A rare photograph of an ethnic show village under construction. The erection of houses with thatched roofs and of a temple structure in the background around wooden or metal poles are clearly discernible. Indian-Ceylonese performers are visible in the foreground. Postcard. Private collection of Hilke Thode-Arora.



Figure 2.5. Kalmyks in front of their yurt, 1883–84. Museum am Rothenbaum, Kulturen und Künste der Welt.

Alternatively, the performers would live in heated rooms and use the buildings from home just for the performances. At smaller tour stops that did not provide enough space for original dwellings, backdrops or stages were used.

At least until the early 1880s, the Hagenbeck shows traveled with a housekeeper who cooked and did laundry for the troupe. Unfamiliar food could be a cause of tension, however, and gradually the organizers began to supply the performers with ingredients and let them cook for themselves. In this way, preparation rules, food taboos, and dietary habits—especially among some Indian, African, and Muslim performers—could be taken into account. Special care is documented for several cases in which extra meat portions, alcohol, or even opium rations were dished out as the troupe members were used to them from home (fig. 2.6).

In Hamburg, starting in 1899, as at other tour stops, it was compulsory to have troupe members and their living quarters monitored by a public health officer, mainly to prevent the introduction of tropical, contagious, and especially venereal diseases. Doctors routinely enforced hygienic procedures and checked whether the accommodations were adequate from a medical standpoint.

Diseases, sometimes resulting in death, did happen in the context of ethnic shows—usually because of insufficient medical care, such as failure to provide vaccinations or clothing that was suitable. Gastrointestinal and respiratory diseases due to unfamiliar food and the European climate and accidents during the performances or when working with animals are mentioned again and again. First aid and household remedies were usually applied in these cases. A stay in the hospital, if inevitable, could be a frightening experience to those not used to it from home. One of the Sami men, for example, suffering from severe diarrhea, refused hospitalization for some weeks. Brought there eventually, he was convinced he had been brought there to die when seeing all the ailing patients and he refused to undress and, finally, had to be picked up from the hospital as he was adamant that he would not stay (Jacobsen 1877–81, 52).

Although mentioned only rarely in the sources, seasickness and homesickness were ailments that probably afflicted quite a number of ethnic-show performers. In spite of having signed a contract, many of them had no previous ethnic-show experience or realistic understanding of what it meant to be far away from home for a long time. Symptoms of depression are described for



Figure 2.6. Samoians cooking and eating, probably 1891. The photo might be partly staged although the children do seem to be eating—there exists a second postcard with the same persons and setting showing the meal a moment later. Depictions like this allowed the buyer of the postcard to imagine being part of the family-like scene. Postcard. Private collection of Hilke Thode-Arora.

some of the Inuit from Labrador and for a man from Patagonia who stopped participating in the performances and one day saddled his horse, asking for the way home. Inadequately but apparently with good intentions, Carl Hagenbeck traveled to Berlin and organized an entertainment program for the three Patagonians, including theater shows, city tours, and restaurant visits, but to no avail. Finally, he had the troupe return home before the season ended.

In a dramatic combination of disastrous circumstances (cf. Thode-Arora 2002, 2011), all eight Inuit from Labrador died from smallpox in 1881, and five of eleven Fuegians died from infectious diseases in 1881–82. In 1910, some of the Oglala, although they had been medically tested at recruitment, succumbed to tuberculosis. Tragic, painful, and traumatic as these documented cases were, they should be seen in perspective: even if we triple or quadruple them to account for hypothetical undocumented casualties,¹⁸ the

18 There were some casualties during the Somali shows and among the Samoians performing in, among other tour stops, Umlauff's Weltmuseum, run by Carl Hagenbeck's nephew Heinrich Umlauff. Their impresario Robert A. Cunningham had a bad reputation among his contemporaries for mistreating ethnic-show performers (cf. Thode-Arora 1989, 41–42).

death toll of the Hagenbeck troupes would still be way under 5 percent of all persons who performed in the shows. It has to be kept in mind that also for Europeans, traveling shows and circuses and work with animals at that time were far from hygienic and safe: staff members with severe injuries and casualties are mentioned, for example, regularly for Buffalo Bill's traveling shows and for a number of Hagenbeck company activities with animals.

Written sources and a number of placards with printed start times of the performances¹⁹ allow an estimate of the working hours in ethnic shows. In many shows, there were eight to ten performances a day, more on Sundays and holidays. This means that performances must have taken approximately thirty to forty-five minutes.

Hagenbeck ethnic shows were advertised by newspaper announcements and by colored, painted placards.²⁰ The program brochures sold with the shows often had a colored title page that was identical with posters advertising the spectacle. Apart from the guided tour through the showgrounds and the sequence of the performances, the program brochures contained a sort of ethnographic description of the depicted country and its people, their customs and culture. Moreover, many of the brochures included black-and-white photos that often appeared again as motifs of the picture postcards sold during the show. Postcards depict either portraits of individuals or groups taken in the studio or, with equipment, at the showgrounds, or they portray scenes and scenery from the show: dancers, musicians, craftspeople, and acrobats at work; rickshaw or bullock cart drivers; mahouts and dromedary or horse riders; and "village" streets, dwellings, mosques, or temples. Only very few cards show a staged dramatic scene—for example, a mock scalping on one of the cards sold with the Sioux show.

The postcards for some shows were printed in large quantities and circulated not only in Germany but also abroad, as the same visuals appear with English, French, Spanish, and Eastern European text. The purchasers seem to have either kept them as a souvenir (a number of cards carry ethnic-show troupe members' autographs in Arabic, Russian, or Sinhalese script); used them to send specific greetings from the show, referring to it in their messages; or sent them with a message having no connection at all with the spec-

19 See the list of newspaper ads corroborating this in Thode-Arora 1989, 184, fn. 59.

20 For ethnic show placards, see Malhotra 1979; Schmid-Linsenhoff 1986; Thode-Arora 2001.

tacle. The sale of the postcards and the proceeds from them were sometimes in the hands of the ethnic-show participants themselves.

Carl Hagenbeck's main interest was in animals, and his original idea of presenting ethnic shows was to demonstrate to the spectators how people in faraway regions of the world caught animals or worked with them. After the success of the Sami show in 1875, which centered on the work with reindeers, he had two shows from northeast Africa organized that were to give an impression of the Africans' stalking and hunting wild animals for the Hagenbeck trade. Accordingly, Carl Hagenbeck did not use the term *Völkerschauen* in his writings, but usually called them *anthropologisch-zoologische Schaustellungen* (anthropological-zoological shows) (Hagenbeck 1909, 83). The two attractions for the audience were the performances and the "villages."

Performances, given several times a day on a stage or on a set, got more elaborate over the years. Irrespective of the world region depicted, the shows invariably encompassed dancing, music, combat scenes, and, if possible, scenes with animals. Originally a loose sequence of unconnected presentations, the scenes were combined into a dramaturgical sequence with dramatic climax and a happy ending in later years. With variations depending on the region depicted, a typical Hagenbeck performance as described in the program brochure would start with, for example, a peaceful village scene in which people did their daily chores. Then enemies attacked, setting fire to the dwellings or abducting a woman. This gave ample opportunity for battle scenes. In the end, peace negotiations settled the issue, culminating, for example, in a North African-style horse fantasia; a marriage between members of the enemy groups, featuring singing, dancing, and a parade with animals carrying bride wealth; or a Sinhalese-Indian parade with elephants. Singing, dancing, and battle scenes as well as animals could be integrated into different parts of the show (cf. Demski's chapter in this volume).

Ethnic shows could be seen in Hagenbeck's menagerie or on special exhibition grounds. From 1875, they toured several cities or towns. As tour stops were negotiated only after an ethnic-show troupe had reached Europe, the dependence on show venues required a limited troupe size: ideally, a troupe should be large enough to arouse the audience's interest but small enough to easily find a venue, which could be a small stage in a theater or restaurant or a skating ground or park.

In 1907, when Carl Hagenbeck opened his zoo, there were no more space limitations. As a consequence, ethnic shows became increasingly elaborate, and sometimes there were several troupes from different parts of the world performing at the same time. Troupe sizes reached more than 400 persons at this time. Between 1907 and World War I, but to a certain degree even with his earlier traveling shows, Hagenbeck went to great lengths to create “authentic” scenery in which the ethnic-show participants performed and often lived; apart from dwellings, even landscapes with plants, animals, and famous sights from the depicted region—for example, temples from India or the Egyptian pyramids—were erected. A veritable sightseeing tour with numbered attractions, described in the program brochure, took the spectators around the exhibition grounds, highlighting special house forms, the replicated sights of the region to be depicted, food stalls at which delicacies of the troupe’s region of origin could be tasted, artisans producing handicrafts in front of audiences, the stall of a magician giving regular performances, or the dwelling of a famous warrior who had fought against the colonial powers in a well-known battle. During the open hours of the showgrounds, the spectators could roam these “villages,” as they were frequently announced, freely: they could observe the troupe members’ cooking and eating, apart from other daily pursuits such as milking reindeer, weaving, and carving. The illusion of travel to the region depicted was aspired to and used in advertising slogans—a form of travel without any risk and affordable costs: “Do not take a long trip to see Africa, but come to the 100 Somali in the Somali village. Hagenbeck’s Zoo”²¹ (*Hamburger Anzeiger* [*Hamburg Gazette*], May 21, 1927) (figs. 2.7 and 2.8).

Hagenbeck thus capitalized on the principle of immersion, which had already been a crowd pleaser during the world’s fairs, with their staged exotic ambience: at a time when Europeans could hardly travel and information on faraway countries could only be drawn from books, newspapers, and journals with few photos or illustrations, the “villages” with their illusion of a travel adventure proved to be a top draw. The few protests against the shows were concerned with aspects of the staging but not with the fact of putting human beings on display per se.²²

21 *Um Afrika zu sehen, macht keine lange Reise, sondern kommt zu den 100 Somali im Somalidorf. Hagenbeck’s Tierpark.*

22 In and after World War I, there were protests in the Netherlands (cf. Hagenbeck 1955, 106–7) and Poland against the Hagenbeck circus. These, however, had nothing to do with the staging of ethnic shows

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Figure 2.7. Arab city and mosque as backdrops behind a small stage, probably 1912. Postcard. Private collection of Hilke Thode-Arora.



Figure 2.8. Street scene from the “Ceylonese village” erected at Hagenbeck’s zoo, 1908: more than 400 people were recruited for the largest troupe ever under contract with Hagenbeck’s and went on tour, to the Franco-British Exhibition in London among other venues. Postcard. Private collection of Hilke Thode-Arora.

The Reception

Ethnic Shows and Academia

Although the spectacles were a phenomenon of popular culture, the connections between ethnic-show organization and academia were numerous and manifold. Still a young discipline, but haunted by the idea of vanishing “races” and cultures, anthropology strived for an all-encompassing database of humankind’s physical and cultural characteristics, indulging in extensive body measurement and collection activities. Most academics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had few or no opportunities to travel overseas and were excited about the presence of people from foreign cultures in Germany. It is no coincidence that large ethnic-show enterprises went to great lengths to create what they saw as “authenticity,” achieved by employing authentic human beings, artifacts, scenery, animals, and plants from the region to be depicted; this was consistent with academic views of the time. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anthropology adhered to the paradigm that there existed not only a zoological and phenotypic inventory of every region of the world but also a cultural inventory for every ethnic unit—including material objects and certain values and social structures or typical configurations, patterns and leitmotifs combining them.²³ The cultural inventory of an ethnic unit was thus considered to be finite and, as a consequence, “completely” collectible and depictable. It is in this context that the tireless body measurement and collecting activities of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anthropologists have to be understood: ethnicity was seen as a rigid quality and research tried to establish factual instead of perceived differences among human cultures.

Carl Hagenbeck became a member of the academic Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory in the 1870s and had regular extra performances organized for academic societies at the different tour stops.

(which anyway was hardly existent in the Hagenbeck circus of that time; cf. Hagenbeck 1955), but rather with having an enemy circus perform or fearing its huge consumption of rare food resources. Many thanks to Dominika Czarnecka for drawing my attention to appeals of that kind from 1917, kept in the National Library in Warsaw.

23 Cf. Malefijt 1976, 138–59, 256–92. Today’s anthropological paradigm, by contrast, understands ethnicity as a fluid concept, governed by highly negotiable and context-based ascriptions of Self and Others constructed by actors in social interaction: even if there were two ethnic units whose cultural inventory did not differ in one single item in an outsider’s perception, they could still define themselves as two ethnic units by symbolically creating (perceived) differences among each other.



Figure 2.9. Placard for Gustav Hagenbeck's India Show, 1905–6, featuring three of the four recurring elements of most ethnic shows: musicians, dancers, and a parade with animals. Private collection of Hilke Thode-Arora.

Afterward, the scholars were usually allowed to take body measurements of the troupe members. Anthropological photographs depicting members of ethnic shows in frontal, profile, or half-profile view for studies of typical physical features as well as charts with body measurements can frequently be found in relevant professional publications of the time and in museums. In some academic societies plaster casts were made of the face or body—unpleasant procedures to which the ethnic-show performers sometimes refused to subject themselves (Thode-Arora 1989, 127–36).

Scholars of non-European languages, musicologists, and museum ethnologists interviewed participants of the shows regarding their traditions or artifacts in the collections or taped their songs and myths. As many ethnic shows had a collection of artifacts on display as a sideshow and others were used as show props, museums often benefitted by acquiring these pieces after the end of the show season.

As anthropology's database of a phenotypic and cultural inventory of different populations was small and insufficient at the time, the academ-

ics faced a serious problem, however: ethnic-show participants were not always from the area or ethnic unit the impresarios claimed participants were from. In fact, to draw the crowds, labels for ethnic shows were often chosen to relate them to countries or ethnic groups mentioned in the press. For example, people from northeast Africa were frequently announced as “Abyssinians,” as Abyssinia was in the newspapers quite a lot. The anthropologists’ dilemma in working with ethnic-show participants thus consisted in finding out whether these people actually were from the area they were claimed to be from and, at the same time, in getting to know more about this very area by relying on exactly the same troupe members. Circular reasoning was a constant methodological danger.

Encountering the Others: Audience Reactions

While the smallest Hagenbeck ethnic-show troupe comprised no more than three persons, the largest troupes encompassed up to several hundred individuals. In 1908, for example, the show called “Ceylonese Village,” starting in Hagenbeck’s Tierpark in Stellingen and moving on to the Franco-British Exhibition in London, housed more than 400 participants (figs. 2.9 and 2.10). In contrast to the huge colonial exhibitions and colonial trade fairs bound to one city, the commercial Hagenbeck shows were highly mobile and toured all over Europe, often including small towns, thus reaching several hundred thousand to millions of spectators, as indicated by their impressive attendance figures. They thus had a more significant impact than the few immobile ethnic shows at colonial exhibitions with their educational and colonial-propagandistic intentions. The extent to which Hagenbeck ethnic shows served to reinforce—or perhaps even to shape—ideas about people of foreign cultures and regions of the world that had existed in the minds of Europeans since the Middle Ages or the Enlightenment should therefore not be underestimated, even if the shows were just a form of entertainment (Thode-Arora 2014, 2017).

The crowd could be considerable: 30,000 to over 90,000 visitors on just one Sunday with fine weather or reduced entrance fees are mentioned for several shows in big cities like Berlin or Paris (Thode-Arora 1989, 168–73). In addition to a voyeuristic, patronizing attitude, curiosity, and fascination with the “exotic” that many viewers likely adopted—and although Hagenbeck saw to it that only a few troupe members were able to speak a European language so that the spectacle could run smoothly but the contact with the

audience would be made difficult—sources point to an often overwhelming need on the part of visitors to communicate with the ethnic-show performers in German, English, French, or Spanish, or by using sign language. Jacobsen's unpublished letters show that visitors were often reluctant to leave at night and almost had to be forcibly removed from the grounds at closing time. Fences and barriers served not so much to keep the ethnic-show participants from leaving the premises or, indeed, to cage them up, but rather to protect them from the sometimes pushy crowds of visitors. One aspect of the ethnic shows surely has to do with the erotic appeal that many of the non-European men and women had for German visitors. Jacobsen's papers (e.g., Jacobsen 1929, 88–90) describe a number of incidents involving flirtations and love affairs. This was seen as acceptable in the case of European men and non-European women, yet if it involved European women and non-European men—which was not all that rare, even in the 1880s—it was considered scandalous. A social distance through ethnic othering, as intended by the organizers, could thus not always be maintained. In fact, it seems to be exactly the perception of an ethnic Other that encouraged spectators to shed their inhibitions and establish communicative or even physical contact.



Figure 2.10. Title page of the program brochure for the “Ethiopia” show at Hagenbeck’s zoo, 1909, featuring an original Christian Ethiopian painting. Private collection of Hilke Thode-Arora.



Figure 2.11. Scene from the adventure film *The Spiders* (1919), directed by Fritz Lang and partly shot at Hagenbeck's zoo. Museum am Rothenbaum, Kulturen und Künste der Welt.

From Ethnic Show to Film

In the late 1910s and in the 1920s, more and more German silent movies had a plot set in faraway places. Most of these films were shot at home, so non-European people, landscapes, artifacts, and components had to be used to create the overseas scenery: as with ethnic shows, a number of film directors put great emphasis on “authentic” sets. While the main characters were usually played by German actors, the extras and some minor roles could be filled by persons of (partly) non-European descent who had the desired phenotypes.

As ethnic shows and a number of movies followed a similar ideal and method of creating “authenticity,” it is perhaps not surprising that there was collaboration and exchange among the creators of ethnic shows and movies to a certain degree. In the 1920s, the contracts of ethnic-show participants with the Hagenbeck company had a clause committing them to appear as extras in movies. Furthermore, since 1919, Hagenbeck had leased a vast area of his zoo to a film company; a number of movies of this time—for example, by Fritz Lang—were filmed in the artificial landscape of the zoo (fig. 2.11).

The blurs and overlaps in creating representations of an ethnic Other were also reflected in Hagenbeck's staff—some experts at creating exotic ambiences made a career of moving swiftly between academic and entertainment requirements when collecting and presenting artifacts and animals or when recruiting people from overseas. The well-known Hamburg-based dealers in ethnographic objects, the Umlauff company, for example, sold well-documented, high-quality collections to museums but at the same time equipped ethnic shows from their artifact pool and built elaborate background scenery for them. On an even more superficial level of the entertainment business, they provided Egyptian mummies with fish tails and sold them as “mermaids” to traveling fairground showmen in Eastern Europe, most often in Russia. Later, the Umlauff company also equipped films. Heinrich and Johannes Umlauff, who occasionally also organized ethnic shows, were Carl Hagenbeck's nephews (Thode-Arora 1992, 1997).

The Troupe Members

Although turn-of-the-century ethnic shows were set in a hierarchical colonial power structure, it would be too simplistic to see non-European actors always as powerless in this setting. Some participants were indeed abducted, tricked, or kept under degrading conditions (see Eißenger 1996). However, there was a wide range of constellations already in the situation of recruitment, as Jacobsen's private papers reveal.

Even if they voluntarily signed contracts, received good pay, and had a thirst for adventure, some ethnic-show participants were unable to assess what it meant to be away from home for months or even years and to be in a completely foreign world. Abraham Ulrikab's diary (Thode-Arora 2002) provides eloquent testimony for this. Others, by contrast, such as the Oglala-Sioux from the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, actually became professional show “Indians,” performing successively for Hagenbeck, for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, for the Sarrasani circus and for other organizers and, acting from a reservation-life background full of deprivation, were able to negotiate good fees due to high demand. In 1926, in negotiations taking several hours at a stretch, Sami demanded contract changes, higher fees, and paid substitutes to look after their herds in their absence from Lapland before signing contracts with Jacobsen. Like the Oglala, Sami

people also had previous experience with work in ethnic shows and knew what to expect.

There were numerous cases in which owners refused to part with ethnographic pieces Jacobsen was interested in or with parts of their animal herds, and sometimes owners insisted on high prices or on selling artifacts only in lots. Some of the Kwakwaka'wakw seem to have instrumentalized Jacobsen's recruitment efforts for their own agendas²⁴ and threatened to hold him responsible for people lost to the dangers of travel.

Especially for those performers who were aware of what to expect, as also for the organizers and impresarios, ethnic shows were primarily about business. In a number of documented cases, individual troupe members sought work in ethnic shows repeatedly; some even became ethnic-show entrepreneurs and impresarios themselves (see e.g., Brändle 2007). While some hoped to escape debt or depressing living conditions under colonial rule, others had primarily financial motives for joining a show. In spite of all its hardships, work in an ethnic show could sometimes be much less burdensome and more profitable than making a living at home by hunting, herding, or toiling in the fields. Apparently, it allowed some performers to earn good money in a relatively short time, enabling them to pay off debts or acquire their own piece of land, for example (Hagenbeck 1932, 77, 156, 160–62; Thode-Arora 1989, 150–57).

There are a number of documented cases in which ethnic-show participants strategically and aptly used European forms of display, stereotypes, and expectations for their own gain. Some of them thus took an active part in negotiating the image of an ethnic Other. Indian and Ceylonese ethnic-show participants often were professional show people and used to European audiences from back home; they presented the same numbers and tricks in Europe as on the Indian subcontinent. Some of them made careers in European and American circuses (Thode-Arora 1989, 89–90). Indian-Ceylonese elephant specialists ran their own small-scale shows as early as the 1880s. Hersi Egeh Gorseh (also spelled as Hersi Ige Gorse) from Somalia had come to Germany as a troupe member in the 1880s but soon was the one to recruit and organize the Somali shows for Hagenbeck and other companies, effectively monopolizing the lucrative ethnic-show business for mem-

24 E.g., eloping and joining the ethnic show with a woman against her family's will.

bers of his own clan. Part of the Somali strategy was to successfully mimic and act the role of neighboring ethnic groups—adopting their attire, songs, and dances, and thus covering ethnic-show themes from all over northeast Africa (cf. Warsame’s chapter in this volume). Moroccan artistes have monopolized the “human pyramid” act right up to the present day and connected it with their own traveling ethnic shows in the 1920s. The years after World War I also saw a number of black Germans run ethnic shows of their own (Escher 1999; Thode-Arora 1989, 163–65; unpublished interview with Theodor Wonja Michael, November 1999).

Ethnic shows offered an opportunity to the spectators for face-to-face contact with the performers. This bore the risk of unexpected behavior, of communication and images not intended to be conveyed by the organizers of the exhibition. There are documented cases of show participants trying to communicate their own messages about their culture, and of others who strived to change their hairstyle or put on European clothes, thus reducing the impression of an ethnic Other; there were performers who regularly went to pubs or dance halls; and there were flirtations, love affairs, and even marriages with spectators. Samson Dido from Cameroon, for example—a supposedly high-ranking man who came to Germany with one of the few Hagenbeck shows from the German colonies—chaired the performances given by his countrymen dressed in African attire but took no part in them. Outside performance hours, he made a point of donning a European dress coat and top hat with his loincloth. Abraham Ulrikab, a Christian Inuit from Labrador who kept a diary about his ethnic-show tour through Central Europe, was shocked by the spectators’ ignorance concerning his native country and about their indifference toward Christianity, which was a central aspect of his life. He actively tried to influence their image of his home region by seeking to engage the visitors in conversation and by illustrating his words with drawings (Leutemann 1887, 69; Thode-Arora 1989, 156, 2011).

Conclusion

At the time of the German Empire few were able to undertake journeys to distant countries. People could inform themselves about remote parts of the world through newspapers, magazines, and books but not through direct, personal observation. Part of the appeal of the ethnic shows for a European

public certainly was that the shows offered a surface on which to project images of an ethnic Other, fed by academic and popular paradigms of the time. The Hagenbeck company's approach of audience immersion in staging the "villages"—giving the visitors a feeling of face-to-face encounters and the illusion of a journey—must have corroborated these images. From today's perspective the ethnic shows can thus indeed be understood to represent what is called "ethnic othering" or "alterity"; for the people in Europe, it was a form of constructing one's own identity, of distinguishing oneself from the perceived and construed physical and cultural otherness of the ethnic show participants—all the more important in Germany, which had only recently been unified from many small states into an empire.

For the last two decades, scholarship has concentrated on this aspect, especially the field of ethnic shows as linked to colonialism and the development of racial categories in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western academia and society. While this approach is no doubt important, it has, in my opinion, taken only Western perspectives into focus, thus reproducing discourses of Western agency and non-Western powerlessness that were virulent at the time of the ethnic shows.

Ethnic shows, however, were a complex phenomenon with a wide continuum of power relations in the processes of recruiting and organizing, as I hope to have shown in my actor-centered approach, concentrating on recruiters and organizers but also participants, relying on a large body of primary sources. Studies on a micro-level like this, examining in detail relevant individual cases, can reveal a subtext of indigenous agency in European sources, giving evidence of ethnic-show performers' roles in the recruiting and organizing processes of the shows. I would like to argue here that the wide continuum of power relations between organizers and show participants has been under-researched, as scholars have mainly concentrated on European agency and perspectives, without critically challenging this ethnocentric view. Indigenous agency, motives, and strategies in ethnic-show recruitment and organization, even in adapting to audience expectations, backed by a number of sources, have been widely neglected and should be reconsidered in the future.

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PRESS

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CHAPTER
THREE

**A Brief History of Staging Somali Ethnographic Performing Troupes in Europe,
1885-1930**

Bodhari Warsame

Spectacles of human oddities and Others with peculiarities that were considered “exotic” or “natural” (not spoiled by civilization) had been staged in Europe, in one form or another, for centuries. These sorts of so-called human spectacles reached new and highly diversified frontiers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, thus becoming a widely available form of mass entertainment in Europe and America (Thode-Arora 1989; Rothfels 2002). It was in this period that many native peoples were recruited in groups or individually by different enterprising impresarios and merchants into the business of itinerant ethnic spectacles, known in Germany as *Völkerschauen*. Among those “exotic” recruits were several Somali ethnographic performing troupes who toured Europe and beyond from around 1885 until 1930. The Somalis became so popular in the European ethnographic exhibition circuits that one daily newspaper in Germany once wrote: “Um Afrika zu sehen, macht keine lange Reise, sondern kommt zu den 100 Somali im Somalidorf. Hagenbeck’s Tierpark” (“To see Africa, one does not need to travel far but only needs to see the 100 Somalis in the Somali village at the Hagenbeck zoo”; cited in Thode-Arora 1989, 140).

The main aim of this chapter is to shed light on the history of itinerant Somali performing troupes involved in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century ethnographic exhibitions in Europe. It explores how these Somalis became involved in the exhibitions, the recruiting process, their agency and negotiating power, the difficulties they faced during the tours, places they toured in Europe (particularly Central and Eastern Europe), the nature of their tours and dealings abroad, how they conducted themselves away from home, and, finally, what became of these Somalis after the end of the ethnographic exhibitions in Europe and the legacy left behind at home and abroad.

This is a brief exploratory piece that is part of extensive research lasting many years retracing the historical footsteps of these Somali troupes. It is based on both primary and secondary source materials including contemporary academic texts, news items and opinion articles, archival materials (texts, audio recordings, and visual images), museum holdings, and considerable important Somali oral history drawn from interviews with descendants of some notable original participants. It has been a multidisciplinary, collaborative process of pulling the pieces together to create the first major publication recording the history of the Somali *Völkerschau* participants in detail. This chapter serves as the first major article drawn from that research.

The Beginnings

The Somali ethnographic entertainers were the biggest group of Somalis ever to frequently travel to Europe at the time, besides those involved in local and overseas colonial service and seamanship. Although the Somalis had been loosely connected to the outer world through long-distance trade, mostly over the seas, it was connecting to colonial economic networks that afforded Somalis wider opportunities for travel abroad. Therefore, the emergence of the Somali itinerant ethnographic performing troupes operated within the exploitative colonial economic networks of the time. The story of their adventure is simply a history of modern globalization taking root in the colonial Somali Peninsula. A population eager to gain from a world they had only heard about in the colonial propaganda, a savvy German businessman who understood the financial gains involved in connecting the peoples of two “strange worlds,” and pioneering Somali entrepreneurs who were also eager to explore what opportunities the world of Europe and beyond could offer, incidentally, came to fulfill each other’s expectations.

Each of these forces had different expectations of the encounter and the outcomes were correspondingly varied. The European spectators, who expected the wildest of the wild “savages,” encountered instead proud, ordinary people whose ambitions in life were not that different from their own. They saw parents and children whose daily activities matched theirs, no matter how much they had previously exaggerated the romance of the “savage” and the “civilized” in their minds. For Carl Hagenbeck (1844–1913), one of the most famous organizers of the ethnographic exhibitions in Europe, the

encounter exceeded his financial expectations. The Somalis who appeared in these staged performances attracted paying audiences to Hagenbeck's enterprise for decades (Thode-Arora 2008, 168; see also Thode-Arora in this volume). Hagenbeck found the Somalis to be an intelligent and dignified people, who were there strictly for business and nothing less (Hagenbeck 1956, 133). And at the end, the Somalis were somehow satisfied with their newly found adventure, although with some difficulties and disappointments depending on where they performed on any given tour in Europe or elsewhere. Disappointments including culture shock, racism, homesickness, death in strange foreign lands, and a harsh climate that they were unaccustomed to, but also happy moments, were all weaved into their daily lives while touring Europe and beyond. Earning more than their local average income, the opportunity to see the world, showing and representing the prestige of Somali warriorship, and memorable births and marriages taking place abroad, while on tour, were all part of the experience. It could be fairly said that, during their tours, the Somalis cleverly exploited to a great extent their ethnic differences and physical features in a racially charged business adventure, as well as their sense of nomadic pride and strong independence and survival skills practiced in their native land.

Since the 1880s, the Somali territory has opened much wider to the outside world and many more Somalis are currently scattered across the globe for different reasons. In the footsteps of these early ethnographic performers, others—including those who served the colonial powers in different capacities during both world wars and the present diaspora resulting from the prolonged Somali Civil War—have created their own enclaves around the world. There are now many cities in Europe and the Americas populated by thousands of Somalis who arrived during the last three decades without being aware of the history of those early brave, enterprising, and professional groups who first saw these remote and strange places more than a century ago.

These early Somali ethnographic performing entertainers stand out as pioneers who stared into the face of colonization, imperialism, orientalism, racism, and globalization in its deadliest form and did not only survive but came back stronger and more determined to employ their entrepreneurial experience in their homeland. Some started their own businesses and prospered after the end of ethnographic shows in Europe; others became

exploring guides and leaders. Still others either faded back quietly into their nomadic society or undertook other adventures around the world.

Carl Hagenbeck's Modern Ethnographic Exhibitions

Carl Hagenbeck was not the only person who organized the Somali ethnographic exhibitions held in Europe but was without doubt the most influential one (for more about the Hagenbecks' ethnographic shows, see Thode-Arora in this volume). His name conjures the history of the most continually successful zoological business enterprise in Europe and of modern animal zoos; the most famous one, Hagenbeck's Tierpark in Stellingen, was established in Hamburg in 1906–7. The opening of the Stellingen Tierpark was an important milestone in the history of modern ethnographic exhibitions in Germany. Although Hagenbeck was considered a giant in his field, he complained as early as the 1890s of stiff competition in a market saturated with many other ethnographic impresarios and wild-animal dealers competing for a lucrative market share, and his almost total monopoly was not complete until he opened his own magnificent and famous Stellingen headquarters (Thode-Arora 2008, 166). Hagenbeck is also particularly credited with the invention of modern moated zoos, allowing considerably greater freedom of movement for captive animals, thus revolutionizing their general wellbeing and humane handling. Zoological gardens extending from Europe to America contracted his services and adopted his methods and designs to modernize their animal holding facilities.

The Hagenbeck name is also associated with another historically colorful but much less enlightened business. Besides dealing with wild animals collected from faraway lands and distributed to zoos around the world, Hagenbeck was involved in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ethnographic exhibitions, in which living human beings were displayed in venues including animal zoos, circuses, multipurpose arenas, and holiday resorts in Europe and elsewhere.

Hagenbeck was born into a business-minded family. His father was a fishmonger for many years before he added the side business of buying and selling wild animals, which eventually became profitable. Hagenbeck was thirteen years old when his father gave him some animals to care for. Within a short period, his animals needed more space, for they multiplied in number,

and he soon found that dealing and exhibiting animals could be highly profitable if enough knowledge, determination, and creativity were dedicated to the cause. Within a decade or so, Hagenbeck's agents and wild animal trappers were traversing remote corners of the world, including Somali territories, in search of exotic animals. Hagenbeck himself traveled to some of these regions, including Africa, from which a great number of his animals were imported. By the middle of the 1870s, the supply of wild animals exceeded the market demand while profits decreased. This was due to the large-scale collection of wild animals, while zoos in Europe were lacking financial and infrastructural capabilities to absorb such huge consignments. This wholesale trapping in the jungles of Africa and Asia decimated native wildlife populations and was costly to animal dealers themselves. Millions of wild animals were destroyed in the process. For example, many animals were caught while still nursing or fragile and young; therefore, to get them out safely, the parents were either shot on sight or simply maimed to render them harmless (Hagenbeck 1909, 57).

This situation prevailed for some time, and then suddenly, a brilliant idea was hatched by Hagenbeck with the help of an old family friend. In around 1874, Hagenbeck was due to import a herd of reindeer from Lapland. Incidentally, a good family friend, a book illustrator and animal painter named Heinrich Leutemann (1824–1905), suggested to Hagenbeck that he could also get a group of native Laplanders to accompany the reindeer. He accepted the offer and within the same year Hagenbeck had several Laplanders camped in his animal exhibition park, tending their reindeer and carrying out other normal chores, as they did in their own country. The wild-animal-dealing side of Hagenbeck's business was not profitable at the time, and this new idea of exhibiting humans instead of wild animals, or exhibiting humans and animals together, struck him during a period of general economic stagnation. By 1879, the only sure business that was going for Hagenbeck was the ethnographic shows that started with the exhibition of Laplanders. Exhibiting human beings thus saved his business, at least partially, as he himself attested (Hagenbeck 1909, 25). He imported and displayed peoples from all corners of the world to satisfy a European curiosity fueled by expanding colonial imperialistic ambitions that were gaining ground in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. He used the same method (see below) he had employed to dominate animal trade, since both modes of

business required high capital injection. He made massive investment into expanding his business beyond Germany by winning contracts from many zoological gardens all over the world.

The Somali Connection

After the Berlin Conference of 1884, in which Africa was divided among European colonial powers, Germany officially staked its claim to part of the African continent, despite being a latecomer to the arena of colonial imperialism. Although Germany did not colonize any part of the Somali Peninsula directly, it sought to push itself into the European tussle for the Horn of Africa, although such efforts were opposed by the British-Italian-French colonial bloc. The German East African colonies were not far from Somali territory. Only the British colony of Kenya served as a buffer zone between the Somalis and the colonial German East African territories.

Hagenbeck's vast enterprise was not dependent on German colonies for a supply of wild animals and "exotic" people. He had agents almost all over the globe working for him, employed for the sole purpose of trapping wild animals and recruiting native performers for his exhibitions in Europe. These agents negotiated with local chiefs or elders and subcontracted them to trap and collect animals, using local knowledge and manpower. The animals were then shipped by sea to Hamburg, the seat of Hagenbeck's business empire in Germany, and to many other world centers, after stopping for acclimatization.

The Nubian region in (Egyptian) Sudan was one of the most fertile grounds for Hagenbeck's animal trappers, producing the first and largest animal shipment from the region in 1870. The consignment, as he claimed, contained fifteen giraffes, five elephants, an African rhinoceros, six lions, seven leopards, thirty hyenas, twenty boxes of monkeys, and twelve boxes of birds, with seventy-two Abyssinian goats to provide milk for the young animals whose parents were killed or separated from the young (Hagenbeck 1909, 9). There were two seasoned agents involved in this success. One was Lorenzo Casanova, an experienced animal trader and an expert agent in the region, and the other was an agent named Migoletti (Hagenbeck 1909, 8). Both had operated a respectable animal trade business from the region for many years.

Another important agent who prospected for Hagenbeck in Sudan was Josef Menges (1850–1910), a self-made explorer and naturalist. He was instrumental in initially connecting the Somalis to the Hagenbeck establishment. “Mr. Mungus,” as he was later known by the Somalis, joined the famous 1874 expedition of General Charles Gordon to the Nile (MacKall 1987, 12). Menges left Gordon’s service after the expedition was plagued by ill health and other hardships (Moore-Harell 2010, 96–100). He then traveled in the region and became Carl Hagenbeck’s collaborator in about 1876, in a large area stretching from Egyptian Sudan to the Somali country, eventually making several trips to the northern Somali territories between 1876 and 1906.

The Mahdist uprising against the British colonial forces in the Sudan (1881–99) was a significant blow to Hagenbeck’s wild animal business in the region, making it impossible to export any animals more from Sudan. At this time Menges’s agency began to work more widely, in Eritrea, Abyssinia, French Somaliland, and British Somaliland. The Somali country had at the time plenty of wild animals that were exported to Europe in great numbers or hunted locally for sport. Menges himself discovered the Somali wild ass, *Equus asinus somaliensis* (Rothfels 2002, 254), in about 1882, a new species that was not known in Europe. He later wrote a scholarly article about his celebrated finding (Menges 1887). In 1883, he acquired a foal from same rare species and took it to Hamburg, where it lived in captivity for some time.

In line with Hagenbeck’s dual-mode ethnographic business, not only wild animals came from these regions but also humans, including Nubians, Somalis, and others meant for ethnographic exhibitions. At least one shipment of wild animals must have been delivered to Hagenbeck before any Somali troupe was recruited from the region for ethnographic exhibitions in Europe. It seems that Menges first tried to partner with the Somalis on his own terms and to establish himself in the business. This is evident from at least two pre-1895 Somali ethnographic exhibitions held in Switzerland: one in 1889 called “Menges’s East African Caravan” and another in 1891 called “Menges’s Somali Caravan” (Stachelin 1993, 156–58; Debrunner 1979, 227; Jung 2017, 145–56).

Initially Menges recruited a Somali “chief” called Hersi Egeh Gorsch (although his name appears in different sources with different spellings, e.g. Hersi Ige Gorse), a prominent figure who would later prove to be the

most important and the most famous Somali troupe leader, in addition to becoming a close business friend of Carl Hagenbeck and his family. Menges recruited Hersi for trapping and shipping wild animals from the northern Somali coast and the interior toward Abyssinia, where in return Hersi recruited a workforce of trappers from his clan and close relatives. After some successful wild-animal shipments in which Hersi proved his ability, Menges convinced Hersi to take his Somali workforce to Europe for another business dealing: *Völkerschau*. Persistent oral history from the region and academic reports show that while Menges took the role of financier, Hersi played the crucial roles of local recruitment and logistical management on the ground. He established base camps in different locations and subcontracted aspects of the work to local animal trappers and transporters. Oral reports suggest that he earned well and paid well too, and he commanded respect in the community. Therefore, Menges was the principal impresario who first recruited the Somalis as touring ethnographic performers, independent of Carl Hagenbeck.

Information about the early years of Hersi Egeh and Menges's collaboration is sketchy before 1895. Menges, somehow, later conceded to Carl Hagenbeck, since no one could have competed with such a resourceful giant and survived in such a very distinctive market where operating costs were high. Menges supported the Hagenbeck zoo and ethnographic exhibition business by sending wild-animal shipments and, subsequently, arranging for Somali groups to be exhibited in Germany, England, Switzerland, the Habsburg Empire, Russia, and other European countries. The first Somali troupe (Hersi Egeh's troupe), commissioned by Carl Hagenbeck with Josef Menges, arrived in Hamburg in 1895.

The Recruitment Process and the Somali Agency

Recruiting methods and guidelines for ethnographic performing troupes closely followed established methods for collecting wild animals in their respective regions. These guidelines were not fixed but were dictated by factors including marketability, supply and demand, territorial accessibility and regional politics, availability of willing participants, and racial and ethnic features (Thode-Arora 2008, 167; see also Thode-Arora in this volume). Carl Hagenbeck was, in particular, very careful in his recruitment guide-

lines and methods. He seems to have realized early in his ethnographic exhibition business operations that recruiting human beings was very different from the wholesale trapping of wild animals. Since, for the wild-animal side of his business, liability was limited to either financial loss or animal lives, it did not matter how many wild animals ended up in his hands, with no one to answer for any loss incurred. Recruiting humans involved no such care-free decision and involved many other delicate variables. He learned early that some recruits were more vulnerable than others and should be avoided at all costs to limit bad press or political and financial liability. Since, after 1901, German colonial territories were off limits to ethnographic recruiters for fear of indigenous people being infected with “civilization,” Hagenbeck was left to deal with other colonial states that were not necessarily on good terms with Germany. He was, therefore, forced to navigate around colonial political landmines to recruit the best ethnographic troupes by maneuvering through costly rules and regulations. For example, where another European colonial administration or interest was involved, permission would be necessary, and sometimes fees and travel expenses would have to be paid to the troupe members. This meant dealing directly with other European colonial authorities, and that was not always in the best interest of Hagenbeck’s business. This explains why some Somali troupes recruited from either former French or British Somaliland were labeled as “Abyssinians” or “Ethiopians” while they appear as “Somalis” at other times. Evidence of this matter is recorded in connection with an incident involving a Somali troupe believed to be the largest, led by Hersi Egeh. The promoter of the troupe refused to let anthropologists led by Dr. Felix von Luschan have “scientific” access to the troupe members after von Luschan tried to take anthropometric body measurements of the group (Zimmerman 2001, 19) and the troupe members resisted. Dr. von Luschan threatened to have the troupe deported from Germany and to put a stop to possible touring opportunities if the Somalis resisted his demand. Their “crime,” beyond refusing to submit to von Luschan’s probing, was that they were performing under a “false flag,” the Abyssinian one. This was vicious blackmail experienced also by other groups during their stay in Europe. Since the Abyssinian kingdom was independent from the grip of colonialism, recruiters used it to circumvent both the French and British colonial administrations to recruit the Somalis and other closely related ethnic groups in the region.

The British colonial authorities were worried about German colonial aspirations in the region and especially the recruitment of ethnographic performers from its colonial sphere. This was recorded by Hersi Egeh. He told the German writer Paul Eipper of hostile encounters he had had with the British colonial administration in his homeland. Hersi Egeh mentioned being harassed and threatened with imprisonment because of his collaboration with the Germans and the Hagenbeck ethnographic exhibitions (Eipper 1931, 124).

Another recruitment method used was what could be termed the “exchangeable savage,” the misguided European practice of applying common stereotypical traits generally to certain ethnic groups in a particular region of the world. There were many instances in which this was used to recruit ethnographic performers or procure cultural artifacts. The exchangeability was not limited to people’s customs but also extended to materials and artifacts (Sperlich 2006)—for instance, exchanging Abyssinians for Somalis or Tahitians for Samoans because of their expected or assumed cultural and ethnical similarities. Therefore, Somalis alone portrayed several other ethnic groups from the general region. This change of ethnic identity happened for two reasons: (a) it was an administrative necessity, since major Somali troupes, such as Hersi Egeh’s group, traveled with Abyssinian passports; and (b) it enabled tactical showmanship in which exhibition themes were constantly changed for maximum exposure and public interest. It was the organizers (or financiers), with some input from the troupe leaders, who determined how each show was presented.

Hagenbeck had also an eye for noticeable “strangeness” and “authenticity,” in both the physical appearance and cultural background of his foreign recruits. His views on this matter were well defined. He sought troupes that were “strange but not too strange” for the taste of his clients. He was strictly against freak shows where human deformities were manipulated and displayed for the public. The physical appearance of his recruits must be agreeable to his audiences’ definition of racial classification; customs and attire must be striking, without any influence from outside. The Somalis, supposedly, fitted into this category perfectly and became one of few troupes proven to draw in and please audiences. What appealed to Hagenbeck and other impresarios about the Somali troupes included racial, physical, and cultural peculiarities. He and other impresarios found the Somalis racially attractive

and intriguing, since they could hardly place them directly into any of the perceived racial categories; for example, the tall and lean physical stature and traditional attire made the Somalis stand out in the eyes of their exhibitors, including Hagenbeck (Thode-Arora 1989, 62–63). The Somalis appeared to the common European of the time as black Africans, but not exactly; they had some Caucasian features, but not exactly; they somehow resembled Arabs, but not exactly; and they were Muslims, but were different from a European's perception of a Muslim. The Somalis' deep nomadic tradition, which makes them independent and mobile, also played into their becoming favorable to recruiters. The clan-based structure—which meant that a group leader would recruit only reliable specialized performers who could be in service for a long time—was another aspect that made them highly sought after. This was evident with respect to Hersi Egeh's troupe, which mostly consisted of members of his inner clan circle, each member having honed his or her special role in the group for years. The first recruitment of any troupe was always difficult, since it required considerable investment and was logistically complex. Only after a group came into service and stayed on the touring circuit for a certain period would their potential be realized, depending on group cohesion, loyalty to the leadership, and professionalism.

Reliable sources on the Somali ethnographic performers' troupe recruitment are very limited but there are two strong written sources detailing recruitment activities and inter-troupe relations. Otto Müller (1926) published a short but very informative book containing details about a recruitment process he had been directly involved with when he traveled to the Horn of Africa in around 1925 to procure wild animals and ethnographic performers from the region. This account includes his initial travel arrangements in the region: contacting valuable intermediary local agents, establishing a recruitment base camp, selecting individual group members (men, women, and children), collecting authentic domestic cultural materials to be shipped along with the group (most made on the spot), training the group for expected performances, taking the group from French Somaliland into neutral Abyssinia to secure travel documents granted only after members declared allegiance to the Abyssinian authorities, and finally shipping the whole contingent, "the village," to Europe.

The second source is based on the story of Mohamed Nur, who, in around 1910, joined a group of Somali ethnographic performers recruited to travel to

Germany. The group was shipped from Aden (Yemen). Nur left behind a rare voice representing the Somali ethnographic troupes who frequented Europe at the time. He narrated his biographical account to a German linguist, including how Nur was recruited and the role he was recruited for (troupe chaplain/Islamic teacher). Evident from his story is that he was individually employed by a Somali group leader, with whom he later had a bitter dispute after reaching Germany. The dispute resulted in Nur being shunned from the troupe while on tour. He tried to join another troupe but had already been blacklisted by the first troupe leadership and failed to secure a position. He later lived in Germany on his own for many eventful years (von Tiling 1925).

These two sources, particularly the latter, show that the Somalis had considerable control over their affairs both during the initial recruitment and after reaching Europe. They were not simply helpless natives who had fallen prey to European colonial racist deception but were capable and independent negotiators in their unusual venture. Of course, there existed clear power relations that tilted in favor of the European impresarios, including determining the nature of the shows, the exhibition venues, and the working rules and regulations. They were neither forcefully recruited nor exhibited against their will. It is undeniable, though, that the whole concept of ethnographic human exhibitions under the colonial gaze is at least morally troubling, but so, of course, is the colonial discourse in its entirety. Recruiting and exhibiting ethnographic performers for live exhibitions was not that different from recruiting other colonial workforces from colonized nations. Therefore, although the power relations were clear from the beginning in favor of the European organizers, the Somali performers were not without agency in their endeavor, and to simply categorize the whole phenomenon with terms like “human zoo”—suggesting that humans were collected like wild animals and put into zoos—does not offer an accurate picture (Sánchez-Gómez 2013; see also Thode-Arora in this volume).

The Somalis were not only exhibited by Carl Hagenbeck; any impresario with resources to recruit or lease sought after them, bringing them from all over the Somali-inhabited territories. Somalis were mainly recruited from the two Somali-inhabited regions that were at the time colonized by Britain and France. There were several Somali groups who crossed each other’s travel routes, each numbering from a dozen to more than a hundred members. Pursuing and retracing their quite extensive routes and ever-changing itiner-

aries is not an easy task. It is not yet clear exactly how many Somali troupes were involved, but at least two major groups from the two French and British Somaliland colonies were at work, sometimes simultaneously. The only group we know for certain was involved for the entire duration, with continuously intact leadership and membership, was Hersi Egeh's troupe (whose last show was in 1929, in the Netherlands and Sweden).

Hersi Egeh: The Somali Troupe Leader

Both Carl Hagenbeck and his son, Lorenz Hagenbeck, wrote about how local native chiefs were corrupted with monetary bribes and glittering presents dangled in front of their faces before they exposed their clan members to the danger of trapping wild animals (Hagenbeck 1909, 54; Hagenbeck 1956, 237). These local "chiefs" were engaged not only when trapping or catching animals but also to recruit and convince their brethren to travel abroad for ethnographic exhibitions in Europe (Thode-Arora 2008, 167). Both material and cash payments were used to win the support of clan headmen and/or elders.

The Somali troupe leader Hersi Egeh was one such key figures (fig. 3.1). He was born around 1862 on the northern coast of what was then British Somaliland. For many years he led and toured with one of the most successful Hagenbeck Somali ethnographic performing troupes. His group toured all over Europe and America for more than thirty years. He got into the *Völkerschau* business in his early twenties (about 1885). The last show involving Hersi Egeh and his well-known troupe was with the Carl Hagenbeck circus in Sweden in 1929. He was sixty-seven years old at the time, as he told Eipper, who was at the time traveling with the circus (Eipper 1931, 124).

Hersi Egeh's help was also instrumental in contributing to German efforts in the subjugation of southwestern native African resistance by procuring more than 2,000 camels for the German army in southwest Africa, an order executed with Carl Hagenbeck's financial backing. In early 1906, the German colonial army in what was then known as German Southwest Africa (today Namibia) ordered from Hagenbeck a contingent of pack camels that could be used in the tough Kalahari Desert of southern Africa to put down the Herero and Nama peoples' uprising against German colonialism. The harsh German colonial military campaign concluded in the infamous Herero and

Figure 3.1. Hersi Egeh Gorseh. Postcard. Author's collection. This image was made for the 1910 tour with Carl Hagenbeck circus which included Argentina (notice the Spanish inscription). Hersi Egeh "Chief," who always traveled with his extended family within the troupe, stands in front of his main Somali house (Somali aqal), fully attired and armed (two different spears, a long dagger—not the usual short Somali dagger—a shield, and a horse whip. Notice the white ostrich feather on his head, an insignia of bravery. The whole set (body and material) is a part of the exhibition performance.



Nama genocidal massacre (1904–7). Hersi Egeh, along with Menges and Lorenz Hagenbeck, was instrumental in the procurement of the camels used in that military campaign (Hagenbeck 1956, 65–72).

Hersi was a very ambitious man, who had developed a close relationship and business collaboration with Carl Hagenbeck and his family—so much so that he sent his older son, Ali Hersi, to enroll in one of Hamburg's public schools. After the end of the *Völkerschau* adventure, Hersi Egeh devoted himself to his other businesses, including importing sophisticated German sewing machines into the Somali territories. Hersi died in the late 1930s in Hargeisa (British Somaliland). He left both material and human wealth. His descendants are today numerous in their homeland and around the world. There is also a very rich oral history about the Hersi Egeh's troupe and legacy (see below).

Somali Ethnographic Exhibitions

Somalis joined Carl Hagenbeck's ethnographic exhibitions as early as 1885, although they were not under exclusive contract to Hagenbeck until around 1895. Hagenbeck recruited more than seventy troupes from around the world and exhibited them all over the world. Some of these groups did multiple tours, as long as their services were in demand. The venues they were

staged at included public fairs, restaurants, cabarets, large outdoor gatherings, amusement parks, and zoological gardens. One of their regular bases was Tierpark Stellingen in Hamburg, after Hagenbeck developed the capacity to host large troupes and caravans from faraway lands recruited by his agents. Many troupes, particularly the Somalis, were headquartered in this animal park sometimes year-round. From Stellingen they were farmed out to the highest bidders from trade and colonial exhibitions, national and provincial expositions, coronation and royal jubilees, and other mass gatherings all over Europe. The Somali group led by Hersi Egeh was present for the opening ceremony of Tierpark Stellingen on May 7, 1907. Lorenz Hagenbeck wrote about that day and about seeing Hersi Egeh in full “war paint” with his favorite sons, daughters, and family that seemed to be growing by the year (Hagenbeck 1956, 77). This is an indication of the troupe’s longevity in this unusual business, since more than half were Egeh’s family members and the rest were probably close relations and allies of the clan. Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany paid a visit to the park in 1909 and met the Somali troupe and their leader, Hersi Egeh (a photograph showing the encounter exists).

Lorenz Hagenbeck also described when he first witnessed at a young age a group of Somalis brought from the former British Somaliland by Menges to Hamburg in 1895. He was completely mesmerized by the “exotic natives” from Abyssinia, as he described them. He wrote that huge amounts of food, including baskets of bread and urns of tea, were distributed among the new arrivals to welcome them. Seeing Somalis for the first time was both a joyous and an astonishing affair for Hamburg locals and a good selling point for Carl Hagenbeck’s business. The Somali women and children were what caught the young Lorenz’s eyes, particularly Somali mothers busy feeding their hungry “coffee-brown children” (Hagenbeck 1956, 25). This curious description suggests that the experience of watching people from different parts of the world was not all about seeing black and white. Instead, other human colors and skin hues began to be recognized by the European spectators. Black, brown, and yellow were other human color possibilities that could be experienced right at their doorstep.

The performances were mostly pre-planned to some extent, but executed with a great deal of improvisation from the performers. What was being staged for thousands of paying spectators were “authentic” activities from far lands and peoples. Every aspect of Somali life was on display: race, ethnicity,

culture, religion, landscape, bodily features, attire, animal rearing, traditional sports, homemaking, ironworking (weapon making), pottery, horsemanship, food, warfare, song, dance, marriage, death, and birth were staged. The commissioning impresarios had huge influence on the design of the exhibitions and performances, but closer observation indicates that experienced troupe leaders like Hersi Egeh also had considerable influence on the performances. Oral history has revealed that Hersi trained his own troupe regularly and kept the members in a special camp, even when not on tour. There he received any new recruits and introduced new acts, songs, dances, and other elaborations to be used for the next possible tour. This shows that he had considerable say in the tour and performance arrangements. Most acts in the show, including singing, dancing, and warfare, remained a fixture throughout, while others changed and new scenes were introduced accordingly.

These shows took different themes, depending on the location and audience, and were staged in sequential scenes that told an entertaining story (Thode-Arora 1989, 109). For instance, one of the most popular shows started with a landscaped background on which inhabitants of a settlement seemed to be tending to their daily activities in peace. Suddenly, a marauding band from a different clan attacked the settlement, trying to steal the prized livestock. In the ensuing confusion, the men of the attacked settlement mounted a counter-attack with the help of a mysteriously powerful “white comrade.” The attackers were fiercely repelled, leaving casualties. Then the defeated party sent emissaries to broker a peace deal with the victorious party. After some negotiation, the peace deal was accepted, blood payment and marriageable girls were exchanged, and finally a communal feast and rejoicing with elaborate dances followed. Peace was restored and life continued as usual. All able-bodied adults in the group were involved in the acts and exhibits. Children, although they were part of the exhibition, did not take part in the actual performances but had other roles to play, including selling postcards and other souvenirs in the exhibition grounds.

The Somalis took their touring exhibitions seriously as a highly competitive and jealously guarded business, particularly the long-serving troupes, such as Hersi Egeh’s troupe. Within the group, some troupe leaders behaved like and were treated by the others as employers, with considerable power over the performers and their earning potential. Therefore the leaders commanded strong loyalty in order to maintain cohesion and the continuation

of the troupe. Besides the traditional clan leadership structure, troupe leaders' authority rested mainly on the resources they could distribute, such as employment and contracting opportunities. Outside the group, there were troupes of other nationalities, such as the Sinhalese "Hindus" and Arab Bedouin troupes that were also popular. Both troupes were connected to Carl Hagenbeck and performed along with the Somalis in important exhibitions, and some dangerous trade turf wars erupted occasionally—for instance, between Hersi Egeh's troupe and Arab Bedouins in around 1912 in Hagenbeck zoo (Hagenbeck 1956, 113) and in 1929 in Sweden between the Sinhalese and Hersi Egeh's troupe (Eipper 1931). Both fights were accidentally sparked by each side trying to protect their side of the exhibition grounds, a space they used after main performances to sell souvenirs, including lucrative postcards and other items.

Selected Performances in Central and Eastern Europe

Vienna, 1895 and 1910

The year 1895 was a busy time for the Somali ethnographic performing troupes. Hersi Egeh's group performed in Hamburg, London, and Vienna. The exhibition in Vienna was scheduled to coincide with the opening of one of Europe's first large amusement parks. Situated in the middle of the city, it was a theme park, "Venedig in Wien" ("Venice in Vienna"), a very creative reproduction complete with waterways and gondolas. The park was inaugurated on May 18, 1895, in the Prater district. Since "Venice in Vienna" was opened in mid- or late May and the London show was held between May and October of the same year, it is possible that the Somalis either moved to Vienna after they performed in London or did their rounds in "Venice in Vienna's" opening ceremonies before their London show.¹

In 1910 the Somalis came back to Vienna, this time a different troupe than that which came in 1895. This troupe, numbering sixty-five members, was led by a European impresario called Edmund Porfi. His name and involvement with the Somalis appear in records first in 1904–5, when he managed the same group's debut tours in Europe (Swantje 2000, 22). The Somalis were contracted to perform at the First International Hunting

¹ This information derives from a brochure held by the Vienna Museum of Ethnology.



Figure 3.2. A Somali mother bathing her child at the exhibition grounds in Vienna, 1910. Postcard. Author's collection. Life went on as usual during the tours abroad. Since every Somali troupe included considerable number of children, even the educational routines were carried as usual.

Exhibition held from May 7 to October 16, 1910. This was, as the name suggests, a leisure-hunting exhibition involving European royal houses and dignitaries of privilege. In this grandiose international affair many European and non-European aristocrats took part, from Britain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Italy, Canada, Germany, Norway, Persia, and Sweden, among others. Not only were the people displayed (in hunting villages procured from Germany), but so were the wild animals to be hunted. The Somali hunting village carried the label “Abyssinian village” or “the African hunting village.” The Somali troupe that occupied the village originated from French Somaliland.



Figure 3.3. Somalis, Hunting Exhibition in Vienna, 1910. Clemens Radauer's collection. Compare this photograph with fig. 3.6—the same Somali group in different pose but also with different identity (this one “Ethiopian”, and the other one “Somali village”)!

This “Abyssinian village” had toured Europe years before and was sent from Germany for this occasion (figs. 3.2 and 3.3).

One might wonder why it was decided to recruit an African ethnographic troupe for such an event. The answer lies in the function of the event. It involved hunting wild animals out in nature, and who had better knowledge in dealing with wild animals in their natural habitat than “natural people” themselves? This does not mean simply that their genuine expertise in hunting wild animals was needed: rather, seeing them in action, doing what they had supposedly been doing for centuries without change, was itself a part of the experience to be had by the exhibition attendees. Native hunting techniques were considered unique and exotic. This was not by any means as romantic and complimentary as it sounds. On the contrary, members of the troupe were equated with the wild animals they were considered so good at hunting. Watching them in action—a single “savage” or several of them slaying an elephant weighing several tons—was considered a pure, “natural” sight to be enjoyed and experienced.



Figure 3.4. Somalis, Prague Exhibition, 1908. Postcard. Author’s collection. A prayer scene. This image shows a makeshift mosque area where daily prayers were conducted, which was at the same time a part of the exhibition. Notice the fence and the audience, including at least one non-Somali spectator (a woman in a long white dress) who is probably a paying local client. All aspects of daily Somali life were genuinely lived by the troupe members but also staged within the context of a commercial exhibition at the same time.



Figure 3.5. Somali women, Prague Exhibition, 1908. Postcard. Author's collection. Maintaining one's appearance during performing tours. Two young Somali women sitting in front of their aqal (traditional igloo-shaped house) with some handicraft display behind them. A married woman (head covered) braiding the hair of an unmarried young woman (uncovered head with braids). Notice the fence enclosure of the performing grounds where the whole troupe lived for days, weeks, and sometimes months, depending on the duration of the business contract.

Prague, 1908

Two years before the International Hunting Exhibition in Vienna, the Somalis performed at the Prague Exhibition at the Royal Park. Their stay was related to the Prague Jubilee, held from May 14 to October 18, 1908. A typical ethnographic “Abyssinian village” was featured along other entertainments. The Somalis who performed as “Abyssinians” were engaged in singing, dancing, cooking, and many other daily activities (figs. 3.4 and 3.5).

Schweidnitz, 1911

In 1911 the Somali troupe came to Schweidnitz (today Świdnica in Poland). The ethnographic shows were staged as part of a trade and industry exhibition organized to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Schweidnitz Trade and Craft Association. It was an occasion of great fanfare and the opening was attended by Frederick Wilhelm von Hohenzollern. As usual, a foreign “native village” had to be put in place to become part of the general entertainment for the exhibition visitors, so a Somali village was erected on the exhibition grounds (fig. 3.6).



Figure 3.6. Somalis, trade and industry exhibition, Schweidnitz, 1911. Clemens Radauer's collection. Some of the men of the troupe lining up with their performance attire and weapons. Women are at the back waiting their turn. Notice the target board for spear throwing in the background. On the foreground are some handicrafts (some made on the spot), the work of different artisans, including pottery, milk and food vessels, and mats with intricate patterns. At the back, near the target board, can be seen a paying local viewer, probably behind some sort of separating fence.

Saint Petersburg, 1912

In Russia, a Somali group was exhibited in 1912 for the opening of Saint Petersburg's Luna Park—an amusement park named after London's Luna Park, which itself was a namesake of the original Luna Park, opened in 1903 in Coney Island, New York. This group is believed to be the same group exhibited in the German Luna Park in 1910 (see also Leskinen in this volume).

Budapest, 1928

The Somali troupe from the Hagenbeck enterprise performed in 1928 in Budapest. This was the famous Hersi Egeh troupe, this time led by his son, Ali Hersi. The Somali group was met and studied by Géza Róheim, the well-known Hungarian anthropologist and psychoanalyst. He observed the group for one month before leaving for a long-awaited expedition to Aden (Yemen) and Djibouti, where he studied more Somalis and later wrote several lengthy articles based on Sigmund Freud's work about his observations (Róheim 1932,

1940). Ali Hersi himself and a certain Abul Hasan were Róheim's informants during his anthropological study of the Somali group in Budapest.

Conclusion

The history of the Somali troupes who performed in ethnographic exhibitions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Europe is a rich subject that calls for wider and more thorough research and analysis. The phenomenon occupies a critical position in the greater history of globalization and colonial economic and social networks taking root in the Somali Peninsula, partially resulting in the formation of the earliest Somali diaspora. These troupes saw their involvement in the ethnographic exhibitions as a lucrative business opportunity offering potential economic benefits and chances of adventure that were unachievable for most of the society. This was a business venture that had its dangers and pitfalls, but perseverance, group loyalty and cohesion, and professionalism in the field saw these exhibitions not only succeed but also make Somalis among the most sought-after ethnographic performing troupes of the time. They lasted for close to four decades in a racially charged, manipulative colonial environment but never lost their will to survive and to be agents for negotiating power. They also experienced their share of difficulties, including racial abuse, blackmail, overwork, fierce business competition within the troupe or with other ethnic troupes, culture and weather shock, ill health, death in strange lands, and staying away from home and close family for long periods.

The Somali ethnographic performing troupes left many traces in various multidisciplinary archives. These include written sources such as news items and academic articles; visual references, including numerable photographic postcards and films; and audio recordings. The Somalis left museum items in Europe that are still available. For instance, during the 1929 tour of Sweden, Hersi Egeh himself, whose troupe was embedded with the Carl Hagenbeck circus, donated at least four newly made Somali cultural items to the Swedish Museum of Ethnology in Stockholm (the museum recently confirmed that they still possess at least one of these). They inspired figures in art and literature including the author Karl May (*Das Straußenreiten der Somal*, 1889) and expressionist painter Max Pechstein (*Somalitanz*, 1910, now in the Museum of Modern Art, New York). They left descendants and graves (marked and unmarked) in some European cities.

The most interesting legacy, still valued in the Somalis' homeland, is a rich oral history narrated by the current generation of descendants and relatives. The most highly prized stories relate to Hersi Egeh's troupe, whose base was the port city of Berbera (in former British Somaliland). Hersi married several women and had multiple children and grandchildren, a good number of whom were members of his famous troupe, including his oldest son, Ali, who later succeeded him in running the family business affairs. He was famously known as Hersi Arwo (*arwo* meaning exhibition in Somali). According to oral history, Hersi amassed a considerable amount of money and commercial assets and became the richest man in his territory. He built the first large modern stone buildings in Berbera and established diversified business holdings in Yemen, Djibouti, and Ethiopia. Acquired wealth and technological rarities, such as the mass production of tailored clothes made possible by imported German sewing machines and bicycles from England, were significant in cementing Hersi Egeh's name and legacy for generations. The Hersi Egeh Arwo lineage is still strong and includes at least one surviving daughter and many grand- and great-grandchildren living both in and outside the homeland. After the end of the ethnographic exhibitions in Europe, most members of the Somali troupes, except for a very few individuals who stayed behind in Europe, returned home and engaged in other ventures.

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CHAPTER
FOUR

**“Wild Chamacoco” and the Czechs: The Double-Edged Ethnographic Show of
Vojtěch Frič, 1908-9¹**

Markéta Křížová

The commercial exhibitions of people of non-European origin in Europe and North America throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are often seen as an effort to legitimize and celebrate—via the construction of an exotic, racially and culturally different Other—the dominance of specific European nations, or Europe as such, over non-European regions. Such an interpretation of the shows by historians of science, however, leaves open for investigation the specificities of ethnographic shows in regions and societies that for various reasons lacked, or lagged behind in acquiring, colonial possessions even though their inhabitants were certainly informed about and sometimes profited from the colonial endeavors of other nations.

This chapter presents a case study of ethnographic shows that mostly took place in Prague, but also in Vienna and Venice, and in many small cities and towns throughout the Czech lands (defined below) in 1908 and 1909. Traveler and amateur anthropologist Vojtěch Frič brought from South America a “savage” who engaged in formal and informal interactions with the public. To understand the story of Frič and “his Indian” it is necessary to approach it within the broader context of the nationalist clashes and competitions in the Czech lands and the early phase of the collecting, measuring, classifying, picturing, narrating, and parading of non-European Others by members of a small nation at the center of Europe that lacked colonies but still cherished colonial fantasies and aspirations.

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Scene: Czech Lands Divided and Aspiring

The names “Czech lands” or “lands of the Bohemian Crown” denote the regions of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, historically ruled by the kings of Bohemia and from 1526 incorporated into the Habsburg monarchy. In 1918 these lands became, together with Slovakia and Ruthenia, parts of the new Czechoslovak Republic. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the words “Czech” and “Bohemian” were often used as synonyms in English-language texts, while the phrase “Czech lands” did not exist during that time; it is a product of the effort of present-day historians to grasp the territorial, social, and cultural integrity of the whole region of the crown lands (Dickins 2011). In the present text I will honor this usage of the phrase. But it is important to mention that the Czech lands were, from at least the Middle Ages, inhabited not only by the speakers of Czech, one of the Slavic tongues, but also by those who spoke German. After hundreds of years of relatively peaceful coexistence, in the second half of the nineteenth century nationalist competitiveness caused an ostentatious political, economic, social, and cultural separation of the two ethnic groups. Each produced its own literature, theater, music, and scientific discourse; both sought self-identification via the stereotypic images of Others, models to follow or deterrent examples to be despised (Houžvička 2016; Cohen 2006).

Landlocked within Europe, the inhabitants of the Czech lands scarcely participated in overseas exploration and exploitation. The whole of the Habsburg Empire neither possessed colonies nor pursued geopolitical interests outside of the Old World. Still, there were numerous and varied “colonial fantasies” at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, justified by the sense of superiority and of a civilizational mission, voiced both by the imperial elites and by the members of the various nations subjected to the Habsburg dynasty. There were collectors and voyagers who visited various parts of the globe, and travelogues and travel fictions were popular among all social strata.² The Czech-speaking as well as the German-speaking public in the Czech lands demonstrated a taste for

2 The term “colonial fantasies” was coined by Susanne Zantop (1997) with respect to Germany in her monograph to denote the situations of simultaneous lack of real possibility for colonization and the collectively voiced ambition to realize such expansion. See also Bach 2016.



Figure 4.1. Frič and Cherwish during the Sixteenth International Congress of Americanists, Vienna, September 1910. *Pestrý týden*, October 2, 1943.

the exotic, but their “colonial fantasies” were not straightforward. For example, the discourse of Czech nationalists was dominated by the feeling of their own oppression at the hands of the Austrian state and the oppression of the whole Slavic race at the hands of the Germans. So there had been a stream of sympathy toward the American and African natives deprived of their language and customs by the white colonizers. At the same time, the Czechs, in their aspiration to become equal to the most dominant European nations, followed the western European way of presenting the “primitives” as inferior to themselves. Rather than rejecting colonialism as such, the Czechs formulated their own colonial schemes, asserting that they would be more civilized and humane than the existing colonial powers (fig. 4.1).³

A great response was provoked by an exhibition on South Africa, organized in 1880 in Prague by the physician Emil Holub (Šámal 2015). The event combined exhibits of stuffed animals and mannequins in native costumes arranged into scenes that allowed a glimpse of “real life” in Africa. At the same time the first ethnographic shows visited the Czech lands, mostly the capital city. Already in 1878 the Hagenbeck company brought a Nubian group to Prague. In 1880, an Inuit performance included kayak rides on the

3 For the colonial ambitions voiced by the Czech traveler to Africa, Emil Holub, in the 1880s, see Šámal 2015; for the Czech “colonial fantasies” in general see Lemmen 2013.

River Moldau; in 1882 a group of Samoyeds came, and in 1885, a “Ceylon caravan” arrived that presented both the Sinhalese natives and the exotic animals. Then there was a series of African shows: the Dahomeans in 1892 and 1898, the Ashanti in 1897, and so forth. All the shows were covered extensively by the Czech and the German local press and apparently enjoyed great attendance (Herza 2018, 172–78).

During this period, the Czech public in the capital and in the provinces was beginning to favor another cheaper and more easily accessible medium for knowing the world: photography, a technological invention that appealed to the sense of superiority of Europeans over the rest of the world, which was unable to pursue similar technical innovations. Photography apparently offered an “objective,” “truthful” depiction of a strange reality but at the same time testified to its otherness. Precisely because of this double role, photographs became extremely popular among “armchair travelers” all around Europe (Maxwell 1999). Besides appearing in books and magazines, photographs in the form of hand-colored glass slides projected by “magic lantern” or “skiopticon” could be used for public lectures. This was another of the novel mechanisms of knowledge production and transmission that became immensely popular in the Czech lands by the end of the nineteenth century. The popularity of public lectures was due to the emergence of new forms of popular mass entertainment combined with education. The verbal and pictorial information imparted during lectures was affordable even for the working classes, who could thus access education (or the illusion of education) which had until then been reserved for the elites. But the presenters, in their effort to attract a (paying) audience, often accentuated the otherness and the picturesque nature of the objects of their narrative (Todorovova 2016).

It has already been mentioned that most of the ethnographic shows that arrived in Prague were either from Africa, Asia, or the extreme north (the Inuit and Samoyeds). There was relatively less direct or even indirect contact with the native peoples of America, though Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show was briefly presented in 1906 in several cities in Moravia (Griffin 2010, 114; Čvančara and Čvančara 2017; see also Barabas in this volume). As for Latin America and its (native) inhabitants, the reader needs to be reminded that after its “discovery” the American continent entered European imagery as completely, genuinely new—that is, a previously unknown world whose vast extent, human inhabitants, and flora and fauna were extremely different from

every other land previously known. This provoked imagined and real conquest schemes even in regions lacking the ability to realize them. However, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, precisely when other regions were being opened for colonization, the independence movements brought about a radical change in the balance of powers in America. While the northern continent was beyond the colonizing reach of European powers, the southern continent offered at least possibilities for economic penetration and for “intellectual” conquest—that is, symbolic possession for those European nations demonstrating their superiority via scientific exploration, description, and categorization of American nature and history (Aguirre 2005).

In this informal conquest the members of nations outside the circle of imperial powers could also participate. The first Czech who shared eyewitness information from this part of the world with his fellow countrymen—and who in his writings unanimously condemned the backwardness of Latin America but also accentuated the exoticism of its natives—was a traveler going by the name Enrique Stanko Vráz.⁴ In the 1890s Vráz organized a series of lectures with photographic slides about his travels in equinoctial America. Then, it was Vojtěch Frič who brought the South American reality into the Czech lands, first through exhibitions of objects and photographs and then by introducing to audiences a “genuine Indian” during his lectures, transforming such events into miniature ethnographic shows.

Actors: Vojtěch Frič and Cherwish Mendoza

Vojtěch Frič (1882–1942), son of a prominent Czech patriot and notable figure in Prague, became interested in the native cultures during his first visit to Brazil in 1901–2, which he originally intended as a botanical expedition (fig. 4.2). During three subsequent journeys (between 1903 and 1912) he amassed ethnographic collections that he partly sold, partly donated to museums in Prague, Berlin, Saint Petersburg, and Washington, DC. In between the voyages, he participated in congresses, published in specialized journals, and also lectured extensively to the Czech public. His planned fifth expedition was

4 In fact, it is problematic to label Vráz as “Czech”—even though he styled himself as a Czech patriot, his Czech origin was at best doubtful. For a brief overview of Vráz’s biography and queries regarding his birthplace and origin, see Pütová 2013.



Figure 4.2. Cherwish with Frič, his parents, and a parrot, 1908. Apparently, the picture has been cut out of a bigger family photo. On first sight, the snapshot makes an impression of Cherwish being included into the family as an equal. But the presence of the parrot suggests his continuing exoticization into the image of “Man Friday.” Archive of the Náprstek Museum, ar. Frič 8/4, s. n.

thwarted by the outbreak of World War I. During and immediately after the war Frič became involved in politics and visited Argentina and Uruguay as an envoy of the new Czechoslovak state. But his engagement in diplomatic service was made impossible due to his conflictual relationship with the minister of foreign affairs, Edvard Beneš. Disappointed, Frič returned to botany. But in the 1930s and 1940s he also published several adventurous, partly autobiographical novels in Czech.⁵

Between his second and fourth journeys, Frič focused his attention especially on Gran Chaco. The inhabitants of this sparsely populated and mostly inhospitable region had opposed the penetration of European incomers since the colonial period. As the region did not offer mineral wealth, it remained a sanctuary for groups escaping European pressure elsewhere in South America. With the division of the Spanish colonies,

Gran Chaco ended up as a borderland of Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil, and for the next fifty years it remained uncharted and little known. But since the 1880s various expeditions had been trying to trace the geography of the Chaco and to assess its economic potential. Many of these expeditions ended up in disaster. In 1882 the French explorer Jules Crévaux died with most of his men at the hands of the Tobas; the Spaniard Pedro Enrique de Ibarreta y

5 The scope of this chapter does not make it possible to explain in detail the specificities of Frič's personality, his activities, or the reasons he was in rather a precarious position within the European anthropological community in the decade before World War I. For some of these issues see Křížová 2018.

Uhagon was killed by the same group in 1899; and the Italian Guido Boggiani was killed by the Chamacocos two years later (Miller 1999).

Frič could have chosen this region precisely in an effort to make an imprint on the history of exploration. In fact, when he visited Gran Chaco for the first time in 1903 and 1904, he followed in the tracks of Ibarreta (Frič 1943, 165–77). However, to the Czech public the specificities of Gran Chaco paled in comparison with the more general stereotypes attached to “South America” as a whole, something Frič often commented on with resentment. In a letter to Josefa Náprstková, head of the committee of the ethnographic museum in Prague (Náprstek Museum), to which Frič donated his collections from his second journey, he complained bitterly that the collections were labeled as “sent from the South American pampas.”

I have written correctly and explicitly that I have traveled in the swamps of central Chaco! The pampas are more than 1,000 km from that place . . . How could the traveler dare to entrust his collections, a result of months of heavy work, exertion, danger . . . to a museum that simply writes “collections from South America”?⁶

It was at the fortress Bahía Negra in the Paraguayan part of Gran Chaco that Frič recruited the main protagonist of his ethnographic show. In documents from 1908 and 1909, his name was usually given as “Cherwish” (Červiš in the Czech transcription or in corruptions as Černiš, Čeruiš, Čemiš). In the 1940s, when Frič wrote a series of newspaper articles about the events of 1908–9, he used a slightly different version—“Cherwuish” (Čerwuiš).⁷ Besides, the Spanish surname Mendoza often appeared in the sources; sometimes other surnames, such as Nietej (*Nietej*) and Pioschad (*Piošad*), were cited.⁸

6 Frič to Josefa Náprstková, Alto Paraguay, Bahía Negra, October 10, 1904, Archive of the Náprstek Museum (hereafter ANpM), Scrapbook 73 “Vojtěch Frič,” f. 51–52, orig. in Czech. If not stated otherwise, all the translations from the primary sources are mine.

7 Under the title *Indiánský Gulliver, který jel vyzkoumat Evropu* (*Indian Gulliver, Who Went to Study Europe*), Frič published in the years 1943 and 1944 a series of articles in the popular weekly *Pestrý týden* (*Colorful Week*). These articles are crucial for mapping the story of Cherwish, even though there are numerous omissions or distortions of facts. Hereafter, these articles will be referred to as *Pestrý týden*, along with the date. In the 1990s these articles were reprinted by Frič’s family, so the variant *Cherwuish* was coined in public knowledge in the Czech lands (Frič 2011).

8 Frič himself never provided the meaning of these names (while he translated others, for example, specifying that the name Loray, of the Chamacoco girl who “loved him,” meant Black Duck; see Frič 1918, 80–

Cherwish was a member of the Chamacoco (Ishir) tribe of the Zamuco language family, inhabiting the northern part of Paraguay (Escobar 2007). Certainly Cherwish was no innocent “savage” unaffected by Europe’s civilization, even though Frič tried to present him as such. He was at least a nominal Christian able to communicate in Spanish. This was the information given by Frič’s father to the Prague police directory at the beginning of October 1908:

My son, the traveler Vojtěch (Alberto) Frič, returned after two years to Prague on September 18, bringing with him a native Indian as his servant. His name is Cherwish Mendoza, age about thirty-five years, religion unknown, fairly educated (he speaks his Indian dialect and Spanish), by origin of the woods near Cuyabá in the state of Paraguay. (Pytlík 1993, 184)⁹

There are several different versions of the story of Cherwish’s voyage to Europe, all given by Frič at various times and in various contexts. The one best known and most favored by the Czech public until today is that presented by Frič himself in the articles from the 1940s. In the summer of 1908, allegedly, Frič visited the Chamacocos near Bahia Negra, with whom he was acquainted from his previous expedition. He found them decimated by a strange disease—bleeding boils in the rectum, with the loss of blood causing anemia and death. One of the “Indians” offered to accompany Frič to Asunción in search of a cure.

He told me: “I am from the line of chiefs. Therefore, I do not work as a woodcutter . . . The tribe was looking for someone for you to cure or to kill while looking for the cure for all. I offered myself. Now you are my dij.” (Frič’s note: This is what the war slaves call their masters. The master has the right to kill the slave, but I have never heard of such case. They treat them more like adopted children.) I asked: “Why do you wear

81). In the dictionary of Guido Boggiani, the word *niéto* is translated as tick (*zecca*) (Boggiani 1929, 168). There is, of course, no guarantee that this was the meaning of Cherwish’s other name; and, if it were so, that Frič was aware of the meaning. The translation of Pioshad was not possible to ascertain.

9 After returning for the first time from Latin America, in public as well as private communication Frič doubled his first name with its Hispanized variant, Alberto. As for Cherwish’s religion, there are several mentions in the sources stating that he was baptized, for example in *Wiener Abendpost* (*Vienna Evening Mail*), September 9, 1908. (Most of the newspaper articles that will be quoted in the present chapter were anonymous and without headings).

a headdress from the feathers of a black duck, the sign of the sorcerer’s apprentice?” “I want to learn from you how to cure my people.” (*Pestrý týden*, September 11, 1943)

But neither the doctors in Asunción nor those in Buenos Aires were able to discover the source of the disease. As Frič was to participate at the Sixteenth International Congress of Americanists in Vienna in September 1908 and none of the captains of the river boats were willing to take on board an “Indian”—“only in a cage”—the traveler was “obliged” to take Cherwish home “by detour of Europe.” In Prague, finally, with the help of a young student, the cause of the illness was discovered to be a hitherto unknown parasite (hookworm, *Ancylostoma duodenale*), as well as the cure—a strong purgative. After returning to Paraguay, Frič was able to help the tribe (*Pestrý týden*, November 13, 1943) (figs. 4.3 and 4.4).

The story of the traveler and scientist who, with the help of a medical novice, outwitted the learned doctors and saved helpless “Indians,” and of his noble native counterpart—son of the chiefs, brave and unselfish—fitted well into the romantic tradition of adventurous “Indian” novels. However, during and immediately after his 1908–9 trip Frič himself gave other hints. In a lecture for the International Congress of Americanists in London in 1912, he mentioned his effort to learn more from Cherwish about native religions and mythologies:

So far we had not understood the meaning of the beautiful feather adornments, stone axes, etc. . . . Only when I took one Indian with me to Europe, where he lost his horror from shamans, he ventured to reveal to me some secrets of his religion.¹⁰

10 Notes for a lecture at the International Congress of Americanists, London, May 1912, archive of Draga Fričová, manuscript translation from German into Czech by Čestmír Loukotka, Archive of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Ms. 445, f. 442. (After Frič’s death in 1944, his widow Draga Fričová deposited part of his manuscript documentation in the Náprstek Museum and another part in the Archive of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies of the then Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences; the rest remained in the family archive. In the 1950s, the Czech linguist and ethnographer Čestmír Loukotka transcribed and translated some of the documents from the Archive of the Academy of Sciences, but the proposed publication of the annotated edition was not realized, moreover, the originals were lost, so only the transcribed Czech version remains). See also the newspaper coverage of the Sixteenth International Congress of Americanists, *Wiener Abendpost*, September 9, 1908; *Národní listy* (*National Newspaper*), September 17, 1908.



Figure 4.3. Cherwish in Vienna taking part in the banquet opening of the International Congress of Americanists. *Neuigkeits-Welt-Blatt*, September 17, 1908.



Figure 4.4. Another picture of Cherwish at the Congress of Americanists. *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, September 16, 1908.

Frič strived to be universally acclaimed throughout the Czech lands as a world-famous scientist and explorer, particularly because he was definitely not considered to be one by many Czech intellectuals, including the circle around the Náprstek Museum, at the university, and in the National Museum in Prague. While he was popular among the general public, the Czech scientific community early on labeled him as histrionic and amateur, due to his boastful self-presentations and his lack of respect for established scientific authorities (Křížová 2018). By bringing to the Czech lands the “Indian,” a “scientific booty” and proof of his ventures in unexplored regions, he hoped to strengthen his position.

Pecuniary interest also motivated Frič. Public lectures represented an important source of income for travelers. Competing for paying audience was one of the reasons for the clashes between Frič and other Czechs lecturing on faraway countries.¹¹ In a letter to his friend Theodor Bartošek, Frič hinted that he was trying to attract the attention of Czech journalists who reported on the Congress of Americanists, so as to ensure he would capture the interest of the public at the moment of his return to Prague.

I will try to attract (journalists) to my lectures with slides, cinematographic projections of dances and phonographical (recordings of) singing and maybe by the presence of the chief of the wild Chamacocos, whom I plan to take with me . . . If I give a party for the reporters, with several bottles of Champagne, I have guaranteed the international humbug. The more so if I have with me my Indian whose mane and beautiful wild appearance wakes up the curiosity of the public . . . As the language of these Indians is important and little studied, I have a pretext for taking him with me.¹²

Interesting in this context is the word “humbug,” alluding to P.T. Barnum. In the second half of the nineteenth century the term had already entered both German and Czech languages in the sense of “creating a stir” or simply as “swindling,” but apparently Frič was using the word in a more positive sense. Last but not least, Cherwish—or, in another version of the story, his relative, the Chamacoco chief—had supposedly himself been eager to come to Europe.

11 The conflict with Enrique Stanko Vráz is summarized in Rozhoň 2005, 158–65.

12 Letter of Frič to Theodor Bartošek, Patagones, March 1, 1908; ANpM, f. Frič, 12/40.

Before his departure, Cherwish received from the tribal elders instructions on how to explore “all the secrets of the whites, so that, if he returned alive, he could instruct his people” (*Pestrý týden*, September 11, 1943). This, as we will see, was for Frič a crucial factor not only as justification for his taking the “Indian” to Europe but also for his own scientific self-presentation.

Performances and Interactions

Frič certainly had already succeeded in gaining the attention of journalists in Vienna. Cherwish accompanied Frič to sessions of the Congress of Americanists at which Cherwish “listened with great attentiveness” to the lectures in Spanish, French, and German (*Wiener Abendpost*, September 9, 1908) and took part at the banquet in the town hall. There, his consumption of excessive quantities of wine provoked an anonymous journalist to pen a humorous warning against the demons of alcohol (*Neuigkeits-Welt-Blatt* [*Paper of the News from the World*], September 17, 1908; also *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* [*New Vienna Daily Newspaper*], September 16, 1908). It is interesting that while the reports invariably portrayed Cherwish as behaving passively and sadly, Frič’s version depicted his fight with the mayor of Vienna, from whom the “Indian” wanted to take a gold medallion, the mark of the mayor’s authority (*Pestrý týden*, October 2, 1943). This was only one of many occasions when Frič’s accounts of events diverged considerably from other sources in accentuating the wildness, spontaneity, and untamed nature of Cherwish (other examples of such diverging interpretations will be mentioned later in this chapter).

In the last days of September 1908, after the Congress ended, the pair set off for Prague. Newspaper articles announced Frič’s lectures and the fact that a “genuine Indian” would be present. Promotional photos of Cherwish in native costume were taken, the sculptor Vilím Amort made a bust,¹³ and the painter Josef Král took Cherwish as a model for a series of oils.¹⁴ Cherwish accompanied Frič on social calls and was introduced, for example, to the community of frequent guests—many of them influential intellectuals, journalists, and writers—who met in the restaurant U Fleků, the so-called

13 The bust is reproduced in [Frič] 2011, 86; it remained in the possession of the family.

14 The fact that Král took Cherwish as a model for paintings is mentioned in the announcement of lecture in *Národní politika* (*National Politics*), December 11, 1908; one of the paintings is reproduced in *Zlatá Praha* (*Golden Prague*), September 10, 1909.

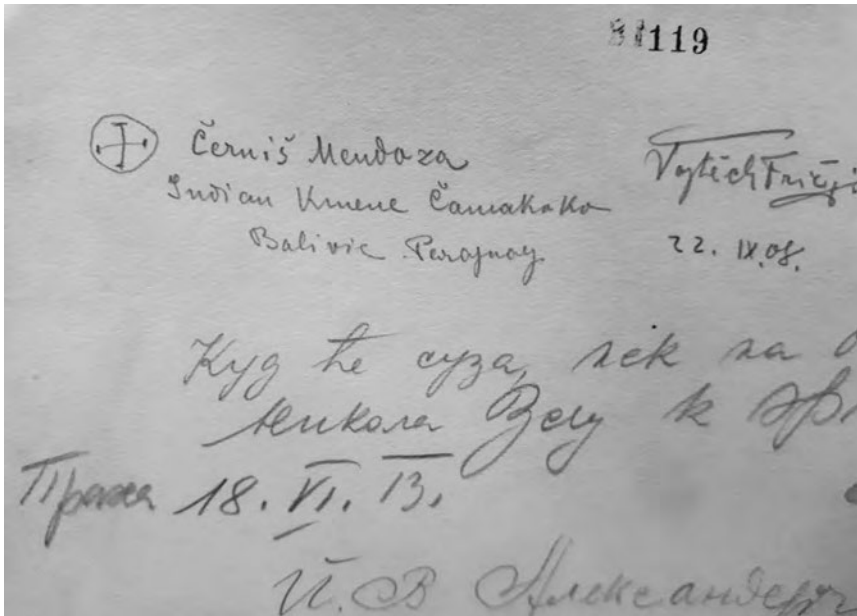


Figure 4.5. “Signature” of Cherwish (cross in a circle) with a note of his name and the signature of Vojtěch Frič in the visitor’s book (*canbuch*) of the restaurant U Fleků. Archive of the Memorial of National Literature, fund 6 (Akademie flekovská), book 3 (1905–15), f. 59.

Flek Academy. Frič brought Cherwish to the restaurant; and the “Indian” signed in the guestbook¹⁵ (fig. 4.5). The pair visited prominent households, the National Theater, variétés, and so forth. In the 1940s, Frič vehemently asserted that all this was done as a necessity and that Cherwish, desperately lost in a big city, was “clinging like a shadow” to Frič so that he, the white protector, was obliged to take him wherever Frič went himself (*Pestrý týden*, October 2, 1943).

But it appears that Cherwish soon roamed the streets of Prague on his own, interacting with passersby. This resulted in numerous first-hand encounters—some amicable, others disastrous. On at least one occasion, he was detained by the police. The incident was immortalized by the Czech journalist and writer Jaroslav Hašek in a short story apparently mixing reality with satire, in which the author was ridiculing at the same time the “Indian,” Frič,

15 The book is preserved in the Archive of the Memorial of National Literature, fund Akademie flekovská, book 3 (1905–15), 59.

and the Austrian police force. But a similar version was given by Frič himself. Allegedly, Cherwish had mistaken a tollkeeper at a tunnel near Vyšehrad for a beggar and refused to pay him. In the ensuing fight police officers in hard hats decorated with black feathers intervened. Cherwish took them for “wizards” and chiefs and challenged them to “battle.”

The policeman took Cherwish by the hand. Cherwish knew that with the Chamacoco this means a challenge for a heroic wrestling match and he jumped the strange chief. Before the policeman realized what was on, Cherwish was upon him, grunting like a hog, which was his victory song, and when the policeman called aloud, “In the name of the law, let me go,” he thought that the white chief asked for mercy. (Hašek 1913)¹⁶

Shortly after their arrival in Prague, Frič gave a lecture under the auspices of *Spolek českých žurnalistů* (the Czech journalists’ association) on December 19, 1908, in the great hall (mostly used for dance parties) on the island Žofín, the traditional center for entertainment for well-to-do Prague citizens. The topic was “Life and Poetry of South American Indians.” Frič projected his hand-colored glass slides, and put on display several pieces of this collection. Cherwish also took an active part, recounting a military campaign against the enemy Tomráho. Frič insisted in his memoirs that Cherwish chose the topic independently, being proud of the chance to boast of his victorious deeds in front of the white public. “From my collections he borrowed the necessary adornments and war prizes . . . He only regretted I did not allow him to light fire on the stage” (*Pestrý týden*, February 26, 1944). Apparently, the response by the public was enthusiastic. The daily *Národní listy* praised the “vivid and universally comprehensive gestures that had drawn great interest, especially when he donned the colorful Indian dress” (*Národní listy*, December 20, 1908) (fig. 4.6).

This first public appearance of Cherwish set the model to be followed in the subsequent months. Frič later asserted that he never, save the one occasion in Žofín, let Cherwish present on stage (mentioned several times in *Pestrý týden*, the description of the event on February 26, 1944). But the newspaper coverings of Frič’s lectures in the 1908–9 season prove that Cherwish cer-

16 The same story given by Frič in *Pestrý týden*, October 23, 1943.



Figure 4.6. Cherwish in native costume. Promotional photograph for a lecture in December 1908. The shot is one of numerous arranged photographs that were used for postcards and posters advertising the ethnographic shows. Cherwish displays the familiar attributes of the “savage”—the semi-nakedness, feathered headdress, and primitive weapons. *Český svět*, December 18, 1908.

tainly was acting on various occasions. Therefore, we have to ask the crucial question: How did the scheme devised by Frič correspond to the standard model of *Völkerschauen* of this period? This question is a necessary simplification, as the individual shows at concrete moments and places might differ considerably from one another. Still, there were some general features.¹⁷ Frič in his autobiographical texts never mentioned familiarity with any of the shows that in the last two decades of the nineteenth century stopped in Prague. Allegedly, in his youth Frič was entirely absorbed by botany and only started to be interested in the natives after arriving in Brazil for the first time.¹⁸ But he was certainly aware of the existence of such shows, and the above-quoted allusion to Barnum (in the letter to the lawyer Bartošek) dem-

17 For these common features of ethnographic shows, I relied on recent comprehensive monographs, such as Schwarz 2001; Ames 2008; Blanchard, Lemaire and Deroo 2012.

18 According to Frič, when seeing the Brazilian natives dying away, he reassessed his priorities. “I arrived to the conclusion that it is more important to study the life of free human tribes than plants and insects, as these peoples would soon die out, while the rest will remain” (Frič 1943, 2).

onstrates that he mentally compared his own public appearances to the opulent shows that had been touring Europe during this period. There were similarities and differences, some of which stemmed logically from the small scope of the show. Others could be explained by various reasons, some of which will be discussed below.

The basic similarity to *Völkerschauen* was of course the very character of Frič's public lectures—the display of a living human being from another continent, emphasizing the cultural differences between him and the onlookers. In this sense, the Czechs mimicked the dominant European discourse, or rather, via accentuating the “primitiveness” of the “Indian” as Other, they indirectly constructed their own belonging to Western civilization. Also, Frič was insistent that his productions were not entertaining but educational events, also in line with the big ethnographic shows. It is interesting that in the Czech lands, the ethnographic and anthropological community did not actively seek the shows in order to “study” the natives. The impresarios did accentuate the educative angle, but the Czech intellectuals apparently ignored the events, or saw them as a vulgar, popular pastime. Frič was thus rather innovative in his promotion of the show as a tool for intellectual elevation of the spectators. He had his personal reason for such an approach, not only seeking the scientists' approval and sanctification of his shows, as the Hagenbecks did (see Thode-Arora in this volume), but also striving to present himself as a leading representative of the new science of anthropology. In fact, the description of the performances as a “one-man show” is not altogether correct, as the two men complemented each other, Cherwish playing the “savage” while Frič assumed the role of “scientist.” The edifying angle facilitated the show's promotion among the middle classes and also justified the ethically somewhat questionable fact of removing the native from his homeland.

Moreover, Frič and the promoters of his performances mitigated the potential critique by accentuating the bonds of friendship between Frič and Cherwish. Their relationship was indeed peculiar, differing strongly from the more impersonal, business-like relations that were common in bigger performing troupes that employed the native performers via formal contracts (see Ulrikab 2005; Ames 2008). While in the advertisements of the lectures the “genuine Indian from America” often was not even given a name by the journalists, he was always presented as the “comrade” of a famous traveler, as “sincerely devoted to him,” as “red warrior” and as “son of an excel-

Figure 4.7. Snapshot of Cherwish during a visit to one of the small towns, late 1908. The photograph relates to the story of Cherwish enjoying the games in snow mentioned in one of Frič’s articles, but also foreshadows the sad return of the “Indian Gulliver” to his native village, where no one believed his narration of “walking across the [frozen] water.” *Pestrý týden*, November 27, 1943.

lent Indian chief” who “followed Mr. Frič all the way to Bohemia”—images similar to those of Leatherstocking and Chingachgook, Old Shatterhand and Winnetou, and other famous pairs in adventure novels. There was, in fact, one ethnographic show whose protagonist was ascribed similar intimate ties to the promoters—a show whose existence Frič was probably not aware of. The “last wild Indian of North America,” Ishi, spent the last years of his life between 1911 and 1916 in the Museum of Anthropology in San Francisco, performing on Sundays for visitors, demonstrating the North American Indians’ “primitive” lifestyle, rituals, and economic activities. Ishi’s stay in the museum was justified to the public by the fact that his life was saved (from starvation) and by his emotional attachment especially to the anthropologist Alfred Kroeber (Kroeber 1961).

In his effort to couple education with entertainment, Frič could not compete with the spectacular entertainment offered to the European public by the Hagenbeck family and others. But the shows containing dozens of participants, horses, elephants, bears, or other large animals, and complete “native villages,” needed infrastructural facilities (e.g., railroads) and great audiences to cover the expenses.¹⁹ Therefore, when touring the Czech lands,



19 For example, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show could only expect adequate financial gain in cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants (Čvančara and Čvančara 2017, 275).

they invariably stopped only in Prague or some other big city. But Frič and Cherwish visited small towns and performed in improvised settings. Frič later complained that this was precisely the result of the enmity of his competitors, who obliged him to retire to places “far from the railroad, without electricity, where no one wanted to come” (*Pestrý týden*, November 20, 1943). But Frič had thus been able to bring the exotic into peripheries. The active role of civic associations in organizing the lectures is also interesting. This is something not seen in cases of big, professionally organized ethnographic shows with itineraries firmly planned in advance by impresarios. Frič advertised, and the representatives of sports clubs and teachers’ and bank clerks’ professional associations contacted him and arranged the date of presentation and a fee, thus taking an active part in bringing the “Indian” into their midst. In a way, taking on the role of “conquistadors” themselves, for the moment. At least thirty such performances, some of them for several dozens, some for hundreds of spectators, took place between November 1908 and June 1909 in theaters, restaurants, sport halls, and schools.²⁰

After the lectures, the audience was encouraged to ask Cherwish questions, with Frič acting as translator (therefore maintaining his dominant role in the show). In spite of the fact—as Frič complained—that these questions mostly resorted to banalities, such as repeated queries as to whether the “Indian” was not cold and whether he liked the town he was at the moment visiting (*Pestrý týden*, February 12, 1944), this feature of the shows certainly must have given the inhabitants of the small cities the illusion of exploring for themselves the fabled mysteries of South America. As one of the journalists reported:

It is adorable to hear the impressions of Frič’s companion from Bohemia and Europe. For example, he wonders at our building of one village upon the other and not one village beside the other. By this he means the multistory houses. He did not want to believe that the trees lose their hair, that is, leaves, in the winter. The first snow gave to him the impression of salt and he wanted to collect it in a bag! It is interesting that among many Indian tribes in South America the woman chooses a man. If two women

20 For example, the organizers of Frič’s lecture in Tábor on April 2, 1909, reported the number of visitors at almost 500 (*Tábor [Tabor]*, March 5, 1909).

court one man, they decide the affair by duel while the groom looks on passively and even apathetically. Then he follows the victor as husband. . . . Also, in other ways the relation of man and woman is interesting. The woman has short hair, the man, long; man paints his face, while the woman does not. In short—a world in reverse. (*Duch času: Orgán strany sociálně-demokratické* [*Spirit of the Time: Organ of the Social Democratic Party*], April 21, 1909)

The spectators were forced to compare, to think of social customs and cultural traits that until the moment of meeting the “savage” probably seemed universal and were believed to have existed from time immemorial. In line with the standard anthropological shows, which necessarily exploited the already established clichés and stereotypes of the non-European Others, Cherwish mostly played the role of “Indian warrior.” For example, in Tábor, he “indicated a scene from warpath and the way they [his tribesmen] fight and also said several sentences in his language, which were explained to the audience by Frič” (*Tábor*, March 5, 1909).²¹ As has already been mentioned, the advertisements explicitly evoked the imagery of Karl May novels and appealed to the “adventurous spirit” of the youth (fig. 4.7):

The traveler will come to Prostějov in the company of his friend from the Great Chaco tribe. Parents, bring your children, so that they can find out at last that the peaceful Indians certainly do not yearn for their scalp, nor will they dig out the war tomahawk, but they will smoke with them the pipe of peace (at least in the picture). (*Hlas lidu* [*Voice of the People*], March 31, 1909)

It was common at the big ethnographic shows that the more formal parts of performances—the dances, singing, and rituals staged at set times before the audience—were usually followed up by a representation of “normal” life and even “informal” life, but these in fact were also staged as an interaction between the performers and the members of the public. Precisely this

21 Similarly, an advertisement for a lecture in Písek on April 15, 1909, stated: “The lecture would be the more interesting because Mr. Frič will take with him a young Indian from the Great Chaco tribe, whose task it would be to depict for our audience some customs, especially war customs, of his tribe” (*Otavan* [*From the Otava Region*], April 10, 1909).

active interaction was also characteristic for Cherwish and Frič. During the lectures, Cherwish was “moving freely through the audience” (*Pochodeň [Torch]*, December 11, 1908) and, in a sense, served as a live museum display, adding his own body and gestures to the light pictures, the artifacts Frič was spreading on side tables, and the narration of his “master.” Additionally, on his walks through the streets of Prague and his visits to bourgeois households, Cherwish was playing the “savage” that the audience was expected to see—belligerent but childishly innocent, surprised by the wonders of Western civilization (trains, multistory houses, electricity) but resisting being absorbed into and “spoilt” by its lures.

On occasion, Cherwish on the streets not only staged the role of living advertisement of Frič’s lectures but made his own shows and earned extra money by singing to passersby, who would sometimes throw money his way—allegedly, in imitation of beggars he had seen “earning” in this manner (*Pestrý týden*, October 2, 1943). It seems that on these occasions, he was trying to liberate himself temporarily from Frič’s patronage; but at the same time he was, consciously, submitting himself to the role of the performing “savage.” Frič strongly objected to Cherwish “shaming” himself by begging; it seems that Frič also considered these independent performances to shatter his own cautiously built image of scientist who was firmly in control of the object of his study.

Beyond being educational and entertaining, Frič’s lectures were also deeply, even though implicitly, political. By advertising the achievements of a Czech traveler visiting the “hitherto unknown” wilderness, discovering new peoples, bringing back priceless scientific treasures at great personal danger and exertion, and gaining success in academic circles both in Europe and in America, this show nurtured the nationalist pride of Frič’s fellow countrymen (*Světozor [Worldview]*, December 25, 1908; *Národní listy*, November 12, 1908). In this nationalist discourse, language had a central role. When Buffalo Bill was performing in Přerov (in Moravia) in 1906, the local daily complained that he addressed the audience in German, which was seen as “disdain” toward the majoritarian Czech population of that city (*Moravská orlice [Moravian Eagle]*, August 12, 1906; cf. Barabas in this volume).²² In

22 Charles Griffin, one of the participants in this particular tour, complained of this unnecessary linguistic sensitivity of Eastern Europeans. “We certainly had our troubles with interpreters. Some towns would be about equally divided between four or five nationalities, and, although they all understood German, the official language, each would insist on being addressed in his native language. We think we have a

contrast, it was remarked with great enthusiasm by the press that not only were the lectures of Frič given exclusively in Czech, but also Cherwish was soon able to understand this language, speak a few words, and sing a song (*Krakonoš* [*Spirit of Krkonoše Mountains*], March 13, 1909).

As I have already mentioned, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century also coming to the fore in the Czech lands was what Ulla Vuorela has termed (in the case of Finland) “colonial complicity”—the participation of a small nation without colonies in the hegemonic discourses (Vuorela 2009). One of the objectives of the ethnographic shows was to present the natives as trophies, proofs of the existence of faraway lands and the dominance of the white colonizer who subdued them. This was precisely the model of Frič’s shows. But in his case, in contrast to performances organized by the Hagenbecks or by William Cody, the “conquistador” was Czech, a first such case. Holub brought to Prague an African girl by the name of Bella, but she was never made to perform in public. On the contrary, Holub arranged for her education in “European” ways.²³

Unlike many other protagonists of ethnographic shows, Cherwish was not subject to medical examination. At least, we can state this if we disregard Frič’s assertion from the 1940s about the “unknown disease,” the number of “learned professors from several universities” examining the bleeds in Cherwish’s rectum, and his final purification by calomel because a medical student, “Mr. Novák,” wanted to study tropical parasites and asked the traveler and his companion for a “donation” (Frič in *Pestrý týden*, November 13, 1943).²⁴ But certainly there is no preserved documentation for these examinations. When Cherwish was approached by university professors or other intellectuals, it was mostly by those who boasted of their knowledge of Spanish and used

race problem in America, but it is more complicated and acute in Eastern Europe, and it is not a matter of color, either . . . Our first stand in the great German Empire was at Zittau, Saxony, August 15. For the three months preceding this date we had a multiplicity of languages to contend with—Hungarian, German, Slavonic, Romanian, Czech, Serbian, Polish, etc.—and it certainly seemed good to get into a country where a universal language was spoken” (Griffin 2010, 114).

23 On this and other non-Europeans in Prague in this period, see Rozhoň 2005, 192–93.

24 As was already mentioned, there is no documentation of any medical student or doctor dedicated to the research of intestinal parasites in Prague in the first decades of the twentieth century. However, the journal of Czech apothecaries brought in 1910 a series of articles by a certain Mr. Novák on the topic of medical substances used by American “Indians.” The author allegedly got the information from Frič (Novák 1910).

the opportunity to practice it with the stranger from overseas.²⁵ To this Frič remarked ironically that, in fact, the “Indian” did not speak Spanish—even though Cherwish himself thought that he did—but instead spoke the patois mixture of Spanish and Guaraní, the common tongue of the Gran Chaco region (*Pestrý týden*, October 30, 1943).



Figure 4.8. Photo of Cherwish, taken on the occasion of one of the first lectures of Frič outside Prague, in Domažlice, October 1908. Archive of the Frič family.

Still, the corporeality of the “wild” Chamacoco was studied by the public during lectures or informal interactions. Of all his bodily features, the greatest attention was provoked by his hair—which was black, shiny, and long. To wear long hair loose was at this time uncommon for both European women and men, and Cherwish’s hairstyle was mentioned in almost every text about him, be it newspaper article or memoirs written many years later. It started in Vienna, where reports from the Congress of Americanists commented that the exotic guest “alternately let his deep black silky-shiny hair hang down in strands or twisted in a knot at the back of his head” (*Neuigkeits-Welt-Blatt*, September 17, 1908). Czech reporters also alluded to long black hair as the most distinguishing characteristic of the “Indian,” the sight apparently being both appealing and repugnant (fig. 4.8). When remembering the visit of the “Indian” in the household of the famous painter Mikoláš Aleš, his daughter wrote:

At that time my sister’s little daughter was staying with us . . . Daddy introduced to her the honored guest, the Indian with hair to his shoulders, asking “how do you like him, Elinka?”—“Nice,” said she, but her chin was quivering with fear. (Svobodová-Alšová 1957, 70)

25 Such as a certain “Professor Sturm” in Vienna (*Neuigkeits-Welt-Blatt*, September 17, 1908) or Professor Antonín Pikhart, Czech writer and translator from Spanish and Catalan, considered to be the unofficial “consul of Spain” in Prague (*Národní listy*, December 21, 1909).

On the other hand, while at least one of the promotional photographs featured Cherwish with facial painting characteristics typical of the Chamacoco (*Jičínské noviny* [*Jičín Newspaper*], April 4, 1909),²⁶ these never provoked any comments or speculation.

Even more interesting is the fact that the perception of Cherwish’s body diverged from the standard image of the “*Völkerschau* savage” as potent, attractive seducer, object of fascination as well as menace to European women (cases of this attitude toward non-European performers are discussed in Herza 2016). Cherwish was described as “mild and tame” (*Krakonoš*, January 2, 1909). Also in Frič’s texts from the 1940s, the image imparted was not of uninhibited and uncontrollable masculinity, but rather of its opposite, the insuperable repugnance toward the female sex. According to Frič, European women—from the elderly Princess of Bavaria, famous traveler, patron of scientists, and president of honor of the Viennese Congress of Americanists, to the Prague bourgeois housewives, village maidens, or workers in Venetian glass factories—were genuinely attracted to the “Indian.” But the “savage” could not be persuaded:

His behavior was scandalous. When he could not communicate his feelings by speech, he did it by universally understood gestures . . . There were some medical students visiting me, who sought for the causes of this distaste. Was it an abnormality, a perversity? But there were no symptoms of such perversity. (*Pestrý týden*, January 22, 1944)

Finally, Frič was able to discover the reasons for the negative attitude. The “Indian” was disgusted and scared by the feather ornaments on the women’s hats. For Chamacocos, such ornaments were the privilege of shamans, and women could neither see nor touch them: “How could Cherwish shake hands with women who were violating publicly the most sacred taboo, on which depends the existence of the whole of mankind?! Religious prejudices sometimes push people into strange behavior” (*ibid.*). Only slowly did Cherwish’s antipathy wane, and after a time he allowed some girls to stroke his long hair or even, in Frič’s words, “condescended” to talk to them (*ibid.*).

26 For the specific facial painting of the Chamacoco, see Escobar 2007, 68.

Meeting the “Wild Indian”

That Cherwish became a local celebrity is documented by his staging during the carnival celebrations in Prague in February 1909. That year, the “carnival of artists,” which constituted the traditional apex of the social season in the capital of the Czech lands, was dedicated to the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the National Theater. Therefore, it was recommended to the participants of the carnival procession that they choose masks that would refer to the repertoire of the theater. However, the procession not only featured Carmen or Puss in Boots but also “the traveler Frič with his faithful Indian Mendozza [*sic*]” (*Národní listy*, February 24, 1909). It is not clear from the newspaper report whether the pair participated themselves—that is, in person—or if someone else had donned the masks. There is no other documentation save the one newspaper report. But two years later, Frič’s acquaintance Eduard Klaboch adverted, when writing to him in South America, that in January 1912 a ball would be organized in Prague. “Could you come with some Indian?” he asked.²⁷

On the other hand, toward the end of Cherwish’s stay in Prague an event occurred that showed that in spite of his popularity he was not untouchable. While traveling on a pleasure steamboat—alone, without the company of Frič or any of his friends—he was approached by three men, according to newspaper reports, “the brothers Douda, known rascals,” who pestered the “Indian” to talk to them. When Cherwish refused, at the moment of leaving the steamship he was attacked and beaten up (*Národní listy*, August 8, 1909). The Czech press denounced the “cruel deed” as a mere act of villainy, but the local German press in Prague and, later, also the Viennese newspapers immediately interpreted the incident within the frame of the nationalist struggles. It served the journalists as a stepping stone for ridiculing the Czech nationalists and their obsession with the language, and helped to depict them as brutal as well as stupid (as the attackers were unable to comprehend that an “Indian” from South America “naturally” could not understand Czech) (*Prager Tagblatt* [*Prague Daily*], August 9, 1909; *Montags-Review aus Böhmen* [*Monday’s Review from Bohemia*], August 9, 1909). Frič himself, in his article from the 1940s, narrated the same story, but left out the linguistic aspect,

27 Letter by Eduard (Klaboch) to Frič, Smíchov, November 16, 1911, ANpM, ar. Frič 1/4, s.n.

accentuating instead the racism of the attackers and, besides, attributing to the “Indian” a more active role in line with the image of a strong, untamed “savage” that he was consciously constructing. In Frič’s version of the steamship incident, Cherwish was called “ape,” a word in Czech he understood, having been similarly insulted previously. In response he attacked the men, throwing them into the river (*Pestrý svět* [*Colorful World*], February 26, 1944).

Amidst the general enthusiasm about seeing, touching, and studying a real “Indian,” there appeared also disapproving voices. Karel Horký, a progressive journalist, perceived the bringing of Cherwish to Prague as mere self-promotion by Frič, a sign of his narrow-mindedness, a manifestation of a strained effort by a small nation to be seen and heard. “Young sailors, when returning to their home village from a great overseas journey, usually bring proudly with them a parrot. Frič was walking an Indian around Prague” (*Stopa* [*Footprint*], vol. 3, no. 16, 1912–13). What all of this meant to the protagonist is difficult to ascertain. In contrast to preserved statements or observations of “savages” who visited Europe as actors in the ethnographic shows, there is no reliable record from Cherwish himself (for examples of non-European participants of the shows who left testimonies see Herbsmeier 1994; Gouaffo 2013; Ulrikab 2005). The character of the documents that have been preserved makes it difficult to ascertain his feelings and his agency. There are no traces of his effort to break through the stereotypes and the limitations he encountered.

Frič, as was already explained, was exploiting Cherwish in several ways, using him as an object of study, testing and exploring the “savage” mentality under extreme conditions, and observing how “civilized people” reacted to him. Through all of this Frič tried to find proof for his conviction that both the “savages” and the supposedly civilized people were burdened by the same prejudices and laughable customs but, in case of the civilized people, without the mitigating influence of the “wilderness” upon their characters. These prejudices could be uprooted only by positive science, of which Frič saw himself as a principal agent (Křížová 2018).

While cultivating the image of the original thinker, Frič was in fact following the classical literary tradition, which used the “primitive” as a dark mirror image of itself, but also put the critique of decadent civilization in the mouths of children, simple peasants, or barbarians, a priori liberated from all layers of culture and all social ties and compromises (Connelly 1995). Frič

depicted Cherwish as possessing “remarkable observation skills, unsullied by civilization. His smell and hearing were as acute as his ability to read in the faces of people their intentions, without being influenced by words” (*Pestrý týden*, February 26, 1944). As could be expected, the results were not flattering for the Europeans:

The teacher had changed into a pupil. Cherwish saw what I had long forgotten to see, pretense, hypocrisy, false morals, social prejudices. How ashamed was I, that our words are empty and in spite of sounding beautiful, mean nothing. (*Pestrý týden*, February 19, 1944)

Cherwish also assumed the role of moral and social critic in the writings of other authors, from progressive intellectuals who agitated against ladies’ corsets and over-decorated hairstyles (*Palacký: pokrokový list lidovýchovný pro východní Moravu* [*Palacký: The Progressive Journal for Popular Education in Eastern Moravia*], January 9, 1914), to Christian moralists calling for the return to the traditional social system, as was the case of the high-school professor and author of popular travel books Josef Kořenský. “Many savages can serve as an example to whites. Until today I feel the rebuke directed at us, boastful Europeans, by a certain Indian . . . brought by the traveler Vojtěch Frič from South America” (Kořenský 1912, 15). According to Kořenský, Cherwish once saw two women walking to a railroad station, one bent by age and laden with bags and bundles and the other young, with a springing step, and gaily dressed. Learning that the mother was accompanying her daughter to the railway station, he was astonished by this custom of white people and loudly expressed his opinion:

“My mother is also old and bent to the ground. Neither I nor my sister ever allowed that she carried our things and worked for us.” . . . Indeed, at that moment the raw savage could reprehend us rightly. “We savages are better people than you whites, who boast of Christ’s love to one’s neighbor and in vain recite the words: honor thy father and mother.” (Kořenský 1912, 15)

I have already mentioned the patronizing tone that the press used when referring to Cherwish; it was further accentuated by the nickname *Červíček*

(in Czech, “Little Worm,” an allusion to the pronunciation of his name in Czech) allegedly given to the “Indian” by a popular comic actor, Jindřich Mošna, and then used by many other authors, including Frič himself. The possessive pronoun “my”—“my Indian,” “my servant”—also appears consistently in Frič’s writings, mirroring the newspaper articles about the “Indian of Mr. Frič” (*Národní listy*, December 21, 1909) and the “servant, who is sincerely devoted to Mr. Frič” (*Jihočeské oblasť* [*Reports from Southern Bohemia*], February 20, 1908). When traveling to Europe and back, Frič slept in a first-class cabin, while Cherwish stayed below decks, coming out only to fetch the morning maté for his “master” (*Pestrý týden*, September 11, 1943). One of the most frequently reprinted promotional photographs for the lecture tour featured Frič in the pose of a colonizer, stretched in a hammock and smoking a pipe, while Cherwish, dressed in European clothes but with facial painting and loose hair that clearly marked him as “savage,” stands deferentially in the background (fig. 4.9). This photograph also featured a parrot, and the two often appeared in reports side by side as two specimens from America paraded in front of Czech audiences for their entertainment and education (*Jičínské noviny*, April 4, 1909).

Conclusion

At the beginning of August 1909, Frič and Cherwish went by train to Trieste, and then by boat via Venice to Buenos Aires. The whole journey was described in detail by Frič in a series of newspaper articles published with numerous photographs in the first part of 1910 in the popular illustrated weekly *Světozor*. A letter from Frič’s friend, Eduard Klaboch, dated December 1909, documents the fact that Cherwish was remembered in Prague. In a discussion of a different subject, Klaboch made a passing reference to the “Indian”:

What about Cherwish? Didn’t he get seasickness? . . . I entreat you to allow me to make several copies from the negative plate on which I am with Cherwish in Prague, the one you left behind. . . . NB. Please give my best regards and those of my brothers to Cherwish.²⁸

28 Letter by Eduard Klaboch to Frič, September 14, 1909, ANpM, ar. Frič 1/4, s.n.



Figure 4.9. Photograph of Vojtěch Frič and Cherwish taken in Frič's apartment on Náplavní Street, 1909, and used as a promotion for his lecture. The caption to the illustration says: "The famous traveler with his Indian Mendoza in his salon in Prague. Used to the tropical heats of South America, they warm themselves by the fire, together with a parrot that continuously reminds them of the far country." Note the painting on Cherwish's face. *Jičínské noviny*, April 4, 1909.

Cherwish's destiny upon returning to America is not very clear, as again the sources are fragmentary and contradictory. According to Frič's articles from the 1940s, the traveler fulfilled his promise and brought him directly back to Bahía Negra. However, sources from an earlier period indicate that Frič kept his "servant" during his subsequent journey through the Gran Chaco to Bolivia.²⁹ In another letter, from November 1911, Klaboch commented on one of the photos on display in a shopping window of the

29 In the first months of 1910 there appeared in Czech newspapers (erroneous) rumors of Frič being dead, killed in Bolivia. When the information arrived that Frič was alive, several newspapers published lengthy speculations about the source of the false news. One of the versions was that during the journey Frič "got into a dispute with his Indian servant who robbed him. The tribesmen of this Indian, who had before stayed with V. Frič in Prague, joined their compatriot and threatened the Czech traveler in such a way that he had to interrupt his journey" (*Národní politika*, July 14, 1910). In response to these rumors, Frič wrote a letter, which said "I consider it my duty to declare that that news is untrue of my Cherwish," without, however, explaining further (Frič to unknown addressee, Buenos Aires, August 6, 1910, ANpM, ar. Frič 3/2, no. 51).

Figure 4.10. Photograph from the exhibition of South American artifacts and costumes in the house of Frič in 1913, with Cherwish’s bust among the exhibits. Archive of the Náprstek Museum, fund Ar. Frič 8/4, s.n.

department store U Nováků. This store provided Frič with most of the necessities for this voyage; as a form of payment, Frič was sending back photographs and postcards that the shop owners put on display as advertisements. Klaboch wrote: “Why did you take a photo of Cherwish with a bottle in hand? He looks like a drunkard in that picture.”³⁰

I have already mentioned that Cherwish—according to Frič—received from the tribal elders detailed instructions to explore the secrets of the whites. During his stay, Cherwish was collecting souvenirs and artifacts (buttons, electric bulbs, etc.). Upon returning, Cherwish displayed his collections and organized for his tribesmen his own lectures, explaining the mechanisms of trains and electricity, describing the European winter, and singing songs he composed on various occasions. This is of course an extremely rare case of the protagonist of an ethnographic show turning things upside down, reversing the roles and becoming himself an impresario, who brought the bizarre customs and behaviors of Europeans to remote parts of the world. “His red brethren had a great laugh during his narrations, for example, about the harnesses of our ladies.³¹ He impersonated these ladies by stuffing a horse tail under his hair” (*Palacký: pokrokový list lidovýchovní pro východní Moravu*, January 9, 1914). However, we need to use caution in interpreting this episode from the life of Cherwish, as it was only reported by Frič himself, in line with his own self-justification (figs. 4.10 and 4.11).



³⁰ Letter by Eduard Klaboch to Frič, November 16, 1911, ANpM, ar. Frič 1/4, s.n.

³¹ With great probability, by “harnesses” the author meant corsets, at this time a favorite target of progressive intellectuals.



Figure 4.11. Frič with a bust of Cherwish, a work of the sculptor Vilím Amort. The photo was used on a leaflet promoting the exhibition of South American artifacts and costumes in the house of Frič in 1913. Archive of the Grassi Museum, fund Historischer Briefwechsel 1913, Nr. 12855.

According to Frič, Cherwish fared badly. In fact, the “Indian” had foreseen the danger, when he—after sliding joyfully on a frozen pond in northern Bohemia—suddenly burst into tears. “I will not be able to recount this at home. No one would believe me that I had walked on water, they would laugh at me” (*Pestrý týden*, November 27, 1943). And that was precisely what had happened. In spite of returning to the camp laden

with gifts, he was received with a mixture of fear and distrust that soon grew into antagonism. Finally, Cherwish was pronounced a liar and driven away from the tribe. Frič dwelt extensively on this sad ending of the great European voyage, describing in detail how the “savages,” blinded by superstition, had repudiated a traveler who was narrating the truth that, however, did not fit their traditional worldview. All this, in his own eyes, mirrored Frič’s own failure in making a breakthrough into the academic cohorts of Europe.

He was the first Chamacoco who not only had seen the sea, but was voyaging over it to the distant lands . . . Those who had visited the whites before him were telling lies—what they had heard from others, and these others had deceived them, because they had only seen the cities from the deck of the ship . . . I was also planning to correct the lies of those who had seen the lands I lived in just from the decks of the ships or from the hotel and the Baedeker. (*Pestrý týden*, November 27, 1943)

Frič did not succeed in defending his theories in front of the scientific community. The museum curators despised his choice of artifacts for dis-

Figure 4.12. Photo alleged to be Cherwish in old age, shown to Alice Růžičková and Martin Čihák in 1999. Personal archive of Alice Růžičková.

play, as they preferred different types of objects to respond to popular taste. His lectures were not generally approved of, allegedly because he did not “flatter” the audience by telling them what they already knew but tried to shake existing prejudices and myths (*Pestrý týden*, December 4, 1943). In the eyes of Frič, the cultured Europeans who would behave that way were neither wiser nor more open-minded than the “primitives” from Gran Chaco.

In 1999 two Czech documentarists, Alice Růžičková and Martin Čihák, set out for Gran Chaco to trace Frič’s travels. They interviewed some Chamacocos who claimed to remember an old member of the tribe named Mendoza and his travels in Europe with his white “friend.” They even asserted that after returning from his voyage Mendoza assumed the first name of the white man, so that he was thereafter known as “Alberto Mendoza.” Růžičková and Čihák even visited Cherwish’s grave in Puerto Diana³² (fig. 4.12). Mendoza is believed to have died childless in old age, sometime after World War II. A certain “old man Feliciano” mentioned that in his last years Cherwish enjoyed the reputation of a “man of the world.”



He was telling the most astonishing things, for example, that he had seen iron fly . . . The people had only seen (thrown) axes fly. Only later they believed him, when the planes started to come here.³³

32 Interview with Alice Růžičková, May 6, 2019. During this journey, the documentarists unexpectedly encountered Frič’s surviving daughter, Herminia.

33 This information was quoted by Yvonna Fričová, in her afterword to [Frič] 2011, 227–29.



Figure 4.13. Cherwish on stage, from the comic book by Lucie Lomová, *Divoši*, Prague 2011.

And Cherwish was also remembered by the Czechs. In spite of the frustration Frič felt at the end of his life, the traveler was in fact remembered within the Czech nationalist discourse, much in line with the image he himself tried to cultivate. Both his adventure books for children and his volume *Indians of South America* were repeatedly published. And as part of the tale of the scientist from a small nation in the center of Europe who went far and gained unique expertise in spite of the fact that his nation did not possess colonies, the popular tradition conserved also the side story of his “Indian” companion, a “wild” man clashing with civilization.

Several comic strips in children’s magazines in the 1980s and 1990s mentioned Cherwish, always in line with the story given by Frič in the 1940s.³⁴ Then Lucie Lomová in 2001 published a comic book with the title *Divoši* (*Savages*). While this author relied heavily on Frič’s version of Cherwish’s voyage and visually copied the promotional photographs, she allowed Cherwish a certain subversive agency, even though the protest is mostly mute (Lomová 2011) (fig. 4.13). In 2014 a theater show was performed, named after the book edition of Frič’s articles, *Cherwish, or from Pacheco to Pacheco by*

34 There is an episode from the series *Lovci zelených pokladů* (*Hunters for Green Treasures*), *ABC* 33 (1988–89), nos. 13–24, and from *Pán Jaguárů* (*Lord of Jaguars*), *ABC* 40–41 (1995–97), nos. 17–24, 1–26, both reprinted in Oldřich Dudek, Rudolf Baudis, and Jiří Petráček, *Golem a další komiksy* (*Golem and Other Comic Books*; Žalkovice, 2017), 125–59.

*Detour through Central Europe.*³⁵ The story of Cherwish thus continues to resonate in the Czech popular discourse, symbolically continuing the line of the 1908–9 shows. It seems to be responding to the deeply rooted colonial fantasies of the Czechs, who were and are striving to be on a par with major European nations, to assert at least symbolically their dominance in the world. Thus, they accepted and still accept the hegemonic discourses, albeit with a hint of sympathy for the “noble savage,” as he fit into the existing racialized, gendered, and/or sexualized stereotypes.

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CHAPTER
FIVE

Why Hidden Ears Matter: On Kalintsov's Samoyed Exhibition in Vienna, 1882

Evgeny Savitsky

Authentic Fictions

Going out for a walk on Easter Sunday 1882, Friedrich Müller, professor at the University of Vienna, noticed a huge poster on the street depicting human figures almost at full height. The poster reported that Samoyeds had arrived in Vienna from the shores of the Arctic Ocean with a real yurt and their deer, and that a Russian accompanied them. Samoyeds were to be seen at the Orpheum Theater in the Wasagasse—a theater that was very popular among the public in the cold half of the year (Müller 1886, 25). Looking at the poster, Müller suspected something was amiss. He recalled that not long ago in Vienna an advertisement was issued about a show of real Zulus,¹ whose arrival attracted great attention, but as soon became clear, these were not true Zulus but “the most harmless blacks” (Müller 1886, 25) from the Temne tribe (in what is now Sierra Leone), who had been taught while in Europe what should have looked like eerily wild Zulu dances. When the substitution of the Zulus was discovered, the police intervened and the organizers had to curtail their performance, taking it to other places.² So, looking at the posters with Samoyeds, Müller suspected yet another deception. Could someone really bring Samoyeds to Vienna? Maybe the public would actually be shown just Ostyaks?³

1 Müller does not give the precise date of this show. The Zulus attracted particular interest in Europe after they defeated British troops at Isandlwana in 1879. Many in Germany saw similarities between King Cetshwayo and the Germanic chieftain Arminius who fought against the Romans.

2 On real and fake exhibitions in Vienna at this time, see Schwarz 2001.

3 The words “Samoyeds” and “Ostyaks” were used in the nineteenth century by Russians to describe a wide range of very different ethnic groups. “Samoyeds” referred mainly to those speaking Samoyedic languages and living along the Arctic shores of Russia from the White Sea to the Laptev Sea, including the island Novaya Zemlya (Nenets, Enets, Ngasans, Selkups). Ostyaks referred to different ethnic groups (mainly Khanty and Kets) living to the east of the Ural Mountains in western Siberia, including some groups speaking Samoyedic languages like the Selkups, who were known as Ostyak-Samoyeds. It was not a very

Müller's doubts increased a couple of days later, when a friend of his who managed to visit the Orpheum informed him that the Samoyeds were sitting there on the stage around their tent at a decent distance from the public and that all attempts to ask them to come closer were unsuccessful. The huge Russian accompanying the Samoyeds answered all the requests with only a grin. Then Müller decided that he should go to the Orpheum himself and try to speak with Samoyeds in their language. Having met at the Imperial and Royal Court Library the journalist Johannes Meißner, who wrote for the *Deutsche Zeitung* (*German Newspaper*), Müller suggested that they go to the Orpheum together. So on April 13, 1882, in the afternoon, they entered the dimly lit hall of the theater, where in the middle around a yurt there were some fur-clad creatures fenced off from the audience by a special grill.⁴ As Müller wrote later (1886, 25), "I was determined to directly address these people in their native language," and if they understood it, to find out what dialect they spoke and which Samoyed tribe they came from.

Why was Müller so interested in the Samoyeds, much more than in the Siberian Ostyaks? As an orientalist and linguist Müller was actively involved in ethnographic research. In 1873 was published his *Allgemeine Ethnographie* (*General Ethnography*). In those years, he knew very little about Samoyeds, but in 1881, a year before the events described, the French *Revue d'Anthropologie* (*Anthropological Review*) published a book review by Edmond Vars concerned with the works of the Russian zoologists Anatoly Bogdanov and Nikolay Zograf (Vars 1881). On the eve of the anthropological exhibition in Moscow of 1879, Zograf made a trip to the north to collect anthropological and ethnographic material. He bought up samples of "folk culture," took measurements, and even secretly dug up and stole the remains of the dead. He reported his findings in letters to his senior col-

clear classification, and the situation is not much better now, as most of the ethnonyms of northern peoples currently in use are totally artificial creations of the Soviet national politics of the 1920s–30s. In some cases these ethnonyms were mainly accepted by the local population (as with the Nenets); sometimes they are still largely opposed (as with the Selkups). Accordingly, it is highly problematic to speak about these peoples in the nineteenth century or to use Soviet ethnographic works for understanding them, which had rather more of a performative than a descriptive function, binding some groups and separating others. As for Müller, it is not clear who he meant by "Ostyaks," but perhaps these were Khanty, who lived closer to the industrial centers of the Ural region, were sometimes allies of Russians against Others, and were considered to be more "developed" (Slezkine 1994; Golovnev 1999; Martin 2001).

4 It is not clear from Müller's description how tall the grill was—something like an animal cage or just a low fence.

league, Professor Bogdanov, who on the eve of the exhibition published a study of skulls brought by Zograf (Bogdanov 1879; on Bogdanov, Zograf, and anthropology in late imperial Russia see Mogilner 2013; see also Leskinen in this volume).

The works published by Zograf himself after returning from the exhibition contain curious details about both the life of the Samoyeds and the progress of research. For example, he reports,

that the Samoyeds eat up so much that they are often forced to roll on the ground for a better passage of food along the food routes; the stomach of a Samoyed, having just had lunch, around his circumference increases by tens of centimeters in comparison with the stomach of a hungry subject. (Zograf 1878, 8)⁵

Reading these lines today, we may shake our heads incredulously: How can it be that the stomach grew tens of centimeters at a time? But when Zograf tells us that during the making of a cast of a Samoyed's teeth, the Samoyed bit Zograf's finger painfully, then there seem to be no grounds for distrusting the researcher. Zograf thought that this kind of Samoyed resistance could be explained by a rumor circulated in connection with the measurements—that Samoyeds would now be called on for military service; Zograf's expedition took place only a couple of years after the military reform of Alexander II, when general conscription was introduced in Russia (1874, with exceptions for some categories of the population).

The Samoyeds' resistance sometimes made Zograf's expedition life-threatening:

On one of the nomad camps in the northern part of the Kanin Peninsula, the Samoyeds strongly refused my proposal to make measurements. When I began to persuade the eldest of the nomads to show others a good example and begin to measure, a young Samoyed with the most disgusting Russian curses jumped out of a nearby chum⁶ and ordered me to get

5 *Journey to the Samoyeds*, published a year earlier, deals only with the fact that Samoyeds have "huge and drooping stomachs" (Zograf 1877, 5).

6 Pronounced "choom"—a kind of tent, a temporary dwelling used by the Nenets and other Uralic peoples of the Russian North.

out of their camp as soon as possible, but only on foot and without luggage. To my answer that I am ready to leave, but only with luggage and on deer, the Samoyed doubled his curses and called on his comrades, numbering about six or seven, to carry out his demand. My requests to deliver me to the foreman were resolutely refused, and when I, out of patience, threatened him with punishment from the justice of the peace, I was told that I could not see more, “neither Russia, nor the justice.” When I saw another Samoyed approaching, I ordered him to help me to tie up the most violent one, who had already swung at me at once, but the Samoyed took the side of his comrades, and the furious man rolling up his sleeves headed towards me with a purpose that was far from pleasant. I took out a revolver and announced that I would shoot anyone who dared to attack me; the Samoyed was not embarrassed and took out from somewhere a flintlock gun, and God knows how this curious duel would have ended if it had not occurred to me to point out the five holes in the revolver and say that “my gun shoots five people at once”; this statement was supported by the clerk who accompanied me, who during the whole continuation of the scene was deprived of the opportunity to help me, since there were three Samoyeds standing near him and beating him on the first attempt to open his mouth. The Samoyeds dispersed and went off to a meeting somewhere. At night, the Samoyeds decided to migrate . . . (Zograf 1877, 13)

The resistance of the Samoyeds in Zograf’s description looks wild and irrational. The most actively resisting young man is defined as possessed by fury—Zograf even considers it right to tie him up. In the end, however, the tone of the story changes to ironic. Fierce resistance is opposed by witty fiction, which should amuse the reader. These and other entertaining stories, which abound in Zograf’s works, made the Samoyeds amazing “subjects” for visitors to the 1879 exhibition and readers of richly illustrated books specially published for its opening. It may be that for Müller the Samoyeds, being very dangerous, were as interesting as the warlike Zulus. It should also be noted that in Russian *Samoyeds* means “those who eat themselves,” which was often interpreted in the late nineteenth century as an indication of the cannibalism allegedly still practiced by these people.

Entering the Orpheum hall, Müller went to the very edge of the grill, behind which the Samoyeds sat, and loudly turned to the eldest of them.

“*Hasavanu?*” (“Are you Samoyed?”). “*Hasavadm!*” he answered; that is, “Yes, I am Samoyed.” Then the professor asked, “Do you speak Samoyed?” and the person confirmed that yes, he did. Upon learning that the Samoyed’s name was Wasko, Müller commanded, “Wasko, come closer!” and the “shaggy” Samoyed obeyed the command—he got down from the sled on which he was sitting and hobbled closer. As the Russian translator will later explain, Wasko had lost one leg and part of his fingers in a fight with a polar bear. “*Tolabar!*” (“Count!”), Müller then commanded, and Wasko began to obediently count: “*Nopoi, sidea, njahar, tjet, samljan . . .*” (Müller 1886, 25). It should be mentioned here that Zograf in his *Journey to the Samoyeds* noted precisely the inability of these people to count:

Samoyeds do not know how old they are; they generally count very badly, not one of them could tell me how many deer he has; the Samoyeds cannot even answer the question about the number of children, and they begin to list their names, even if there were only three of them. In Mezen I heard that during a visit to Arkhangelsk by His Imperial Highness the Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich several Samoyed families were introduced; to the questions of His Highness’s retinue about the size of the family, not a single Samoyed could answer immediately, while the order to line up according to family was executed extremely quickly. (Zograf 1877, 9)

Despite this, it is precisely the ability to count up to ten that finally convinces Müller of the authenticity of the Samoyeds. Thus, it turned out that, unlike the Zulus, the Samoyeds (fig. 5.1) were not false and that they belonged to the “tribe of Yuraks” (i.e., the Nenets).

Meißner, who after the visit to Orpheum described it in an article for the *Deutsche Zeitung* (1882, 1–2), reports that the show was organized by Russian merchant Alexei Feodorovitsch Kalinzoff, who in Arkhangelsk was joined by Mr. Raab from Pressburg (modern Bratislava) as an impresario. Müller describes the organizers in a slightly different way: when he spoke to the Samoyeds, two people approached him—“Mihailowitsch, a Russian, and Raab, a native of Pressburg,” who were the leaders of the “caravan.” Upon learning that the professor intends to question the Samoyeds for scientific purposes, Mihailowitsch and Raab call for an interpreter, “a



Figure 5.1. The two photographs taken at Georg Wassmuth's studio between late April and mid-June 1882, when the Samoyeds moved from the Orpheum Theater to the zoological garden in Vienna's Prater, follow the pattern of the usual bourgeois family portrait. Printed side by side in Josef Szombathy's anthropological report, they begin to represent a group of ethnic types in national winter clothes. Photos on the insert to Szombathy 1886, pl. III.

dense blond Russian," who turned out to be Aleksey Kalinzow—his name is also given in full by Müller; only surnames were used for Mihailowitsch and Raab. Müller reports that it was Kalintsov who managed to push the Samoyeds on a long trip across Europe, since he had been engaged in barter trading with them for many years—partly independently, partly on behalf of his older brother—had lived among them and perfectly learned the Samoyed language. Mihailowitsch and Raab communicate with the exhibited people only through him. Thus, in the description of Müller, Kalintsov looks like a “subcontractor,” having an important but not a dominant position in the caravan. Meißner, on the contrary, does not mention Mihailowitsch at all, and only briefly—Raab, paying all attention to the conversation with Kalintsov as the main manager. Later, in the winter of 1883, when the same Samoyeds, except for the deceased Wasko, were shown at the Leipzig zoo (fig. 5.2) and at the Swedish ice rink in the Berlin suburb of Spandau (“D.” 1883), the *Gartenlaube* (*The Garden Arbor*) magazine named only Kalintsov as the manager; the people who helped him in Austria-Hungary and Germany were not mentioned (“v. J.” 1883, 399). But later in July 1883, when



Figure 5.2. This drawing “from life,” made by Gustav Sundblad at the Leipzig zoo for the popular illustrated newspaper *Die Gartenlaube* in February 1883, shows only four Samoyeds—Wasko died in Prague on August 19, 1882, just few weeks after the Viennese photographs were taken. On the right, a pole with clothes hung on it seems to replace him. From “v. J.” 1883, 97.

the Samoyeds were exhibited in the zoological garden of Basel, the show was managed by the merchant L. Jurkiewitsch from Saint Petersburg. He was able to speak German but needed an interpreter to communicate with the Samoyeds.⁷ This interpreter seems to have been Kalintsov, again in the background, as he was in the Orpheum (Stachelin 1993, 35; Happel 2007, 175).

What Kalintsov reported about himself, apparently, corresponds to reality. In the Arkhangelsk province, the merchant family Kalintsovs (Kalintsevs or Kolintsovs in different spellings) was well known. Perhaps Alexey Fedorovich was the younger brother or son of the merchant Fedor Fedorovich Kalintsov from Mezen (a town to the northeast of Arkhangelsk, where several generations of Kalintsovs lived and continue to live even now).

7 This seems to indicate that the Samoyeds were unable to speak Russian. Also in Vienna it was Kalintsov who as an interpreter spoke for the exhibited people. But in Budapest the linguist József Budenz managed to interrogate Wasko in Russian. Together they checked Matthias Alexander Castren’s dictionary of the Samoyed language (Budenz 1891). Wasko also made for Budenz an oral translation into the Nenets language of several fables and literary tales (Budenz 1890, 83–84; Kontler 2020, 183).

Fedor Fedorovich Kalintsov was a second guild merchant (i.e., his business was worth at least 20,000 rubles) and owned a seagoing vessel. Both Fedor Fedorovich Kalintsov and Andrey Fedorovich Kalintsov (possibly brother to Alexey and brother or son to Fedor Fedorovich) had regular trade contacts with northern Norway,⁸ where in these years they could see recruiters seeking to hire Sami/Laplanders for ethnographic exhibitions and buying up ethnographic objects. Already in 1822 there was William Bullock's exhibition of Sami with reindeer and artifacts in London; in 1853 a "Lapland Giantess" was shown in Britain (Burnett 2017). Laplanders were also the first ethnic exhibition held in 1874–75 by the later famous Carl Hagenbeck, who arranged another Lapland exhibition in 1878–79.⁹ However, the growing demand for ethnographic objects could be seen directly in Arkhangelsk province. Zograf mentions that shortly before him a British expedition came to the Samoyeds. The visitors paid big money for objects of ethnographic interest and thereby "damaged the situation for future researchers." It is noteworthy that Zograf got to the Samoyeds precisely through Mezen, which served as the main transit point on the way to them. Also, it is in the vicinity of Mezen, in the Kuzmin Copse, that Zograf searched for good Samoyed skeletons to excavate for the 1879 exhibition in Moscow, following advice from a priest from Arkhangelsk.

The arrival of the British and then of Zograf apparently contributed to the elaboration of the Kalintsovs' commercial plan. It was not entirely new—during the whole of the nineteenth century, merchants from Arkhangelsk and Mezen brought Samoyeds to Saint Petersburg, where sleigh riding with deer on the frozen Neva was a popular winter recreation (Leskinen 2019; see also Leskinen in this volume). Samoyeds had also been used as a curiosity in Baroque court culture: on January 1, 1710, for example, Samoyeds with deer and in fur clothes took part in the festive procession in Moscow to celebrate the victory of Peter I in the battle of Poltava (1709). According to the Danish ambassador Just Juel, Samoyeds constituted the retinue of a comic king (the

8 Andrey Ruzhnikov has published a charter related to the Fedor Kalintsov trip to Norway in 1868 to buy salt (Ruzhnikov 2014, 227). According to Nikolay Okladnikov, in 1870 nine ships from Mezen visited Norway. In 1873, Russian exports to Norway from the port of Mezen were worth 4,677 rubles. This almost doubled in 1886. In the late 1870s, Fedor Kalintsov married his granddaughter to Solfest Gundersen, a merchant from Bergen (Okladnikov 2006).

9 In 1877–78, Hagenbeck also organized an "Eskimo" exhibition. The groups he showed included four to six adults, the same as Kalintsov's groups (Thode-Arora 1989, 168).

role was played by a Frenchman) alluding to the folly of Karl XII of Sweden, who tried to conquer Russia. A month later they participated in the funeral procession of the “Samoyedic king” (the same Frenchman), who died after too much drinking (Juel 1899, 118, 142–43).

But Kalintsov’s plan seems to have been different from what had gone before. Already in 1879, at the same time the anthropological exhibition was opened in the zoological garden to the west of Moscow city center, a group of Samoyeds was revealed. They arrived without deer and had to sit there as anthropological objects, as a living addition to the scientific presentation of their bodies and cultural artifacts in the city center, where only plaster-cast mannequins were to be seen. During his journey to the north, Zograf had liked to imagine how the Samoyeds would look as cast figures in the exhibition hall. He described his beautiful dreams in letters to Bogdanov (Zograf 1877, 12; on the aesthetics of ethnographic representation in imperial Russia see Vishlenkova 2011).

The group exhibited at Moscow zoo was led by the Samoyed Vasily Kanyukov, and it is highly likely that it was the same Kanyukov who later spoke with Müller in the Orpheum (Leskinen 2019). The composition of the group was also similar: as in Vienna, Kanyukov arrived with his wife and little son, accompanied by another young couple. The family name of this couple was Bobrikov, but we do not know the family name of the young couple in Vienna, so it is not possible to say if it was exactly the same group. Kanyukov in Moscow is said to have come from the Kanin Peninsula, while Kanyukov in Vienna was from the island of Varandey, about 750 kilometers to the east.¹⁰ Wasko’s wife had relatives on the island of Novaya Zemlya. These differences concerning place of origin can possibly be explained by the Samoyeds’ nomadic way of life—they stayed in different places on the tundra during the year. During his travels of 1877 Zograf measured several members of the Kanyukov and Bobrikov families, but Vasily was not among them (possibly due to his absent leg and fingers he was seen as not suitable for measurement). The Kanyukovs were measured at the Tarkhanov cape; the Bobrikovs (a young couple of the same age as in Moscow two years later),

10 Today there is the village of Varandey, which arose in 1935 as part of the forced transfer of the Nenets to a settled lifestyle. In 1993, all the inhabitants of the village were evacuated: according to one version of events, because the sea began to advance on the coast, and according to another, because the territory was made free for the oil terminal and port. Some residents subsequently returned.

at the Shoyna River (west coast of the Kanin Peninsula, to the northeast of Mezen) where they had been fishing. Like in Moscow, during the Kalintsov's tour in Europe, Samoyeds were made into passive objects of ethnographic curiosity to be looked at only from a distance. As far as is known, it was only in Berlin, where the Samoyeds performed in winter on the Swedish ice rink, that they competed with skating people on a reindeer sleigh.

In answer to Meißner's question of how he got the idea to bring Samoyeds to Europe, Kalintsov pretends to have invented everything himself. He said that he had been trading with them for a long time—selling “knives, hunting rifles, steel harpoons, colorful patches to decorate women's clothing and especially vodka,¹¹ a lot of vodka,” in exchange for seal fur, and then he thought that the Samoyeds themselves were amazing animals (*Wunderthiere*) and that it would be possible to put them into circulation quite well (*kaufmännisch zu verwerten*) (Meißner 1882). It is impossible to say with certainty whether this comparison was made by Kalintsov himself or whether the journalist Meißner invented it but, apparently, it reflects the general mood of the conversation. Meißner was further interested in how Kalintsov managed to persuade the Samoyeds to go on such a long journey with him, and he explained that the whole thing was due to vodka. Indeed, the journalist notes, the Samoyeds received a quarter of a liter of vodka three times a day. Also the anthropologist Josef Szombathy, who later measured these five Samoyeds, indicated that they received four to five liters of strong alcohol daily in the evening, which everyone drank, including a six-year-old boy. Usually they did not get drunk, but sometimes he saw them drunk completely. As noted by Zinaida Kupriyanova, who studied the Nenets folklore tradition, in their epic songs from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there is often

vivid realistic descriptions of how Russian merchants traveled along the tundra and, alcoholizing the Nenets, took away fur and deer from them

11 Here and on all other occasions Meißner refers to *zjerka*. According to him, *zjerka* was the same as *wutki*, and as an equivalent the Samoyeds received in Vienna *Kornbranntwein* (German vodka). I was unable to identify *zjerka* with any known drink; *wutki* seems to be vodka. Josef Szombathy mentions that in Vienna the Samoyeds drank *Kornbranntwein* mixed with rum. Rum was largely available in the Russian North due to legal and illegal imports from Norway. Maybe *zjerka* was an equivalent to the Russian *zhozhenka* (a kind of punch), a drink made out of rum with sugar, usually mixed with other alcoholic drinks. Meißner mentions that *zjerka* was sweet.

for almost nothing. The songs usually indicate the specific names of localities, settlements and rivers. Such songs usually end up with a young hero killing merchants and leaving for his native camp. (Kupriyanova 1965, 45)

Kalintsov reported to Meißner that he first persuaded Wasko and then the others agreed. For ten weeks they traveled by deer to Arkhangelsk, then another three months to Saint Petersburg. On the way, the Samoyeds slept, wrapping themselves in skins in twos. Vienna was not the first stop of the “caravan”—Samoyeds were shown along the way in Saint Petersburg (cf. Leskinen in this volume) and Warsaw, where they stayed several weeks, and also only shortly (four days) in Kraków. Then they would travel from Vienna to Budapest, where they would stay during July (Szamojéd 1882; Kontler 2020), and to Prague, where they would be in August 1882. From Austria-Hungary, Kalintsov’s “caravan” would later go to Germany and Switzerland¹² and from there to France. The latest traces of these Samoyeds can be dated to summer 1883, when they stayed in Basel (July) and Lyon (perhaps after Basel).¹³ Already in Vienna in April 1882 Kalintsov informed Meißner of his intention to spend the summer in France and England, but he obviously meant the summer of 1882, because Meißner said that Kalintsov’s tour with the Samoyeds was planned to be one year long. In reality it became longer than a year and France was not reached until summer 1883. This may mean that Meißner misunderstood Kalintsov, or it may indicate that Kalintsov in April 1882 had no precise plans for the summer months; perhaps decisions to move forward or to stay depended on revenues with no fixed program for the year. The fact that Kalintsov’s tour was much longer than expected could indicate that it was profitable.

Whose Voices?

Thanks to Meißner’s interview, there is an opportunity to hear, albeit indirectly, the organizer of this show, which is infrequent, with the exception of

12 There were exhibitions in Leipzig, Berlin, Poznań (Demski 2020), and other cities. It may be the same group with Curt Terne as an impresario that was shown in Wrocław (Czarnecka 2018).

13 In Lyon, as in Basel, they were exhibited together with an Australian. The exhibition took place at “cours Parrache.” Parrache was a workers’ district also known for prostitution. In Lyon measurements and photos of the Samoyeds were made again and a certain Monsieur Chantre advertised his show of images in the *Bulletin de la Société d’Anthropologie de Lyon* (Photographies 1883).

cases in which the organizers were large companies. Particularly poorly studied until now is the participation of Russian entrepreneurs in organizing such exhibitions, and their role in both the exhibitions' export to Europe and their import into Russia. In this regard, it is not yet possible to say if Kalintsov was a typical figure and whether the attitude toward exhibited people was different when the organizer was not Russian but, say, a Tatar merchant, as during the Somali exhibition in the Luna Park of Saint Petersburg in 1912.

Our insufficient knowledge of the organization of these exhibitions prevents us from answering the question of how such cultural practices would be treated today: if it was always an explicitly racist entertainment, a humiliation of human dignity, or, as was noted in some studies on European and North American exhibitions, if the exhibitions were very different in the quality of organization and ideological underpinning and cannot be considered all in the same way. The problem also is that in almost all cases we can rely only on the European view of the exhibitions; there are only rare testimonies from the other side.

Kalintsov, judging by his interviews and reports of Samoyed's alcoholizing, seems to correspond to the type of unscrupulous trafficker that, apparently, became involved in these shows, as in this case, with a modest budget. At the same time, the idea of the Samoyeds as being the same as animals that could be disposed of at will was apparently a kind of boast by Kalintsov, who took advantage of the fact that the Samoyeds could not refute his words. A number of indications in the texts, as well as photos of Samoyeds taken in Vienna for anthropological research, perhaps allow us to see this story from a somewhat different perspective.

Can the voices of the Samoyeds be heard? Müller seems to convey Wasko's direct speech when he forces him to answer questions and count to ten. Meißner, in his essay, not without a share of pathos, writes that the Samoyed Wasko, who was the first among the representatives of his people to have "descended to civilized Europe" from the shores of the "icy sea," was very surprised and could not help laughing when he heard Professor Müller address Wasko in his own language (Meißner 1882, 1). Although such a reaction looks humanly natural and believable, Meißner seems to be flattering his learned friend, whose knowledge of the Nenets language was supposedly so overwhelming for the native speaker. Whether Wasko really was laughing and what he thought is hard to say, but perhaps in his short conversation with

Müller there was a misunderstanding. When Müller asked “*Hasavanu?*” he meant nationality, but the word *hasava* in Nenets also means simply a male person, so that the affirmative “*Hasavadm*” of Wasko might not refer to him being Samoyed. Perhaps it was precisely the ambiguity of the question that served as the reason for Wasko’s laughter.

According to the official documents Wasko was Vasily Kanyukov; this is reported by anthropologist Heinrich (in Czech, Jindřich) Matiegka in an article on the exhumation of Kanyukov’s body for scientific purposes in 1893 (1893, 62–63). Wasko/Vasily Kanyukov would die in Prague on August 19, 1882, just a few months after talking with Müller at the Orpheum. Vasily was a surprisingly common Christian name among the Samoyeds. It even gave rise to racist jokes: when Emperor Nicholas II visited the pavilion of the Far North at the All-Russian Industrial and Artistic Exhibition in Nizhny Novgorod in 1896, at the entrance he was greeted by a Samoyed Vasily and the talking seal Vas’ka (diminutive from Vasily) in a barrel. The famous Russian painter Konstantin Korovin, who designed the pavilion, later recalled that Vasily (the Samoyed) and Vas’ka (the seal) slept together in the refrigerator (Korovin 2016, 399).

Besides Wasko’s answers to Müller, which may be interpreted in different ways, the only thing that we can hear directly from the Samoyeds seems to be their names, which upon closer examination turn out to be very interesting. The names can be found both in Meißner’s article and in Müller’s story; they are also printed under photos published as an appendix to Szombathy’s anthropological study of the Samoyeds (figs. 5.1, 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5).¹⁴ Names seem to indicate the evidence in the photos: “Here is Wasko with his wife Njeja and their little son Ortje, and here is a younger couple of Iderach and Pitiptija.” The anthropological gaze captured them, transforming them into the “ethnic types.” Names seem to be the only trace of individuality left to these scientific “objects” exposed to the camera. But as it turns out, that is exactly the question—whose names do we see here?

¹⁴ Müller says that photos were made by Szombathy in the atelier of Georg Wassmuth in Prater. Wassmuth specialized in individual and group portrait photography. It cannot be ruled out that the two photos in fig. 5.1 were produced not only for scientific but also for a commercial purpose (as was the case in Lyon). Postcards with ethnic types were popular at that time, but no existing postcard is known to confirm that Wassmuth sold them.

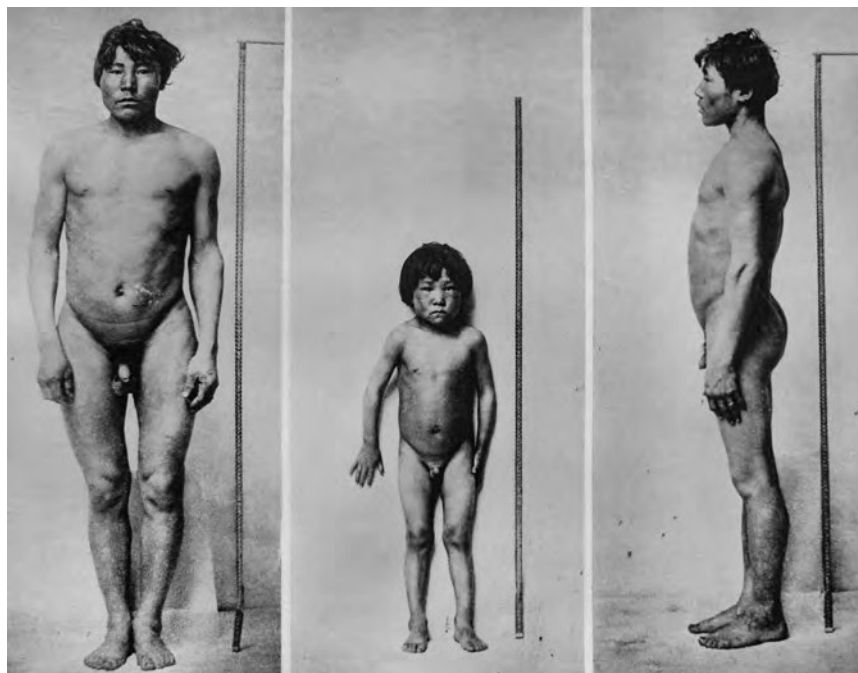


Figure 5.3. Although the merchant Kalintsov compared the Samoyeds with animals ready to do whatever he wanted for rum, Iderach was the only adult exhibited whose full-length photograph Josef Szombathy could take. Little Ortje looks frightened and rests his right hand on a wall that has been made invisible to make the people on display look like isolated scientific objects. Photos on the insert to Szombathy 1886, pl. IV.

Wasko seems to be a variant of Vasily, from which the Russian diminutive form Vas'ka derives, where *a* can be replaced with *o* in the typically northern Russian pronunciation. But Ortje, the name of Wasko's little son, is neither Russian nor Nenets; it is Finnish. This name is even now very common in Karelia, to the west of Arkhangelsk province, and also among the Finnish-speaking Komi living to the south of the Nenets people in what is now the Komi Republic of the Russian Federation. Later the Austrian anthropologist Matiegka (1893) noted the difference between Wasko's skull and the skulls of other members of the group, as well as compared with other Samoyed skulls stored in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. It is possible that the anthropologically different Wasko, whose son has a Finnish name, was of mixed origin or wasn't a Samoyed at all, although the conversation with him convinced Müller of the Samoyeds' authenticity. But not



Figure 5.4. The front and profile photographs of Iderach and Piriptija seem to show these people completely delivered to the powerful anthropologist’s gaze. The bashful blush mentioned by Josef Szombathy can be seen on Piriptija’s cheeks. Photos on the insert to Szombathy 1886, pl. V.



Figure 5.5. Wasko and his wife and son are depicted here, like Iderach and Piriptija, up to the waist. It is noteworthy that their partial representation corresponds to the incompleteness of the data on their bodies below the waist in the table of measurements compiled by Josef Szombathy. Photos on the insert to Szombathy 1886, pl. VI.

only Ortje has a “wrong” name. Iderach also has no correspondence in the Nenets language, but in Komi there is a word *idoera*, meaning neat, tidy, or housekeeping. So, of the three men exhibited in Vienna as Samoyeds, none had a Nenets name.

Even more interesting is female anthroponymy. The young girl is called Piriptija, and regarding this we have correspondence in the Nenets language. The word *piribtya* means . . . a young girl! So this may have been another misunderstanding—the young girl, when asked who she was, may have answered that she was a young girl. But she named herself so (or was named by Kalintsov) not only in Vienna. Njeje, the name of Wasko’s wife, generally means aunt (*neya* in modern Nenets), but it can also be a denomination for a range of other kinship relationships (Kupriyanova 1954, 167). What seems to be particularly relevant in our case is that a husband calls his wife *neya*, while a wife calls her husband *vesako*. *Vesako* can also generally mean (old) man;

sometimes it can be used to be synonymous with *hasava*. With *vesako* we get another possible explanation for the name Wasko, which seems to be not quite a name, like *hasava* is not quite a nationality. Later, after Wasko died, the group was joined by two more people (this also shows that Kalintsov had continuous support from Russia). The newcomers were Hada (grandmother in Nenets) and a young boy, Otzke (again, a Finnish name).

This strange situation with “names” might be explained by twentieth-century ethnography: Nenets people preferred not to reveal their true names to foreigners; they used instead either Russian or Finnish names or degrees of kinship/social status—this seems to be the case with Njeje, Piriptija, and Hada. This does not exclude the possibility that Kalintsov in reality showed Komi husbands with Nenets wives—in the region around the island Varandey the population at that time was mixed. In fact, all Samoyeds being (at least formally) Christians had to have Russian names (there was no religious freedom for Samoyeds in Russia). When a child was born to Piriptija in Berlin in 1883 he was baptized in a Russian church (“D.” 1883) and accordingly received a Christian name. All Samoyeds measured by Zograf had full Russian names with first name, patronymic, and family name (Zograf 1878). Obviously, the people shown by Kalintsov, being abroad, preferred not to use Russian names unless at official occasions. It may have corresponded well to Kalintsov’s marketing strategy, as indigenous names are more suitable for the image of the northern “wilds.” But at least for females we do not have their true indigenous names.

Available sources do not allow us to tell whether Professor Müller and other visitors of the exhibition were duped again, as they had been with the Zulus. This use of names contradicts the expectations of nineteenth-century nationalism concerning the relationship of language and national identity. Müller expected that through language true nationality would be exposed, but this kind of questioning does not seem to be quite appropriate when confronted with the complex cultural realities of the Far North. One may also wonder whether we have here a kind of tradition of name concealing, as is described in twentieth-century Russian anthropological research, or if it is applicable to speak here about what Homi Bhabha called “colonial mimicry,” becoming not quite visible against a background, in the double sense of “against”: with and counter to (Bhabha 1984; about “subversive mimicry” during ethnic exhibitions see Schär 2015, 122–23).

When we now look again at the photos, which first seemed to be just another example of scientific objectification, inscriptions of “names” begin to indicate something different from before: something is hidden here, and hidden so well that Austrian anthropologists could not even ask about it. There is no complete scientific evidence in the photos any more; they are not just a surface, they seem to have a hidden interior.

But researchers in Vienna did not just take photos, they also wanted to make measurements, and what they obtained allows us again to see a little more and a little less at the same time. Müller’s story about visiting the Orpheum serves as a preface to the publication of an anthropological study carried out by his younger colleague, Josef Szombathy, mentioned above, an archaeologist and anthropologist working at the Museum of Natural History, nowadays best known as the person who found the Willendorf Venus. The measurements were carried out some time after Müller’s first visit, when the Samoyeds with the onset of warm weather had already moved from the Orpheum, where they were shown April 9–26, to the zoo in Prater (Müller 1886, 25), where they stayed until mid-June.

Szombathy sought to record everything that may be of anthropological interest. He noted that Samoyeds, like Europeans, tend to blush—this was revealed when Piriptija was stripped for examination. Her face in the photo looks angry, with lowered corners of the lips and frowning eyebrows. In the profile photo, it is as if one could even distinguish the blush mentioned by Szombathy. However, it is difficult to judge emotions confidently from a photo. Much less ambiguous evidence may be the view of the final measurement table, containing a surprising number of dashes, meaning no data (figs. 5.6 and 5.7). Szombathy could take all measurements with only one person, Iderach, whose name is the first in the table. This corresponds to the fact that there are also photos of Iderach dressed, as well as naked, waist up and head to toe.

The next column in the table describes Wasko, who allowed researchers to make almost all measurements of the head except for the ears (four dashes appear here). In addition to the head, Wasko allowed researchers to measure the width of the shoulders but in the remaining thirty-five lines of the table relating to his body are dashes. It is noteworthy that Szombathy also could not take a full-length photo of a stripped Wasko; there is only his image from the waist up.

Maass-Tabelle.

		Mensch	Wasko	Piriptija	Njeje	Orje	Anmerkung
Geschlecht		♂	♂	♀	♀	♂	
Alter (beiläufig)		20	54	17	45	6	
Kopfmaasse:		mm	mm	mm	mm	mm	
1	Horizontaler Umfang	545	550	550	556	493	
2	Grösste Länge (von der Glabella zur Protob. occip. ext.)	174	179	171	168	161	
3	Grösste Breite	151	153	154	155	135	
4	Ohrbreite (unmittelbar über der Mitte des mast. audit. ext.)	127	135	136	—	128	
5	Ohrhöhe (Differenz der Maasse Nr. 14 und 15)	122	—	113	—	—	
6	Jochbreite	142	140	137	134	115	
7	Gesichtshöhe (von der Sut. naso-front. zum Kinn)	118	126	109	113	88	
8	Nasenhöhe	48	54	41	46	35	
9	Obere Nasenbreite (Abstand der inneren Augenwinkel)	36	34	36	35	31	
10	Untere Nasenbreite	39	41	34	38	32	
11	Mundbreite	51	54	43	55	37½	
12	Unterkieferbreite	107	105	104	112	89	
13	Höhe der Ohrmuschel	56	—	58	—	—	
Indices:							
	Breite: Länge	86,8	85,5	90,0	92,2	88,9	
	Ohrhöhe: Länge	70,1	—	66,0	—	—	
	Ohrhöhe: Breite	80,8	—	73,3	—	—	
	Ohrbreite: Breite	84,0	88,2	88,2	—	94,8	
	Gesichtshöhe: Jochbreite	88,1	90,0	79,6	84,3	76,5	
	Untere Nasenbreite: Nasenhöhe	84,6	75,9	82,9	82,6	91,4	
Körpermaasse:		mm	mm	mm	mm	mm	
14	Körperhöhe	1513	—	1480	1429	1016	
15	Gebörgang (oberer Rand)	1391	—	1367	—	—	
16	Schulterhöhe	1282	—	1232	—	—	senkrechte Entfernung vom Boden
17	Brustbein (oberer Rand des Mannbrium etc.)	1245	—	1210	—	—	
18	Nabel	900	—	—	—	—	
19	Schambeinsymphyse (oberer Rand)	752	—	—	—	460	
20	Oberkörperhöhe (Differenz von 14 und 19)	761	—	—	—	576	
21	Schulterumfang	1010	—	830	—	—	
22	Schulterbreite	394	340	346	310	—	
23	Brustumfang	890	—	800	—	—	
24	Umfang der Taille	780	—	750	—	—	
25	Hüftbreite	305	—	—	—	—	
Indices:							
	Oberkörper	50,3	—	—	—	54,7	
	Unterkörper	49,7	—	—	—	45,3	
	Brustumfang	58,8	—	54,1	—	—	
	Schulterbreite	38,0	—	33,4	21,7	—	
	Schulterbreite: Hüftbreite	129,2	—	—	—	—	

Mittheilungen d. Anthrop. Gesellschaft. in Wien. Bd. XVI. 1896.

Figure 5.6. The measurement table shows a lot of gaps, indicating that it was not possible for Josef Szombathy and his assistant Franz Heger to obtain a number of data. The quantity of gaps in the columns differs, and perhaps this allows us to see the different perceptions of measurements by the exhibited people, depending on their age, gender, and attitude to different parts of their bodies. Only the heads were measured almost completely, with the exception of ears in the family of Wasko. Table of measurements from Szombathy 1886, 33.

Here we can see again that photos that seemed to be the embodiment of an omnipotent objectivizing gaze of an anthropologist turn out to be only partial representations of bodies whose frames are negotiated with those who are photographed. Among the photos taken, there are no full-length images of the stripped Piriptija and Njeje, and this again finds a correspon-

Why Hidden Ears Matter

		Iderach	Wasko	Piriptija	Njeje	Ortje	Anmerkung
	Extremitäten:	mm	mm	mm	mm	mm	
16	Schulterhöhe	1282	—	1232	—	—	Höhe über dem Boden
26	Fingerspitze	565	—	518	—	370	
27	Länge der oberen Extremität (16—26)	717	—	719	—	—	
28	Oberarmlänge	276	—	280	—	—	
29	Unterarmlänge	260	—	255	—	—	
30	Handlänge	170	—	165	—	—	
31	Oberarmumfang	265	—	245	—	—	
32	Grosser Trochanter (oberer Rand)	801	—	—	—	—	Höhe über dem Boden
33	Kniegelenk	423	—	410	—	—	
34	Aeusserer Knöchel	50	—	47	—	—	
35	Oberschenkel-Länge	378	—	—	—	—	
36	Unterschenkel-Länge	378	—	383	—	—	
37	Fusslänge	230	—	225	—	160	
38	Oberschenkelumfang	520	—	—	—	—	
39	Wadenumfang	330	—	335	—	—	
40	Knöchelumfang	206	—	235	—	—	
	Indices:						
	Oberer Extremität	47.4	—	48.6	—	—	
	Untere Extremität	52.9	—	—	—	—	

Figure 5.7. The continuation of the table shows the complete lack of data on Wasko and Njeje and only two measurements for Ortje: the length of the legs and the distance from the floor to the fingertips. These data could have been obtained not by measuring from life, but from the photograph in fig. 5.3. In the Piriptija's column the data on greater trochanter as well as on thigh length and circumference are missing. Josef Szombathy wrote about a "suspicious dislike" of the measurements (*misstrauische Abneigung*) by the Samoyeds. Table of measurements from Szombathy 1886, 34.

dence in the table, the numbers and dashes in which are distributed, however, differently than in the columns relating to Iderach and Wasko.

Piriptija, like Iderach, was apparently more open to being measured; she allows her head to be completely measured, including the ears. Szombathy also measures her shoulders and chest, but there is no data in the table for the hips; eleven measurements were not obtained. Njeje, like Wasko, allows Szombathy to measure the head only without ears and the width of the shoulders. Unlike Wasko, she allowed her overall growth to be measured. Ortje, like Iderach, was photographed stripped completely (he looks unhappy and scared, but rather curious, on the waist-up photo); however, his column in the measurement table is also incomplete. Obviously, the possibility of taking measurements was determined by the parents. There were no measurements of the ears, but a couple of other measurements were made: the distance from the floor to the fingertips and even the size of the pubic bone. The column corresponding to Ortje has thirty-one dashes. Neither his photo nor the photos of Wasko and Njeje allow a complete view of the ears, while the ears of Iderach and Piriptija are fully visible.

Samoyeds resisting measurements being made in Vienna seem to act in the same way as those who did not allow Zograf to measure them on the Kanin Peninsula. The fact that they were away from their home camps did not detract from their determination to keep the scientists from touching some parts of the body or making them an object of the image—and no strong alcohol could break this resistance.¹⁵ But not everyone is resisting: Iderach allows himself to be measured completely. Szombathy even reports on the color of the hair between his legs; he did not have such information about any of the other Samoyeds. Piriptija is embarrassed to demonstrate her hips, but in the rest she allows the researcher to measure her, including ears that were untouchable for the older couple. Thus, there are individual differences between Samoyeds related to gender and age.

The approximate age of the Samoyeds is indicated in the table of measurements: Iderach, twenty years; Wasko, fifty-four years;¹⁶ Piriptija, seventeen years; Njeja, forty-five years; and Ortje, six years. Meißner, who visited the Samoyeds a few weeks before Szombathy, indicates that Iderach is aged nineteen; Piriptija, seventeen; Njeje, forty; and Ortje, six. About a year later, the same Samoyeds, except for the deceased Wasko (he died at the age of sixty, according to Matiegka [1893]), were examined by Julius Kollmann, professor of anatomy at the University of Basel, during the exhibition in that city. His data on the age of the Samoyeds were Njeje, *c.* forty-five years; her son Ortje, seven years; Piriptija, *c.* sixteen years; Iderach, *c.* thirty years

15 Ethnological research has not offered a satisfactory explanation of why some body parts had to be hidden from the camera and were not measured. In the classical work *Nentsy* by Ludmila Khomich (1966) and even in the great post-Soviet compendium *Peoples of Western Siberia*, there are simply no chapters on the perception of the body. The body is treated only as an objective physiological reality (with measurements of skulls, etc.). The situation has changed in recent years, as can be seen from Viktoria Spodina's book (2017), which offers an overview of the perception of different body parts by the Samoyedic and Ugric peoples according to recent research; but even by Spodina there is nothing on the Nenets beliefs concerning ears. Another Samoyedic people, the Selkups, believed that "looking into the ear you can see a different world, penetrate some secret" (Spodina 2017, 146). That is why shamans used the ear as a channel of communication with the other world. For some Ugric peoples, making photos was related to taking possession of someone's skin, which can later be used by another person. This can also lead to illness and even death (Spodina 2017, 78). This can hardly serve as a reliable explanation for Samoyed resistance in 1882. One may even question whether ethnological explanation should be sought here or, as Frantz Fanon wrote, whether it introduces unnecessary exoticization of non-Europeans where, perhaps, common human feelings of shame, selfhood, dignity, and so forth can be seen (1952, 78–80). Fanon also warned against isolating ethnological research from the context of the colonial situation, which is still the case in the Spodina's work (2017, 76).

16 In 1879 in Moscow Vasily Kanyukov was reportedly sixty-five years old.

(Kollmann 1884, 599–600). Absent from this list is Piriptija's baby born in Berlin in winter 1882–83. Apparently, the Samoyeds could not say exactly how old they were or they determined their age based on their ideas of time, which caused significant discrepancies. The differences were, however, not only in the indications of age. Kollmann, who took measurements in 1883, was able to quickly publish them the very next year, but Szombathy's publication was delayed for some reason until 1886, and the Vienna anthropologist was embarrassed to note that there were discrepancies between his measurements of bodies and those of his Basel counterpart that could not be explained by the passing of a year (Szombathy 1886, 27).

Allegoric Ambiguity

The Samoyeds elude an unambiguous definition not only as living people but also as allegories into which they turn in the texts of German authors. Here we need to look at the specific context into which both Samoyeds and the merchant Kalintsov were inscribed in Vienna in 1882. On the one hand, we can say that the Samoyeds are included in what James Clifford described as an ethnographic allegory of salvation (1986, 98–121). The need for research is justified for Austrian scientists by humanistic considerations: according to Meißner, Samoyeds living in vast spaces along the coast of the Arctic Sea are an endangered nation. There are only sixteen or, according to other sources, 11,000 left of them. Moreover, their language is unique, quite distinctive, and not related to any other “North Asian” languages belonging to the Ural-Altai family. Meißner notes that, according to Professor Müller, it is incorrect to classify the Samoyed language as among the general North Asian group; Uralic, Altai, and Samoyedic languages are three different groups. Thus, the study of Samoyeds was extremely important for answering the question of whether the Ural-Altai family existed. Here the subject of research (a person) has value to the extent that it turns out to be a supplier of valuable resources—in this case, linguistic knowledge. The extinction of the Samoyeds is presented as a natural process to which weak, degenerating peoples are exposed, without regard to the specific historical conditions of the existence of the Nenets in the Russian Empire. In the nineteenth century, Russian colonization drove the Samoyeds farther north, into areas less and less suitable for human habitation, and attempts at resistance, such as

the uprising of Vauli Piettom in the 1830s, could not change this general tendency. Before the extinction of the Samoyeds, the European linguist researcher turns out to be a cultural hero who saves the language from disappearance, fixes it for science, while Samoyeds are unable to do so themselves. At the same time, however, important for Müller is not so much the cultural heritage of the Samoyeds in itself as clarifying the mutual relationship of language families—filling in blank spots on the linguistic map of the world.

On the other hand, the contrasts between wild and cultural, healthy and degenerate turn out to be unstable, and reversible, and this is very well shown by Meißner's text. It is already remarkable that if Müller and Szombathy are primarily interested in Samoyeds, then Meißner is no less occupied by the figure of a large bearded merchant, Kalintsov. This Russian also represents a certain degree of savagery, albeit different than that of the Samoyeds. Mentioning that the Samoyeds arrived from the island of Varandey, Meißner notes that these people do not actually have a homeland, since they are nomads. Even in the summer, fleeing from insects, Samoyeds strive to live where it is colder, and so they have been living for centuries in wild places where no culture could develop. Unlike the Siberian Ostyaks, the Samoyeds could not even create religion for themselves; they have neither shamans nor healers (cf. Sántha in this volume). They have no culinary art, either; they eat everything raw, which "disgusts even their Russian neighbors" (Meißner 1882, 1). Thus, through an ambiguous contrast, the Russians find themselves inscribed in the general joyless picture of northern savagery together with the Samoyeds.

Further, however, in Meißner's reasoning there is an amazing turn: in his opinion, many will temper their self-conceit when they learn that Samoyeds live in Europe and, thus, are Europeans. Meißner does not stop at this challenge to the cultural hierarchy and goes even farther: although the Yuraks, as he writes, have no religion, sometimes they make idols and give them the blood of deer to drink; however, they do not really count on supernatural help because the sky is too great to take care of the problems of individuals. In this regard, Meißner observes, Samoyeds are more perspicacious than many Europeans. It should be noted here that the *Deutsche Zeitung*, in which Meißner published his "natural science feuilleton," expressed the views of secular German nationalists. It is for them that the Samoyeds, who do not rely too much on heaven, are more perspicacious than German Catholics,

who still rely on ancient religious universalism and supranational Habsburg legitimism. It is noteworthy that only two materials were posted on the front page of the newspaper—the beginning of the feuilleton about the Samoyed exhibition and an editorial above it about the resignation from parliament by Baron von Walterskirchen, in protest against the loss by Austrian politics of its national German character. The editorial criticizes the baron for thinking mainly about Germans in the Alpine regions, believing that the interests of those living in Bohemia and Moravia are secondary. The article refers to language concessions made in the early 1880s by the Taaffe government, which needed the support of Czech deputies. The concessions threatened the position of non-Czech-speaking German officials. Thus, the general racist stereotypes in the Meißner text take on more specific meaning related to a concrete political situation, the threat that the Germans may lose in the fight against other peoples of the Habsburg Empire.

It is noteworthy that the images of the Far North in the same years could have had in Austria-Hungary completely different connotations. In 1873–74, the famous expedition of Karl Weiprecht and Julius Payer visited the Arctic, discovering Franz Josef Land. Forced to abandon their ice-wrecked ship, Payer and Weiprecht were able to withdraw their expedition almost at full strength and were received triumphantly at home. After a heavy defeat in the war with Prussia and the territorial concessions to Italy, after a forced division of the country into Austrian and Hungarian parts followed by demands for equality from other nationalities, readers who followed the news of the Payer–Weiprecht expedition could again feel themselves part of a single great power. Representatives of different nations of the empire took part in the expedition and they, working together and together suffering hardship, were able to win, to survive in difficult conditions, to make new lands known to mankind (Schimanski and Spring 2015). Thus, the Samoyed exhibition arrived in Vienna during a time when the Far North was already meaningful as a political allegory, which Meißner tried to turn in the opposite, nationalist, direction.

The ambiguity of Meißner's representation of the Samoyeds also manifests itself in the way he characterizes the Samoyed women. Speaking about them in general, the German journalist calls them “the weak-willed working animals of their husbands,” but observing the two women who arrived in Vienna, Meißner remarks that “It seems that both our Yurak ladies have

gained some independence. Just a few things seem to indicate their subordinate position” (1882, 1). Thus, the discrepancy between Meißner’s stereotype of Samoyed women being like animals and the actual behavior of Piriptija and Njeje creates the desire to fit them back into the framework of this stereotype, and this turns the two women into a model of European emancipation, about which Meißner, of course, is also ironic, turning “savages” into feminists and feminists into “savages.”

One could not attach importance to this circulation of images—an ordinary journalistic trick—if behind it were not the same difficulties in defining the exhibited people that scientific anthropologists also encountered. Are these emancipated Samoyed women real savages? What language is needed to speak to them? Paradoxically, the authenticity of the exhibited people is manifested not so much in what is shown as in various forms of evasion: in incomplete photos, in unnamed names, in the inviolability of certain parts of the body.

In July, the Samoyeds went to Budapest and then to other cities, but this did not give rest to Austrian anthropologists. The exhumation of Wasko’s body ten years later, and the replacement of the inadequate earlier descriptions with analysis of the dead and fully accessible body, was the last attempt to break through, finally, to anthropological authenticity. Matiegka (1893, 63), who made the new measurements, had to admit, however, that the Samoyeds’ skulls exhibit great variety, apparently resulting from the mixing of Finnish and Mongolian elements. And so it seemed hardly possible to reduce them to some particular type.

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Why Hidden Ears Matter

PRESS

Deutsche Zeitung [German Newspaper], April 14, 1882.

Gartenlaube [The Garden Arbor], no. 6, 1883.

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Vasárnapi újság [Sunday Newspaper], July 9, 1882.

PART
TWO



**Performing
the Ethnographic Other**

CHAPTER
SIX

The (Ethno-)Drama of Exoticism: Ethnic Shows as a Medium

Dągnostaw Demski

One man's life is another man's spectacle.
(Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 47)

Every piece of scientific knowledge, every innovation in medical technology, every paradigm in anthropology wins acceptance and gains currency in part because it is informed by a meta-narrative—a hidden story which is, in effect, the story which the group who bestows this acceptance wants to hear about itself.

(Jackson 1996, 40; emphasis added)

My encounter with the phenomenon of acting out in the ethnographical context occurred during my field research in India, where for several days I participated in ceremonies of the Bhil tribe close to Udaipur (in the southern part of Rajasthan in India) in September and October 1986. Groups of dancers and performers “formed” a stage in the outskirts of small towns or villages and for more than ten hours acted out dances, stories divided into separate episodes featuring actors—tribe members dressed up in characteristic outfits. In each of the dramatized episodes a different person played the main part, including, among others, tutelary deities or local tribal heroes. There were also scenes of sacrifice, eloping, battles with the British, hunts, scenes imitating animals, and other scenes from everyday life depicting rituals and activities that were crucial for survival.

The majority of staged episodes constituted a type of narrative, a story in which music, dance, or a different movement dynamic stood out. The creation of a scene was initiated when a spear was inserted into the ground, then a group of tribal musicians gathered around the spear, at the very center of the provisional stage. A circular space was delineated around the group, within which



Figure 6.1. Gauri Dance of Bhils. Photo by Dagnosław Demski, 1986.

various episodes were being acted out. Outside the circle, the audience, consisting mainly of women and children of the tribe, was gathered, alongside a small number of Others. The audience not only watched but also participated in the episodes. Characters of this tribal drama were built through appropriate behaviours of the actors and through costumes, songs, and gestures.

The last day of the forty-day-long ceremonies known as Gauri Dance was the climax, and the greatest spectacle played out at the outskirts of Udaipur. The event constituted part of the yearly calendar of the ritual celebrations of the Bhil tribe and an element of its internal culture; hence, the event was perceived by

the “native eye.” The spectacle was performed in an open space. For this reason and also because of its color, dynamics, and unique character the event gradually attracted increasing interest among people from outside the tribe. For a field researcher it provided an example of “people in action.” With time, mobility, and tourism development, such types of tribal ritual ceremonies evolved into public performances and became a local event combining the intrinsic tradition meaningful for the Bhil community with growing external interest; therefore, it needed to be staged for broader audiences (fig. 6.1). Tribal drama acted out on a stage on the outskirts of Udaipur won new currency as exoticism in the eyes of a tourist audience.

The phenomenon of staging is a broad concept widely covered in specialist literature (see e.g., Bennett 2004; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; MacAloon 1984; Pradier 2012; Schechner 1985; Turner and Bruner 2011). It pertains both to exhibiting institutions such as museums and theaters and to tradi-

tional ritual forms—what I mean in this case is forms removed from the old context and presented in a new one. Such a procedure has consequences for both the form and the content. Thus a problem emerges, which constitutes the main subject of this chapter.¹ The problem is connected with analyzing a situation in which elements originating from one culture are presented in the context of a different culture (MacCannell 1973; Urry 2007). A similar mechanism operates in this case both in relation to a group and in relation to an individual—“The life of one individual becomes a spectacle for another” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 47)—and also operates in the case of elements of an unknown and distant culture. In a sense, what we are dealing with constitutes a universal question present in different locations and historical periods; however, differences appear in both the content and in the forms.

The issue may be analyzed from the perspective of a drama and performance. This approach is similar to a dramaturgical model proposed by Erving Goffman and stressed in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (2011). It has also some connections with drama and ritual (Turner 1974). Richard Schechner (1985), in turn, creatively explored the borderland of theater and anthropology, suggesting that we approach performance as *restored behavior*. He was interested in the intersection of the native tradition and the theater tradition.

If we analyze the problem from the position of the presented group and the context of the presentation (site and historical period) then we may examine different interesting categories such as authenticity or kind of participation. However, three notions emerge and deserve attention in the context of this chapter especially—stage, drama, and exoticism.

In the present article I refer to ethnic shows as performance because, as Schechner suggested:

The difference between performing myself—acting out of a dream, reexperiencing a childhood trauma, showing you what I did yesterday—and more formal “presentations of Self” [Goffman 2011]—is a difference of

1 Research for this study was carried out as a part of the project “Staged Otherness: Human Oddities in Central Europe, 1850–1939” (project no. 2015/19/B/HS3/02143) granted by the National Science Center, Poland.

degree, not kind. There is also a continuum linking the ways of presenting the Self to the ways of presenting Others: acting in dramas, dances and rituals. (Schechner 1985, 37)

Ethnic shows popular in and outside of Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been thoroughly researched in academic literature (e.g., Abbattista 2015; Ames 2008; Blanchard et al. 2008; Dreesbach 2005; Lindfors 1999; Morosetti 2017; Thode-Arora 1989). Particular emphasis has been placed on aspects related to racism, colonialism, and the exploitation of non-European people in the context of ethnic shows. Relatively few authors have so far analyzed this cultural phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe; however, the amount of research in this field has risen significantly in recent years (e.g., Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020; Czarnecka 2018, 2019, 2020; Demski 2018a, 2018b, 2019, 2020; Herza 2016; Novikova 2013; Tomicki 1992).

I focus on the presence of the non-European Other in the space of Eastern European cities. This perspective delineates my field of research. In this chapter I intend to examine ethnic shows from a perspective that, as far as I know, has not yet been subjected to in-depth analysis. I assume ethnic shows constituted a form of cultural intersection, and therefore I consider how the original “exotic” cultures and exhibitionary tradition became *enfleshed* (Schechner 1985) in the ethnic shows.

Ethnic shows are a secular type of cultural performance that was common in cities (or even “civilized cities”) during a time of modernization. In effect, ethnic shows were a medium through which a certain type of communication with the audience occurred, communication that was typical of that period. This medium served as a source of mass entertainment, although it also enabled the transfer of specific knowledge. If we look at the ethnic shows as a medium, one ought to emphasize that the shows took place on a literal stage and a symbolic stage simultaneously. The symbolic stage included actors, audience, and place. Ethnic shows were also subject to the rules of dramaturgy similar to other performances including theater plays.

In a symbolic sense, the stage became a peculiar exhibitionary arena. It was not a fixed space. Stages were often placed in vacant urban spaces, away from main streets, such as zoological gardens, pastures, riverbanks, or squares outside city gates on which circus tents were pitched. On the

other hand, there were also garden theaters, cabarets, or variétés located inside city centers. Space was becoming an important element of the scenography and, just like other elements, it constituted an integral part of the spectacle to be dramatized. In this chapter I take into consideration basic elements of the spectacle, including space, time, focus, symbol, contrast, mood, and tension, in order to demonstrate how the effect I refer to as the “drama of exoticism” was created. My sources are primarily press articles and archival materials originating from the Polish territories under partition (Prussian, Austrian, and Russian) and created between the 1870s and the 1920s. Polish- and German-language announcements and press advertisements come from Poznań (Ger. Posen), Wrocław (Ger. Breslau), Gdańsk (Ger. Danzig), Warsaw, Kraków, and Lviv.

Due to the specificity of a phenomenon connected with the movement of specific “exotic” groups in cities across Europe I am fully aware that this chapter is more a multilocal study of performance groups than a study of the reception of ethnic shows in specific cities. However, the press provided descriptions of current events that, in one way or another, mattered from the perspective of the local communities and referred directly to what was going on. I analyze excerpts from the press regarding ethnic shows using concepts such as “drama,” “exoticism,” and “stage.” I consider these crucial for presenting ethnic shows as a type of medium characteristic of the era. The use of these notions, moreover, enables me to demonstrate certain differences between ethnic shows and other similar forms, such as variétés, circuses, minstrels as ethnic parodies, and garden theaters, which are forms of entertainment.

Ethnic Shows as Modern “Exhibitionary Arena”

Ethnic shows as a form of mass entertainment gained popularity during a period characterized by a prolific presence of different types of spectacles and shows in European cities. What distinguished ethnic shows from other forms of spectacles was the fact that the actors originated from distant parts of the world and were the representatives of foreign cultures. In this sense, initially, the actors were more important than the content of the shows; it was the actors’ authenticity that mattered and not their artistic qualities or their proficiency. The space in which the shows took place was of secondary

importance; however, it still mattered to an extent—even though it constituted an element of some specific urban space, a “three-dimensional” scenography that was created for the show’s duration and reflected the presented reality. One might then wonder whether some kind of “artificial” reality was being created, like in the theater, or, perhaps, whether it was an attempt to maintain authenticity, and, if that were the case, how this was achieved.

The phenomenon described by Tony Bennett as the “exhibitionary complex” emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century as a consequence of modernization, urbanization, and a growing demand for displaying and exhibiting.

The institutions comprising [the exhibitionary complex] were involved in the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas, where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power (but of different type) throughout society. (Bennett 2004, 118)

According to Bennett (2004, 119), the exhibitionary complex should be understood as the “ordering [of] objects for public inspection and [the] ordering [of a] public that is inspected.” That pertains to the institutional articulations of power and knowledge relations in sites of development and the circulation of various types of knowledge. The exhibitionary complex was closely tied to the ethnic shows, among others. Consequently, questions emerge as to what type of knowledge was generated by this exhibitionary form and the presence of authentic Others on stage and the representations they created and as to what type of message was intended for audiences.

The stage was a significant component of ethnic shows, which suggested the recreation of reality and, consequently, the “delineation/detachment” of a fragment of reality. When describing the “exhibitionary area,” Bennett distinguishes two essential aspects of exhibiting: 1) the topic developed in a specific discourse and 2) the selection process, owing to which constructing a detached fragment of presented reality is possible.

Bennett’s considerations relate mainly to museums, but ethnic shows belong to the same category of the exhibitionary complex. Both ethnic

shows and museums present basic similarities but also significant differences. They came into being as part of the modernization process (Demski 2020). Below, I discuss the case of museums in more detail, and in the following section I elaborate elements of dramatization, which brought about a clear contrast between museum representations and ethnic shows. The presentation of themes by the “ethnographic actors” was an opportunity for the inhabitants of the European cities in which these shows were held to “distance themselves” from the remote realities. Regarding “distancing,” I refer the reader to David Giddens, who referred to modernity as “experiences influenced by processes which have been increasingly removed from the local . . . Distancing has been a fundamental experience of modernity” (cited in Walsh 2002, 26).

Distancing worked on different levels. In another context, the selection of elements (objects, people, etc.) was examined by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998, 2). When analyzing exhibiting strategies, she, among others in museums, drew attention to the fact that what is exhibited is only a fragment of the original reality, “detached, segmented and carried away” (1998, 2), and “for this reason, exhibitions displayed the objects or people . . . they are also exhibits of those who make them.”

The emergence of the museum was part of the experience of modernity, akin to developments in science and technology, urbanization, and consequent changes in the experience of time and space. Thus the museum can be considered either an ideological tool that reinforced conceptions of order, time, and progress or a tool of emancipation whereby the representation of other places and other times opened people’s eyes to a world different than their own and thus helped them to maintain a sense of place and to make connections with those processes that had influenced their current position in the order of things. In this context a certain analogy between museum shows and ethnic shows is possible, as both forms belonged to the so-called exhibitionary services, situated between mass entertainment and knowledge production.

Ethnic shows differed from the museum shows primarily in their form. Still, however, from the point of view of the production of knowledge, ethnic shows presented the same order of things as museums and similar institutions of the era. What actually distinguished museums and ethnic shows was the fact that, due to their live format, ethnic shows represented some-

thing between the new look from a distance and the ever-present need of direct experience. The “ethnographic actors,” though they were authentic and had their individual stories, were becoming representations, while the performances, arranged in episodes, constituted cultural representations. Due to their live format, ethnic shows constituted a form of distancing as they presented fragments of culture through objects, the objects’ creators, their movements, their gestures, their music, and their motion pictures. In museums, distancing resulted from removing objects from their original context and placing them in display cases where they became elements of a given exhibition and its message (detached from their original context, and primary function). In live shows, “strips of activities” (Goffman 2011, 10)—representations of the object, cut from the ongoing stream of activities—were being reconstructed and presented, and finally, they acquired a life of their own (they became a part of the stage context). A new stage entity was then being constructed through drawing attention to the selected elements (pieces, strips). In both cases, elements were “cut out” and placed in a new context, which gave them a new “life” and message. In the case of ethnic shows it was through the elements of dramaturgy that the “strips of activities” evolved into something different than they originally were.

In this sense, there was a shift from exhibitionary forms offered by museums toward theater forms, although both functioned simultaneously, and the emergence of shows did not diminish the role of museums. Performance on stage qualifies as a category of exhibiting, even though the space in which ethnic shows took place was different from the museum space. In the shows, like in museums (ethnographic collections), ethnographic points of reference were used. The difference between these two forms consisted in the techniques of exhibiting and participation.

The museum object preserves its authenticity, understood as coming from a given culture, but it has been removed and detached from its context. Analogously, in the ethnic shows, the “actors” played out elements of their culture and preserved authenticity, but the place was changed—the “stage” functioned in a completely different cultural context.

Arguably, in the context of ethnic shows the experience of authenticity was evoked in the audience through the group’s presentation of its skills and customs and sometimes through processing past actions, behaviors, and so forth. The key factor consisted in the presence of the actors originating from

and embedded in a different culture, which was expressed not only through their external appearance but also, or maybe above all, through their gestures, their movements, the sound of their voices, and the ways in which they occupied space. Fundamentally, it was about the body in its entire complexity and, additionally, the body on stage. This kind of experience was not provided by museums, where artifacts appeared, including human bones or dead bodies accompanied by a scientific description. Therefore, the difference between the body displayed on stage and the body inscribed into scientific explanations appears essential. These two demonstrated separate orders, which were sometimes combined—for example, during popular lectures in anthropology (see Křížová in this volume). During ethnic shows audiences could see not only artifacts but also authentic Others and their animals. Additionally, on occasion after the departure of the “exotic” visitors their artifacts became included in local museum collections and their animals remained in local zoological gardens. This is exactly what happened in 1888 when the Sinhalese left some of their animals in the zoological garden in Warsaw:

Yesterday the last Perra-Herra parade took place in the zoological garden . . . As of today it is left only with two exotic individuals, namely the horse-sized ox and the horse which makes the stalwart Gayerre look like a foal. Both of these freaks of nature were placed in separate pavilions, on the left, behind the playground. (*Kurier Codzienny* [*Daily Courier*], September 21, 1888)

The exhibitionary complex created not only exoticism, but most of all knowledge.

The Reality of the Spectacle and Its Features

Tony Bennett’s notion of the exhibitionary complex focuses on the relationship between knowledge and power or, to be more specific, the techniques of exhibiting that become entangled in the new forms of “spectacle” through generating a particular type of knowledge. Below I examine the type of knowledge generated by ethnic shows understood as a form of spectacle—it should be emphasized at this point that each spectacle is connected to different audiences.

One of the most significant qualities of ethnic shows was the fact that they were live shows. *Living images* grew in popularity in the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century. A living image or *tableau vivant* was a reconstruction of an artwork (a painting or sculpture) created by people who used their posture, clothing, and props to represent a given scene.

The reality of the spectacle is connected, on the one hand, with theatrical forms and, on the other, with religious rituals with the presence of the so-called collective body. According to Jean-Marie Pradier (2012, 338–39), the collective body may arise not only in theaters, where it connects actors and the audience, but also during rituals or military actions. According to Pradier, who drew from Schechner's and Eugenio Barba's works, theater-related emotions are not evoked by an interaction with the invisible, as is the case with religious ceremonies like those of the Bhil, but by the story that, before it has been absorbed, is deconstructed by the actors in front of the audience. Eric Rothenbuhler (2003), while considering ritual communication, analyzed spectacles from the point of view of actors and spectators. Starting from the findings of these above-mentioned authors, I investigate how the relation of actors and viewers is created and what happens between them—whether it is through watching only, through participating, or through something else.

When examining the evolution of theater, Pradier emphasized the presence of characters made from the playwright's thoughts on stage and the fact that they tend to become less interesting for the spectators than the actual humans that bring them to life. Pradier continues this line of reasoning by pointing to the location of the actors and viewers in the broader context or order. According to Pradier (2012, 163), “a symbolic, sensory and affective concept of spacetime is created, which permeates the whole body of a given culture.” The collective body is formed through various kinds of participation in specific moments and consists of the actors and the audience, but also the space. In ethnic shows the dramatic elements served the purpose of connecting the actors with the audience.

In this sense, a city of which the ethnic show stage has become a part—with its political, historical, and social context—became a wider specific space-time. Therefore, differences appeared in descriptions concerning ethnic shows organized in different Polish cities (usually multilingual places)

located on territories under three partitions. Space-time, though, is constructed by people and their actions. In the case of ethnic shows, depending on the city, or rather the specific space-time, a spectator could become an explorer, a traveler, an ethnographer, or a colonizer.

Before I go on to discuss the dramatization techniques used in ethnic shows, a few words about contemporary ethnodrama will be added, which in my opinion can be considered an extension of the idea of historical ethnic shows.

Ethnodrama as Medium

It is a fundamental assumption of this chapter that ethnic shows constituted a specific medium, but what exactly was the specificity of this medium? Moreover, the chapter is concerned with defining exactly what the message of the ethnic shows, how the message was communicated to audiences, in which context it was able to emerge, and at what point it started to lose significance.

The notion of the medium involves at least several meanings. Firstly, the medium may be understood as a means of communication—in this context, ethnic shows were a way of communicating information about distant cultures. However, ethnic shows also communicated information about the attitude of the “ethnographic actors” toward publicly displayed fragments of their culture detached from their original context. Secondly, the medium is “something in a middle position”—ethnic shows were a peculiar “intermediary” between the inhabitants of European cities and the colonies, the remote lands. Thirdly, the medium may be understood to be a mode of expression, a way of expressing something—in this context, ethnic shows told specific stories, using, for example, the medium of dance (cf. Czarnecka in this volume).

If we consider the third meaning, the main themes of ethnic shows revolved around foreign cultures, with all the “actors” representing non-European people. Performances of this type revealed an exotic character from the point of view of the inhabitants of the European cities. Ethnic shows may therefore be defined as a “drama of exoticism” (fig. 6.2).

Drama is a series of events involving a conflict of forces, and a type of performed narrative used to stir the emotional reactions of the audience.

The conclusion arising from these assumptions is that dramatic elements facilitate the mutual interactions of spectators and actors, and therefore, by using specific means, dramatic elements enhance active participation in the spectacle. Obviously, the “drama of exoticism” includes the notion of exoticism, which also conveys different meanings. It may pertain to the quality of being unusual and exciting because it involves something coming from far away, possessing both aesthetic and ontological value, while using it to uncover a significant cultural otherness.²

Performing exoticism on stage involves style, behavior, costumes, and gestures. Spectacles qualified as “ethnic” functioned within a specific set of frames: emphasizing affiliation to a specific culture happened at the expense of focusing attention on the actors’ individuality. In this context, ethnic shows resembled an early genre of ethnodrama, still present on stage, even if the first is considered ethically problematic, while the second is not.

Ethnodrama is “the practice of dramatizing the data by creating a script of significant selections from interviews, field notes, journal entries and print or media artifacts and performing it as a play.”³ Ethnic shows presented in the form of exotic villages that appeared at the end of the nineteenth century may be considered the prototype of ethnodrama. And finally an eth-

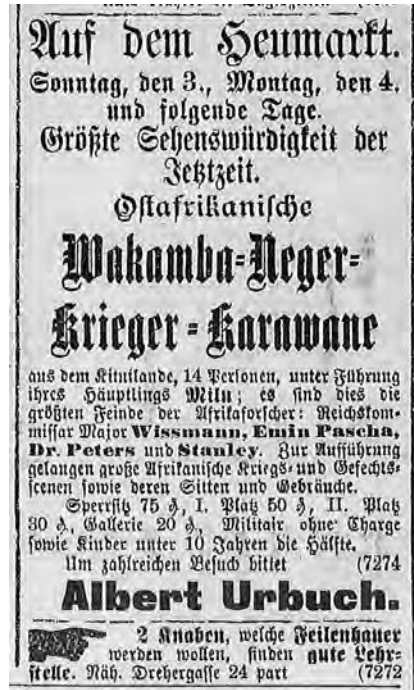


Figure 6.2. Wakamba Neger Karawane. A press announcement from Gdańsk, 1894. *Danziger Zeitung*, August 3, 1894.

2 The exoticism emerged in the West history in the era of expanding territorially, and was defined through orientalism (Said 1978), discussed as enhanced via traveling objects (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998), critically examined as intercultural performance (Fusco 1994), and won attention as a postcolonial clash between dominant and subaltern cultures (Bhabha 1994).

3 <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/dancing-with-the-data/44827>.

nodrama is, roughly speaking, the dramatization of data. It is theater that is made out of research, often conducted in the form of interviews but also including primary sources such as journal entries, field notes, and media artifacts. Johnny Saldaña calls it “reality theatre,” the ultimate goal of which is understanding (as cited in Derr 2017).

As Holly Derr (2017) concludes, “Ethnodrama insists, even in a post-modern world, that the truth is out there, and that a theatricalization of the systematic collection of data can reveal it.” Contemporary ethnodrama qualifies as a form of theater; however, the difference between theater and ethnodrama is that in the former the exciting part of life is presented, while in ethnodrama data concerning the foreign culture and its representatives are dramatized. According to Saldaña (1998, 184–85), the final effect of ethnodrama pertains to “a participant’s and/or researcher’s combination of meaningful life vignettes, significant insights, and epiphanies. This process generates the material from which the structure and content—its plot and story line—are constructed.”

Ethnic shows belong to the category of spectacles which, apart from their entertainment value, existed to enable a public to “understand” a different culture (in accordance with the local imagination, of course). Nevertheless, one ought to stress that this understanding occurred by means of scientific categories typical for that era—for example, there were ethnic shows during which two or more ethnic groups were compared to inform viewers about the superiority of one race relative to another (e.g., the shows in Poznań and Wrocław zoo in 1914 of tribes of the Nile Valley; see Demski 2018a; Czarnecka 2018).

Ethnic shows may be considered to be prototypes of the later forms. Initially, ethnic shows adhered to the rule of “data speaks for itself.” This approach evolved with time. The “exotic” visitors performed without detailed instructions. An exception to this was the more elaborate “greetings to the sovereign” formula (as seen for example in the Zulu shows in Poznań and Wrocław). The question emerges as to who in the case of ethnic shows—the impresario or the “ethnographic actors”—formulated the message, and what was intended to be communicated? Perhaps the differences in messages appeared when the “exotic” Others stepped into the role of “ethnographic actors.”

As well as the phenomena of distancing and selecting described above, the ethnic shows had other specific characteristics as a medium. The following

elements were significant: a) retelling, b) maintaining, c) editing. *Retelling* refers to talking about a certain image of reality. *Maintaining* stands for preserving this image and a narrative about it. *Editing* means adapting and arranging materials “from life” that pertain to the foreign culture for the needs of the spectacle and in the course of its creation. In this sense the materials used do not need to be from the playwright’s thinking process.

In the case of ethnic shows, two fundamental elements should be acknowledged: a) the theme—namely, ethnography as a form of message about a culture, or, to be more precise, cultures—and b) the forms of shows, including exhibition, circus, and native village. When it comes to “ethnography,” the participants of the shows presented a more or less specified program within which historical episodes, everyday activities, and scenes from social and cultural life were portrayed. No fictional characters appeared in the shows—only characters who represented themselves as stereotypical types. Importantly, “ethnography” itself was not the topic; during each show a specific subject researched through ethnography was presented. As particular anthropological types were played out during the shows, nonverbal cues served to demonstrate traits typical for a given group (e.g., king, chief, warrior).

From a spectacle-analysis perspective, what all ethnic shows had in common was undoubtedly their ethnodramatic character, primarily as the dramatization of data about foreign cultures and their representatives, although they also served to highlight colonial expansion, and celebrate Western superiority and modern progress.

Techniques of Exhibiting and the Dramatic Effect

Drama comprises specific activities and techniques used by the actor or the organizer of a spectacle that are applied to evoke a desired dramatic effect in the viewer. This means that there exists a set of rules that the participants of the spectacle (i.e., the actors and the audience) should be acquainted with. These rules as a social action were defined by the context. Through these rules a clear message can be created with reference to the characters on stage as well as to their actions. In principle, all ethnic shows adhered to the same rules, yet they could be unique mainly due to the origins of the “exotic” actors and the content of the spectacles.

Ethnic shows were a convention within which there functioned ethnographic points of reference and nonverbal techniques (generally, in theater the latter can be just as important as words in shaping the meaning and effects of a performance). It is difficult to state whether the ethnic shows had a single characteristic structure, but undoubtedly, equivalents of acts and scenes could be found in them. The shows were originally structured as detached episodes (each of which presented different scenes from the life of a given group); gradually, organizers started combining episodes into more elaborate plots. Each episode could tell a different story; however, in order for a message to reach the audience, the content of each story had to be “recognized” by the audience. This is why the content of the performed episodes was often described directly in press advertisements and posters: for example, with respect to the shows of Zulus in Poznań zoological garden in 1885, it was “the king’s procession, dances, war and hunting songs, assagai [a kind of javelin] throwing” (*Dziennik Poznański [Poznań Daily]*, May 17, 1885).

As I have already mentioned, numerous elements of the spectacle could be subjected to dramatizing techniques. The convention that was adopted signaled exoticism and savagery in various ways, emphasizing different elements depending on the show and the group. In the next part of the chapter I will show how such elements as space, time, symbol, focus, contrast, tension, and mood enabled audiences both to recognize particular plots and to enhance the mutual interactions of public and performers. Based on press coverage in the Polish territories, I intend to examine how and with what methods the dramatic effect was produced, which was the foundation of what I refer to as the “drama of exoticism.” The same dramatic effects were used in the West, but I consciously draw on the local press. Press reports that I have used refer to various “exotic” groups and performances. I tend to recreate a multilocal model instead of focusing on a specific performance.

Molding Space

The audience view was shaped in different ways. Space—that is, both the urban performance space and the common space for the actors and audience—may be dramatized. It may also be analyzed from the perspective of individual experience; however, there exists no press coverage referring to this in the context of ethnic shows.



Figure 6.3. Bedouin camp. Ethnic show in zoological garden in Vienna, July 24, 1900. Clemens Radauer's collection. The show takes place on a circular arena surrounded by a fence behind which the audience is gathered. In the middle a group of Bedouins with horses, camels, and donkeys. On the right a row of Bedouin men standing in front of the honored guests on the main stand.

Regarding ethnic shows, there was no fixed stage on which performances took place. Depending on factors such as the number of troupe members or the weather, stages were organized at different sites. In pursuit of realism, organizers wanted to achieve a certain degree of correspondence to the original site. The selection of a specific location was largely affected by the theme of the show and the type of performance. For example, shows with exotic animals or a performance featuring a tribal village required a lot of space. Space for such spectacles was often provided by zoological gardens (e.g., in Poznań, Wrocław, Warsaw, and Saint Petersburg) and city parks (e.g., in Gdańsk, Łódź, Riga, Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Lviv). Other types of sites in which ethnic shows took place included fairs, such as St. Dominic's Fair in Gdańsk (Demski 2019), variétés, theater gardens, and sports arenas.

At the turn of the twentieth century in the Polish territories, ethnic shows constituted an element of urban entertainment. One must not, however, forget that the context in which the entertainment business was developing and, consequently, certain sets of values differed between the cities under the German partition (e.g., Poznań), cities under the Austrian partition (e.g., Kraków), and cities under the Russian partition (e.g., Warsaw). In this sense the city and its history, architecture, or politics—the city as a space



Figure 6.4. The Sinhalese performers on elephants during the show in Poznań zoological garden. Description: “The parade of leapers, thaumaturges, jesters and Indian dancers named ‘Pera Herra.’ A few humongous elephants were solemnly marching in the parade.” *Wielkopolska Ilustracja*, July 28, 1928.

for the development of discourses characteristic for the era—constituted a part of the local ethnic and cultural landscape from which it was impossible to “escape” and which could not remain unnoticed.

In the literal sense, in turn, the stage provided a framing for the plot. Placing the stage in front of the audience could constitute a dramatizing element (fig. 6.3). The optimal placement of the stage and space for the audience would result in both parties becoming more aware of each other. And related to this interaction, the question emerges as to whether watching constitutes participation (fig. 6.4). A stage that was too distant from the spectators reduced communication and tension; on the other hand, a stage located very close intensified emotions, both positive and negative ones. This is excellently illustrated by German-language press coverage from 1899 describing the shows of the Ashanti people in Wrocław zoological garden:

Whereas with similar performances earlier, the whole area was fenced in so that one could only watch the exotic guests’ goings-on from a certain distance, there is no artificial barrier keeping us now from entering the village, from strolling from hut to hut and from watching the fami-

lies and different groups follow their pursuits at work and at leisure time. And it is exactly these *little scenes* which we can watch in the kitchen, at the different huts, in the workshops and in the school, that show us the chocolate-brown foreigners' characteristics much better than the dances and war-games performed on the big podium. (*Schlesische Zeitung* [*Silesian Newspaper*], June 15, 1899; see also Czarnecka 2018, 193)

Unlike at international exhibitions where national pavilions were set up, an audience here could have a partial experience of what the Others lived. Ethnic shows did not function in isolation from the audience. The “ethnographic actors” were aware of the viewers’ presence and shared the space with them. On the small stage, a direct contact with the “ethnographic actors” was possible. The local press featured numerous characteristic descriptions of the space and stage. The following description of one of the Zulu shows appeared in one of the Poznań newspapers: “On a round square around the Emperor’s monument surrounded with a fence, the foreign visitors presented their national plays and fights, then their caravan with animals paraded around the square several times” (*Posener Zeitung* [*Posen Newspaper*], August 15, 1879). In Wrocław, in turn, “The big lawn to the left of the Zoological Garden’s main entrance [was] where we so often had the opportunity to get to know foreign peoples in their special way of life . . .” (excerpt from April 30, 1897, Archive of the Zoological Garden in Wrocław). Separate spaces often existed in zoological gardens that were dedicated to performances and concerts. A podium enabled the viewers to see the actors better, as illustrated by, for example, the report on the Ashanti visit to Wrocław: “Immediately after entering the Zoological Garden, one notices a podium, on which one class of the Ashanti, the singers, show their highly out of the ordinary productions” (*Breslauer Zeitung* [*Breslau Newspaper*], June 15, 1899). It seems reasonable that space at that time served the division between actors and viewers. However, some excerpts from the press prove the instances of physical proximity between the “ethnographic actors” and viewers. Here there was some form of participation:

The Africans’ first performance of their local customs took place in front of a small circle of invited guests. It is of special interest to watch the different craftspeople in their work . . . It was a very attractive tableau to see the

foreigners prepare their lunch and then settle in different groups to consume their meal. (*Schlesische Zeitung*, June 15, 1899)

The stage was sometimes surrounded by a fence, and smaller side stages were also occasionally placed next to the main stage. For instance, when there were shows of Samoans in the Wrocław zoological garden in 1900, the following description appeared in the press:

The broad lawn prepared for the shows is surrounded with a double wooden fence whose parallel components are placed one meter away from one another. The intention is undoubtedly to prevent any contacts between the audience and the Samoans. In the center of the square a stage has been placed . . . of approximately 50 square meter in size and 1 meter in height; from the side of the birdhouse a structure with 300 seats was prepared, which resembles an amphitheatre. (excerpt from August 21, 1900, Archive of the Zoological Garden in Wrocław)

Molding space served specific purposes, depending on the exhibited group, the subject of the show, and the target audience. Hence certain forms of the shows required other dramatic forms. Parades required open space, mainly city streets; horsemen or animals demanded wider natural areas covered with plants. The final meaning of the ethnic shows was a combination of the venue (e.g., a zoo or park) and the regulation of the distance (e.g., through fences) between the stage and the audience.

Regulating physical distance allowed for the sensation of eye contact, the feeling of closeness to unusual figures, and sometimes even touch. The fences created a barrier against which one could shelter; they separated people from wild animals, and protected the “ethnographic actors” from contact with curious crowds.

Generating Long-Lasting European “Still Images”

On stage, the content of a show must move the audience; it must touch on issues important to local viewers. As the literary genre of naturalism developed in Europe, interest in the everyday lives of ordinary people was on the increase. In principle, in order to keep the audience’s interest the-

ater must reflect real-life situations and experiences spectators can identify with. Ethnic shows were expected to reflect “real” situations from the lives of “exotic” Others. This notwithstanding, ethnic shows evoked imagery—not reality. Adam Kuper (2009) convincingly presents the process of creating primitivism in Europe. The barbarian was replaced by the savage. And at the end of the nineteenth century, this mythical figure of the savage appeared on the stage in shows and in contemporary anthropology.

The gaze expresses an attitude that those who are looking may not be aware of. Episodes presented in ethnic shows generated “still images” (obviously, technically, these were moving in the sense of performance and dynamics)—dramatized representations recognizable to the European audience. The selection of specific plots was one of the dramatic techniques used. Accounts in the press mention, among other events and activities, wedding and war dances, battle scenes, and scenes of camping or preparing for the road. Episodes were a series of “still images” originating from a given culture. “Native villages,” in turn, gave the viewers an impression of actually being in a distant land. This was not a complete immersion but rather a window into that remote reality. The most commonly used style of presentation was an exoticizing one, or the one referred to as “memorable scenes from the field.” In effect, recreating the impression of being “there” and viewing the main elements of a given culture or the everyday life of the Others reinforced the representations, which were to a large extent imagined ones.

The audience was attracted to subject matter of interest to them, and the evocation of images from the collective imagination led to participation. In this way the viewer went beyond a position as a distant viewer and activated “still images.” Thus orientalizing scenes were acted out and the “savage” entered the stage.

Images generated by the shows can be divided into two categories. On the one hand, they represented long-lasting European images of the “savage”; on the other hand, they were a reflection of the new political and cultural circumstances (Morosetti 2017). The latter category included battle scenes and scenes of colonial conquest, such as portrayals of the Zulus and Mahdi warriors:

A Zulu caravan has arrived at the Zoological Garden today. It was in Berlin for six months; no other troupe attracted the attention of the local audience for so long. They come from the country of the Zulu, on the

shores of the Tugela River. It consists of five people, namely the daughter of the famous Zulu King Cetewayo, his seven-year-old son, and a retinue of three warriors. Princess Amazula is around twenty-one years old, beautiful. Her husband was killed in the Battle of Rorke's Drift after the slaughter of the 24th English Regiment in Issamdlawham . . . Incomo is thirty-two years old; he accompanied his father throughout the war with the Zulus and fought bravely by his side. He is surrounded by two fighters from the Zulu campaign, Usofil and Umfula. The last of them, Umfula, was a doctor in his homeland, named after his "Mutugat." (*Dziennik Poznański*, May 12, 1885)

Another example were the Sudanese Mahdi warriors, who performed staged spear battles and war dances:

They brought thirty-four Negroes from Sudan to the "Zoo." It is a group of men and women (eighteen men, fourteen women) and children. Their entire outfit is made of animal skins sewn with white shells and fringes also decorated with shells and short knee-length black pants. The women have long skirts of red fabric with black stripes. The bras are also sewn with shells, and the neck is full of beads. Men of all sizes, but slender and shapely, and a few with even intelligent faces. They are of a calm disposition, they approach their visiting white guests with cordiality and express their kindness just as they can. They do not drink any indulgent drinks, only water and well-sweetened coffee, and they like vegetable food—little meat—but they passionately smoke tobacco in pipes, cigars, or cigarettes, for which they are constantly asking. Every day in the afternoon at four, five, six, and seven they give performances of war dances, festive dances, mock javelin fights, etc., to the sound of drums made of hollow trees, covered with leather. Their skin is completely black, their hair is woolly. This interesting spectacle attracts crowds of audiences. (*Wielkopolanin [Resident of Greater Poland]*, June 4, 1899)

Apparently, shows were more and more commonly becoming a combination of multiple imagined concepts. Detailed images of a specific group and their culture did not matter that much as the shows often combined the qualities of different groups—for example, inhabitants of Africa or India—

and in this way a “generalized image” was established (Burke 2012, 148). In this way the original actors played living images straight from the imagination of Europeans, and what is more, the performed Other entered the stage and dominated it.

Hence, organizers were sometimes suspected of fraud when, for example, inhabitants of Western Africa were believed to be impersonating the Zulus and others. Ethnologists appeared reserved toward the images presented during the shows. They were interested in the details of a given culture, the presence of which was not guaranteed in the shows. Both anthropologists and physicians remained interested in the body. The ethnic shows meant a shift to living metaphors (e.g., from barbarian to wild warriors), which emphasized exoticism through generating imagery and experiences.

Entangled Symbols

As was the case with other types of spectacles, ethnic shows transformed the “mundane into an extraordinary body through fragmentation and reconstitution” (Weber 2016, 319). Symbols and metaphors are essential tools enabling the formation of the final message for the audience. This message can refer to anything that is being used as a stand-in for something else (object, action, events, character, or place). In the case of ethnic shows we only have access to those metaphors that were used by the local press. Journalists, however, were in touch with the organizers of the shows. They also had access to the descriptions of earlier shows. Press accounts reveal that in the context of ethnic shows there existed a specific manner of presentation and metaphors that were directed to the audience. Through these elements a collective image of the spectacle’s content was produced, which affected the experience of the viewers during the shows.

Metaphors refer to the abstract world of human experience in the categories of a more specific world of physical objects and social relations. Each metaphor is an attempt to confront an experience that is devoid of abstract features as a whole and each emphasizes specific aspects of experience. Notions connected with the quality of being unusual and exciting because of coming from far away were dominant in ethnic shows.

What interested the audience was, it seems, both distant phenomena and more specific evidence or confirmation concerning certain historical facts—

on the one hand, an interest in extinction, bravery, nomadism, and “primitive” civilization; on the other hand, differences in body structure, agricultural tools, and hunting and fighting methods. Certain groups were seen as evidence or confirmation that certain battles had taken place. Unusual subjects, such as female warriors, were also of interest.

Analysis of press coverage suggests that particular groups were connected not only to a specific topic but also to a different degree of topicality. Repeating specific sequences of images reinforced the viewers’ reactions toward the Others resulting from their European experience. Not only the narratives concerning civilizational superiority or extinction of the conquered tribes—for example, “These Indians belong to one of the very numerous tribes, called Sioux, which American culture condemned to extinction” (*Kurier Codzienny*, May 10, 1884)—but also the narratives concerning victories of the European superpowers created these images.

The following themes associated with “exotic” Others emerged in the discourse of the era: the Nubian caravan, a proud Sudanese tribe (noble and powerful tribe remains strong—strength leads to survival); the Zulu caravan, a princess, warriors, a warrior defeated by the English; the Dahomey



Figure 6.5. Eduard Gehring’s Kyrgyz women on horses. A Kyrgyz man is standing in the back. Munich, September 30, 1898. Clemens Radauer’s collection.

Amazons, female warriors; Kyrgyz and Tatars, nomadic tribes with no permanent settlements (fig. 6.5); Sudanese, warriors of Mahdi, staged spear battles, war dances, a wild Negro tribe; Samoans, the new Prussian landsmen, and beautiful women; Sinhalese performers, dexterity in dances and bodies; Togo, a very low level of civilization, still needing to be civilized (fig. 6.6), requiring German culture to be instilled in their land; North African tribes (Maurs, Bedouins, Berbers), the life of African nomads; tribes of the Nile Valley, differences in body shape, discoloration of human skin; a village of Ceylon, exotic, festive, and everyday life.

Hence, perhaps, there emerged different images in the minds of audiences from the colonizing countries and in the minds of audiences from non-colonizing countries. Even though the latter participated in the transformations of modernity, they did not possess overseas territories. Yet it is beyond doubt that in both instances the exhibited peoples were isolated from their own geographical and cultural contexts, and they represented whatever was projected onto them by the societies to which they were introduced.

In the second half of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century, collective convictions were formed also through play and theater. As Jean-Marie Pradier concluded, the themes endlessly analyzed within cultures gain such importance that their value becomes transhistorical. These themes mobilize minds, shape and consolidate mentalities, and help to formulate science, wisdom, philosophy, and epistemology, which endure despite the whims of subsequent eras. Their resistance to change and ability to accommodate new concepts prove that they are deeply rooted in habitual modes of thought and behavior; they are also justified by the fact that this



Figure 6.6. The Togo ethnographic troupe from German West Africa, 1901. Clemens Radauer's collection.

repertoire of “invisible axioms” comprises a specific reservoir of information, logic, and practices, according to which collective and individual experience is arranged and interpreted (Pradier 2012, 294).

Ethnic shows were a part of the tendency of forging an individual into collective views by means of repeating specific messages.

Sharpening Focus

Writing about outdoor theater in Warsaw in the nineteenth century, Ewa Partyga (2016, 38, 48) has identified what attracted the new, urban, and heterogeneous audience of the time: couplets, aphorisms, allusions, chants, slogans. With time, these forms of communication became independent and started counting as extra-theatrical forms of understanding among the new type of spectator (Partyga 2016, 49).

Sharpening attention is one of the techniques used to engage the viewer to leave the viewer’s position. A “savage” entered the stage and his traits were sometimes conveyed to the extreme. In this context, the question of whether watching is a form of participation (Partyga 2003, 89) is again relevant. This is an important issue for all shows, including ethnic shows. If rituals involve participation, then what is the point of ethnic shows? In my opinion, increasing attention in ethnic shows evoked moments in which the viewers participated in the performance by understanding the key aspects of its message.

With regard to the “theatrical dimension” (Morosetti 2017, 9) of the ethnic shows, each of the “exotic” groups (less commonly, individual “actors”) presented or possessed different tools for attracting the attention of spectators. I refer to tools in the broad sense of the elements of the presented culture: topics and themes, exotic paraphernalia, and forms of presentation. “Exotic actors” were rooted in a different religious and ethical world that was often completely unknown or only superficially known to the inhabitants of the European cities. To attract the attention of viewers and avoid misunderstanding, the selection of episodes had to reflect themes that were “recognizable” to the audience.

Ethnic shows were a spectacle of cultural difference focused on physical appearance. Thus, the viewers’ attention was manipulated to emphasize significant otherness or, at least, to evoke an authentic exotic flavor. Some

ethnic troupes demonstrated their war dances and displayed their weapons, which symbolized danger for the colonial armies (this applied to Zulus, Mahdi warriors, and “Indians”). In other instances, ethnic troupes displayed their farming methods and tools, which were meant to emphasize civilizational backwardness (as with the Nubians and people from Togo).

During the shows one could observe a vivid combination of two elements—the exotic form and the aesthetic in the new exhibitionary medium. Press accounts regarding ethnic shows demonstrated that some groups were much more popular among the European audiences than others. It seems that in the former case, apart from additional elements, the convention served its role well.

Enhancing Contrast and Evoking “Knowledge”

Enhancing contrast constituted another dramatic method used in ethnic shows. In theater, contrast was established by emphasizing the differences between characters—that is, through the creation of conflict situations. In the context of ethnic shows, the contrast was visible between the characters on stage and the audience. Exoticism was the manifestation of contrast. It was evoked, enhanced, and emphasized on many levels—plots, episodes, costumes, objects, and exotic animals. Differences in body composition, movements, and gestures also evoked a sense of exoticism among the audience.

What was particularly emphasized on stage and what undoubtedly impressed the audience was the exotic body: “Generally, the stupendous bodies of the half-naked animal caregivers were admired; especially when they started sweating in dance and play and their skin became shiny and dark brown” (*Posener Zeitung*, August 15, 1879). The bodies of the “ethnographic actors” compared with the bodies of the spectators represented the strongest contrast, which evoked both fascination and tension among the audience. In the local press this was reflected in the comments referring to, among others, the “Negroes” of Sudan appearing as Mahdi warriors: “Their skin is totally black, their hair is woolly . . . Men of various heights, but slim and slender . . .” (*Wielkopolanin*, June 4, 1899), or

Serious ethnographic shows intended to explain some problems of humanity to the audience are, as we have stressed on multiple occasions,

very rare undertakings. The current event was organized with the idea of explaining racial relations within the huge racial movement in the world nowadays and [providing] evidence that skin color changes in accordance with a specific regularity as we move from the north towards the equator. (*Posener Zeitung*, July 26, 1914)

In the case of ethnic shows, comparing human bodies was not only a dramatic method, but also a way of transmitting specific knowledge reflecting anthropological and racial discourse. The stage gave the public the possibility of comparing peoples from different continents and the shows could also function as an educational program for schools:

There was a striking difference between the Negroes from Togo and the Samoans who had just left Poznań. Their huts were airy as temperatures in their country are extreme. Apparently, they only use clothes in Europe because in their native country only loincloths are worn. They roast broad beans by the fire as well as some species of nut, which they eat raw. Their hair is thick and woolly, faces devoid of regular features. Because of all these reasons visiting this caravan of savages is highly recommended. (*Wielkopolanin*, September 13, 1901)

The knowledge presented in museums, based on ethnographic artifacts and objects, was strengthened on stage by being dramatized. Contrast was strongly related to tension—it was used to evoke tension. This tension, in turn, which constituted the crucial part of theater, was represented physically through bodies and specific movements or through emotional responses or actions to certain situations. Unlike the inhabitants of European cities, whose bodies were not only white but also entangled with sophisticated codes, which revealed their social status (Pradier 2012, 372), the visitors from outside Europe presented “colored” bodies, which were perceived as “animal-like,” “wild,” dextrous, and, therefore, untamed. In the play of “ethnographic actors,” there was no tension between the character and the performer as the Other usually played him- or herself. As a result, whatever was happening on stage appeared “natural” to the viewers. Contrast was established and reflected in the relationship between them and the Others—“ethnographic actors.”

The ethnic shows did not belong to science and yet the performances filled the role of imparting “knowledge.” Thus the illusion was transmitted. The persistence of the myth depended on its political function (Kuper 2009, 11). It was not real knowledge in a sense of how non-European people lived, but rather how Western science of that time was making sense of their life.

Shaping the Mood of the Exotic

Mood reflects our common understanding through the inclusion of a range of feelings; however, these feelings are applied to the moments of the dramatic experience rather than to individuals. A mood might be described as scary, light-hearted, funny, and so on. Shaping a mood as a dramatic activity can be described as a way of exploring how mood can be created and how it can involve spectators.

In 1914 the following comment appeared in the Poznań local press with reference to ethnic shows:

Those times are gone when, during various fairs, people stormed exhibition shacks with representatives of audacious savages of different races trying to impress audiences by fire-eating or sword-swallowing tricks. Spectators have become more demanding, able to distinguish between worthless shows promoted by noisy advertisements and shows that are really valuable and worth viewing. (*Posener Zeitung*, July 11, 1914)

The press encouraged spectators to visit ethnic shows by emphasizing that the shows would provide an intense experience of watching, for example, the famous Mahdi warriors. “Negroes” from Sudan were announced in the Poznań press: “This will be a memory for years to come, as opportunities of viewing savages are rare” (*Wielkopolanin*, June 4, 1899). An article saying goodbye to the Ashanti in Warsaw emphasized the extraordinary and exotic character of their show: “The Ashanti troupe has already left the main circus walls full of fame and gold” (*Kurier Codzienny*, February 11, 1888).

The announcements of the shows were usually enthusiastic and emphasized the uniqueness of the groups. Initially, enthusiasm was partly fueled by the relative lack of contact between Europeans and the non-European Others. However, as the phenomenon developed and the number of spec-

tators increased, organizers focused on making the message more understandable for everybody, which, in effect, made it increasingly stereotypical. This led to certain limitations, including the necessity of focusing on plots understandable for the audience or on those that could evoke reactions among local viewers. The priority was always for the shows to make an impression. Consequently, the German press in Wrocław published the following description of the Zulu shows: “It is a picturesque impression of this dark mass, clad in the most colourful garments” (*Breslauer Zeitung*, June 15, 1899), or the shows of Kalmyks/Oirats: “It goes without saying that these nomads are excellent equestrians; the performances do not present those lukewarm shows which caravans traveling for a long time in Europe have adopted, but they show many original things and are very much worth a visit” (*Breslauer Zeitung*, April 30, 1897). Though partly fictional, the shows were presented as “unmediated” representations of culture and life on distant continents. Press accounts of specific shows suggest that, despite the unquestionable spirit of exoticism, the flavor of authenticity was also noticed.

In summary, the above-mentioned tools emphasized the exotic through achieving a certain degree of correspondence to the original environment, generating images of the “savage,” and reinforcing cultural representations by repeating a sequence of images, attracting focus to particular moments, enhancing contrast and evoking “knowledge,” and shaping a mood of the exotic.

Exoticism was part of the message representing the superiority and domination of Europeans. This worked until World War I, and in the 1920s the message of the shows changed slightly. In the case of ethnic shows as secular



Figure 6.7. The director and employees of the Poznań zoological garden with an elephant and its caretaker from the Sinhalese group performing in the garden, Poznań, 1928. Archive of Poznań zoological garden.

spectacles, watching is a form of participation; in a way, participation is limited to watching. Watching as a form of participation confirmed a conviction that Europeans were superior to non-Europeans. The viewer became part of the larger system (see Rothenbuhler 2003, 89). Regarding imperial shows, they were a kind of “new ritual form”—the triumph of the state and nation. In Central and Eastern European territories, ethnic shows were understood as maintaining global, political, and cultural order (fig. 6.7). However, they were received differently in states with no colonial past.

Reality is not as expressive as the stage: it is dull, and therefore what is dramatized and performed in the eyes of the audience looks better. Ethnic shows as a new means of presenting reality constituted a discovery or development within the city (Demski 2019), where access to reality was also happening through images, narratives, stories, and performances.

The Bhils celebrating the Gauri Dance, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, could be themselves and interact with their spiritual world; the past and the collective body of their community were experienced through performance. In contrast, ethnic shows played out episodes that were detached from their primary or original context. The new context was co-created by the spectators; therefore their reception mattered a lot. Initially, the organizers of ethnic shows somehow enforced an adjustment, both on the non-Europeans and on the viewers, by means of carefully selected elements that were to be recognized by the audience. To hold the audience’s interest, the shows had to reflect situations analogous to those in the audience members’ own lives and had to dramatize an experience the spectators could identify with. Moving toward drama constituted one further step. Effective drama reflects the sequences from “our” fantasies that participate in the dialogue with “our” worldview.

During ethnic shows, people from outside Europe usually played themselves or at least representatives of their own culture. In the new context, exotic shows were becoming “zones of contact”—the space of meetings and interactions, even if marked by difference and embedded in unequal power relations (Pratt 2011), or “arenas” for intercultural contact (Qureshi 2014, 184). The alternative goal of the ethnic shows was to convey and sustain the identity of local communities. The shows were constructed using reference points, deepening the differences between the audience and the performers, contrasting the “higher” position and the “backward” one (fig. 6.8).



Figure 6.8. The Arabic village—one of the attractions of the “Lunapark” at the Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa (Universal National Exhibition), Poznań, 1928. *Głos Poranny*, June 9, 1929.

In conclusion, ethnic shows were certainly not a meta-commentary on a given culture; they were much closer to the construction of European exoticism. The use of dramatic methods resulted in the fact that shows, like ethnological exhibitions, became deformed by the “stage.” The shows were not an instance of a contemporary ethnodrama when there was no search for the “truth out there.” As a medium, ethnic shows represented a way of expressing superiority through exoticism. Despite attempts to evoke authenticity, artificial spectacle prevailed over reality. This type of knowledge referred to the European dream fantasy (Weber 2016). Cinema moved it further through montage.

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CHAPTER
SEVEN

How Do These “Exotic” Bodies Move? Ethnographic Shows and Constructing Otherness in the Polish-Language Press, 1880–1914

Dominika Czarnecka

When analyzing works on the subject of living “exotic” human exhibitions in Europe in the years 1880–1914, one may notice two essential issues.¹

Public spectacles based on the live presence of people of non-European origin developed throughout Europe as a popular form of mass entertainment both in the second half of the nineteenth and in the first decades of the twentieth century. Paradoxically, however, in contemporary discourse the phenomenon has been analyzed mainly by Western European and American scholars (see e.g., Abbattista 2015; Ames 2008; Bharathi Larsson 2016; Blanchard et al. 2008; Corbey 1993; Lindfors 1999). The apparent absence or lack of impact of Central and Eastern European voices in the academic discussion on the subject has considerably influenced the development of terminology related to ethnographic shows and the dominant approaches to analyzing and describing this cultural phenomenon. Lastly, this absence has also impacted the set of essential research problems that became the focus of the majority of existing scholarly works. Projects completed in the United States and in Western Europe concentrated on the regions to the west of the River Oder. Consequently, until recent years ethnographic shows displayed in Central and (to an even greater extent) in Eastern Europe were practically *terra incognita*. And although the number of academic publications on ethnographic performances in Central and Eastern Europe has recently been growing (see e.g., Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020; Czarnecka 2018, 2019, 2020; Czarnecka and Demski 2020; Demski 2018a, 2018b, 2019, 2020; Kontler 2020; Novikova

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2013), most of the publications are fragmentary in nature. One of the main reasons is that much of the source material for relevant studies was either lost or scattered. Nevertheless, analysis of the “exotic” human exhibitions in the region is developing at an ever-increasing pace. The first results of these studies contribute to a fuller reconstruction of the image of the cultural phenomenon, allowing it to be contextualized and interpreted in new ways.

The second issue is related to the emergence of the almost canonical array of research problems tackled in the context of ethnographic shows. Most attention is devoted to themes related to, for example, imperial politics, colonialism, racism, the role of science in the evolution of the phenomenon, and the sexualization of the Others’ bodies. The majority of scholars follow these patterns, transplanting them to their home turf and exploring them on the basis of the local source material. The same trend is apparent in publications on ethnographic shows in Central and Eastern Europe. I am far from advocating the abolition of this model, as it enables the construction of the basic framework without which the development of the study of living shows of non-European people would be considerably more difficult, if not impossible. Nevertheless, if all studies were to follow that same model, the possibility of exploring the true potential of the issue would probably be limited, along with scholars’ ability to perceive new aspects of the phenomenon. What is more, the descriptions of ethnographic shows functioning in very different contexts would not be accurate or complete.

The idea for the present chapter is the result of the above considerations. It is not so much a reaction to any specific trends appearing in the study of ethnographic performances but a suggestion for approaching the subject from the perspective of the process of constructing otherness in the context of the culture of movement. To the best of my knowledge, this angle has not been applied in any existing analyses of ethnographic shows.² The text also contributes to the studies of living “exotic” human exhibitions in Eastern Europe or, more precisely, in Polish territory in the late partition period.³

2 Academic works on ethnographic performances contain some information on different manners of moving. Nevertheless, practices of movement presented in the context of constructing otherness have never been used as the main axis of the analysis, appearing, at most, as an additional element (to supplement or to diversify the study).

3 The Polish state ceased to exist as a result of the three partitions of Poland (1772, 1793, 1795), according to which Prussia, Russia, and Austria annexed parts of Poland. The country regained its independence in 1918, after 123 years of absence from the map of Europe.

The work puts forward the hypothesis that the various practices of movement displayed by non-European people during public performances in Polish territory in this period constituted an important element in the process of conceptualizing otherness and difference. Perceiving ethnographic shows through the lens of cultures of movement provides different information from a focus on the descriptions of the physical features of Others or the structure of the spectacles. Visitors from outside Europe, many of whom spoke no European language, were able to use movement to communicate certain messages in a more active and comprehensive fashion. Moreover, these practices of movement provided a different experience and elicited a different emotional response from the audience than speech did.

The present chapter is based on excerpts from the Polish-language press issued between 1880 and 1914.⁴ The available sources determined the manner in which the phenomenon could be examined. In the case of press descriptions of different ways of moving, I have analyzed narrations pertaining to bodies in motion and not movement as such. In the press of the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the narrative of ethnographic performances was presented from the perspective of the spectators, not the native members of the “exotic” cultures of movement. It should be added that in this period newspapers were read mainly by the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia, and townspeople. The press reflected their points of view. It therefore presented the beliefs of a very specific group of spectators, which constituted only a fraction of a much larger and more diverse audience (in practice, ethnographic shows were seen by almost everybody). European observers lacked the practical skills or embodied experiences associated with gaining knowledge about foreign cultures—a fact that obviously influenced the observers’ level of understanding and the manner of describing what they witnessed. The present chapter does not aim to present a catalogue of all types of dances or a typology of motion practices presented to European audiences. The analysis of press materials focuses on determining what aspects of movement captivated the attention of the inhabitants of the Polish territory and on how the movements were evaluated and which body parts were involved. I looked into the processes of the sexualization of the Others’ bodies and the construction of “savagery” and “primitivism”

4 All source material used in this chapter was found within the borders of present-day Poland.

in the context of different manners of movement. Lastly, the chapter presents an analysis of the spectators' reactions to "exotic" cultures of movement, described in press articles, investigating whether and how these descriptions were connected to the process of constructing otherness.

The Culture(s) of Movement in Late Partition-Period Poland

From an anthropological perspective, motion may be described as one of the most significant aspects of human behavior, while the culture of movement⁵ is seen as an element of culture in a broader sense. The number of cultures of movement existing in the world is considerable; differences can even be observed within a single community (e.g., in the patterns of motion dependent on gender) (Royce 2015, 24). The fact that the culture of movement is influenced by the same forces that impact all other aspects of culture means that it is not a constant, but a variable, changing in time to reflect broader sociocultural transformations. It may therefore be assumed that a deeper understanding of the press articles tackling the subject of how "exotic" Others moved and reacting to these ways of motion requires at least a cursory look at the culture of movement observable in Poland in the late partition period.

In the nineteenth century, patterns of motion and people's access to various forms of physical activity differed in accordance with a multitude of factors. These patterns were different for men and women, for members of varying social classes, and for the inhabitants of the developing urban areas and the countryside. The reasons for these dissimilarities were complex in nature, while the boundaries between certain forms or patterns of movement could sometimes appear to be blurred. For some forms of physical activity (such as tennis), the necessary and specific practical skills could be acquired only

5 The choice to use the term "culture of movement" and not "physical culture" in the context of ethnographic shows was very deliberate, even though the two are nearly synonymous. Broadly defined, physical culture encompasses physical education, sport, leisure activities, rehabilitation, and also tourism (Kobierecki 2016). The concept of the culture of movement is wider in scope and includes all elements of physical culture and also practices that do not fall under that umbrella (e.g., motions related to everyday activities). This difference is of particular import in the context of ethnographic shows, in which some of the motion practices presented by non-Europeans did not qualify as elements of physical culture. Furthermore, although some motion practices performed "on stage" resembled those associated, for example, with sport, their actual purpose was different.

through access to qualified teachers and venues for practice. This was an element of the strategy of excluding members of the poorer social strata from participating in certain physical activities and, consequently, making certain practices of movement elitist in nature. A higher social status invariably required one to familiarize oneself with sets of rules, which also imposed certain limitations (cf. Royce 2015, 128). The forms of physical activity developed by peasant (e.g., country dances) or worker communities (e.g., boxing, wrestling⁶) were much more “democratic” and thus open to all. On the one hand, this led to their gradual rise in popularity; on the other, it made them subject to numerous changes and modifications reflecting broader transformations of the modern era.

One of the more popular forms of physical activity related to rest and leisure in the nineteenth century was so-called open-air entertainment. This involved a wide array of activities and was practiced by the poorest members of the society and by the aristocracy, bourgeoisie, and intelligentsia. Ways of spending one’s free time were much more likely to be determined by material status than by one’s origins (Piestrzeniewicz 2010, 43). Fashionable activities included walks, shooting contests, sack races, football, bowling, and skating; cyclists first appeared on the streets in the 1880s. However, it was dancing that constituted the principal element of any party, be it in the city or in the countryside. The prominent role of dance in the lives of nineteenth-century inhabitants of the Polish territory is apparent, for example, from a statement made by Łukasz Gołębiowski in 1831:

Dance appears to be an innate and indispensable need of mankind, a necessity for more vigorous motion, an expression of certain exultation. Thus, it is found among savage peoples, among the most ancient nations, among the more *civilized*, corrupted and falling into decline; as it occupied our distant forebears, so will it occupy our grandchildren . . . Dancing was a common entertainment: in the capital, in the provinces, in public venues and private homes, among the higher classes, the middle ones and the common folk. (Gołębiowski 1831, 304, 327)

6 For more on wrestling, including “exotic” wrestlers in the Polish territory in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, see Czarnecka 2019. On the Jewish wrestling scene in Warsaw see Portnoy 2006.

The nineteenth-century inhabitants of the Polish territory favored such dances as the polonaise, the contredanse, the mazur, the cracovienne, and the polka (Piesterzeniewicz 2009, 62). The galop was also in fashion, and its “wilder” form was becoming known as the cancan (Tomasik 2017, 375). However, the dance that was a lens that focused and reflected all the changes of modernity in the nineteenth century was the waltz. It showed these transformations in the form of sequences of figures and steps, in the tempo, in the rhythm, and in the manner of performance. Since the present chapter does not focus on the culture of movement in late partition-period Poland but only presents it as the background necessary to understanding the key research issue, which is the history of ethnographic shows, the example of the waltz should suffice to outline the dynamics of the changes taking place in the period in question.

As emphasized by Wojciech Tomasik, “the waltz entered the nineteenth century through the transfer of dance from the countryside to the city” (2017, 358).⁷ The dance that ruled supreme in restaurants and inns on the outskirts of Vienna in the early nineteenth century was the Ländler—an Austrian country dance.⁸ It was relatively slow and stately, and was performed outdoors, often on uneven ground (in front of inns, for example), by daylight. The dance relied on hopping and stamping, sometimes also featuring sweeping steps. Partners would hold each other by the hands or by the waist, at times performing difficult dance figures that required a slow pace. The Ländler was danced in heavy boots and everyday clothing. As a country dance, it could be said to emulate the rhythms of the natural world. In the early nineteenth century, it had already started to evolve from its original form into the mature version of the waltz; this transformation reflected the process of the modernization of dance. According to Tomasik, when Kazimierz Brodziński (the author of the treatise *O tańcach polskich* [*About Polish Dances*]) was comparing the movement of couples dancing the waltz to planetary motions, the dance in question still belonged to premodern culture and featured rustic elements. It only took “its final shape when it began

7 According to Trenton Hamilton (2016, xii), the waltz “was first introduced to the Austrian court in the 17th century . . . Some people, however, found waltzing undignified, and in 1760 the performance of waltzes was banned by the church in parts of Germany.”

8 In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Ländler was a popular dance not only in Austria but also in Bavaria, in German-speaking Switzerland, and in Slovenia.

to be danced, so to speak, against nature” (Tomasik 2017, 365). Obviously, it would be nearly impossible to give any precise estimate as to when country dancing became an integral element of urban entertainment.

In its mature form, the waltz (as opposed to the *Ländler*) required spacious ballrooms (one of the most impressive ballrooms in Warsaw was located in the City Hall), artificial lighting, smooth floors, chic accoutrements, and specially designed apparel. From the very beginning, the evolution of this form of movement was strictly related to social and economic transformations, changes in customs and norms, and the development of technology. Apart from such innovations as artificial lighting, the popularity of the waltz was also greatly influenced by the invention of the grand piano, an instrument that became a significant element of the social life of the epoch and one of the channels of nineteenth-century male–female communication (Tomasik 2017, 359–62). All of these factors affected the style of dancing. The waltz was based on quick, precise movements—“waltzes put the ball more vividly in motion” (Gołębiowski 1831, 318). A rotating dance, it was performed in pairs. Owing to the smooth flooring and light footwear, the dancers could move in smooth steps, not only traveling through space, but also whirling around, which caused pleasant somatic sensations. A dancing pair made two types of rotations at once—one consisted of circling the hall, the other of axial turns. Since the waltz could be danced by up to several hundred pairs at once, the process required synchronization, cooperation, and order.

The strict plan imposed in the ballroom applied to all dancers . . . The ball was becoming a model of an efficient railway enterprise, which, in turn, constituted the essence of the relations that were forming in a modern (read: urbanized) society. The waltz danced “by rail,” [i.e. in a sequence] made it possible for the entire metropolis, with the complex motion that characterized it, to be transplanted into the ballroom . . . Dance allowed one to act out modernity, to stage it with the fast pace and precision of movement, the synchronization of the many pairs in motion . . . In the waltz, as in the life of an urban community, individual virtuosity was not of importance. What mattered was the effect achieved by the dancing groups as a whole. (Tomasik 2017, 371–72)

The process of the modernization of dance was therefore connected to the dynamic of changes observable in a given form of movement; these, in turn, reflected much broader transformations ongoing at the time. As regards the waltz, “more than any other dance it appeared to represent some of the abstract values of the new era” (Hamilton 2016, 58).

The most important function of the waltz and other dances, and the various types of open-air entertainment, was related not to the need to exercise and move but the desire to play and have fun (which was, naturally, associated with social gatherings and unusual somatic and aesthetic experiences). The process of the modernization of dance reveals two fundamental issues: (1) being a manifestation of a specific culture, the forms of movement practiced in a given place and time are indicative of certain features of that society; and (2) being a method for communicating specific messages, forms of movement serve certain social functions.

The process that transformed the Ländler into the mature form of the waltz in the nineteenth century illustrates the dynamic of changes in the manner of moving: from simple, heavy, relatively slow, and imprecise motion to rapid, light, and synchronized movement. It should be noted that the forms of movement practiced at a given time significantly affect the forms of experiencing the body and motion as well as the perception of motion as such.

Nevertheless, reality is not limited to a single model applied in a given place and time. In practice, a multitude of standards (in this case the standards and models of movement) may be in simultaneous use and their development is usually relational in nature. In the nineteenth century, both the



Figure 7.1. Program of the Bagatela theater in Kraków advertising performances by Josephine Baker, May 14–15, 1938. A dancing pose was to stir the audience’s erotic imagination. The image follows the model of visual representations that explored Baker’s sexuality and perpetuated stereotypes associated with the “exotic” female body. Dawny Kraków. <https://dawny-krakow.blogspot.com/2015/05/josephine-baker-w-krakowie.html>.

United States and Europe witnessed not only urbanization and technological progress but also changes in social norms, the emergence of a secular society, the fight for equal rights for women, and the development of psychology. These processes were also reflected in the search for new forms of expression in movement, which would manifest freedom, liberty, independence, and emotions. These efforts led, among other things, to the emergence of new forms of dance, which broke with the tradition of ballet and were intended to be more than just an illustration of music or history—to constitute an organic sensation and a moving experience.⁹

“The 19th century also saw an unprecedented increase in travel and in cross-cultural influences. Many seemingly exotic dance styles arrived on the Western scene” (Hamilton 2016, 65). For instance, the French dancing duo

9 Famous forerunners of these transformations in the West included Isadora Duncan (1877–1927) and Ruth St. Denis (1879–1968). These dancers incorporated elements of “exotic” cultures of movement into their performances. Ethnographic shows also played a role in this process. St. Denis’s stage shows were inspired by Hindu dances or, in practice, by the Hindu village displayed as part of an ethnographic show. The pieces that resulted from these interests were *Radha*, *Cobra*, and *Incense* (Wisniewski 2016, 48). Josephine Baker (1906–75) was the exact opposite of St. Denis, as she did not conform to existing norms, instead questioning the known categories and searching for a new place for African American dancers that would not confine them to the accepted boundaries of the musical (Royce 2015, 17). Baker became the embodiment and the symbol of a foreign culture of movement on the stages of Europe. Transcending the timeframe of the present article, one may add that the Polish press commented on her performances of the “Black Star” or “Chocolate-colored Star” as early as in the 1920s. In 1926, for instance, her dancing was described in the following fashion: “She dances with her whole body, and then with each body part separately: the limbs already still, but the breasts contorting, the hips trembling in spasms, as she offers up the mysteries of her beauty in sudden thrusts—to the whole room” (Wyleżyńska 1926, 4). In 1928 Polish readers were presented with an account of Baker’s visit to Vienna and Budapest (Berlacki 1928, 19). No mention was made of Stockholm, where “the Black Venus” performed in June that year (see Habel 2005). Baker’s first tour of Poland took place in May 1938. She performed in Warsaw, Kraków, Katowice, Łódź, Poznań, and Lviv (*Ilustrowany Kurjer Codzienny* [*Illustrated Daily Courier*], May 14 and 16, 1938). Baker, who epitomized “the New Negro” and was associated with “cosmopolitan” glamor, did not perform her famous “savage dance” or “banana dance” on the stages of Poland. The existing programs for her shows in the Bagatela theater in Kraków indicate that the performances mostly involved singing, though the artist did perform “the Arabian dance” and taught the audience to dance the “Big Apple.” The theater’s poster advertising the shows of Józefina (as she was known in Poland) depicts her scantily clad, in a dancing pose that was sure to stir the audience’s erotic imagination. This image follows the model of visual representations that explored Baker’s blackness and sexuality and perpetuated stereotypes associated with otherness and the “exotic” female body (fig. 7.1). These elements played a substantial role in the process of Baker’s reception in Polish territory. Significantly, however, Josephine’s stage comeback in the 1930s involved “a transformation that had led her away from her former spirited ‘savagery’” (Habel 2005, 133). “After 1928, Baker understood that she had to bring something new to the audience, which was getting tired of her *danse sauvage*. But Baker’s decision was also based on her reluctance to capitalize on the Black Venus myth. She wanted—and succeeded—to be acknowledged as an artist, and not only a Black artist” (Staszak 2015, 10).

Les Lina Darwil created an air of international razzmatazz in early twentieth-century Łódź (under Russian rule), presenting everything that was in fashion at the time, including “‘eccentric’ dances, the Brazilian maxixe, or ‘Apache’ dances performed in opulent costumes that were changed in an instant” (Biskupski 2013, 105). In 1907 Sellin’s theater in Łódź, catering primarily to German and Jewish audiences, staged shows by Miss Emerita (a teacher by profession), who presented traditional songs and dances from Samoa (Biskupski 2013, 108). The periodical *Organ (Organ)*¹⁰ published advertisements made by “a barefoot dancer, an imitator of Isadora Duncan known under the stage name of Dora Dumcan . . . a Japanese juggler, Takashima, a Turkish acrobat and ‘pyramid saltomortallist’ named Marzulla” (Biskupski 2013, 105).

In practice, the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century were a time when forms of movement based on control, restraint, and sublimation of the instincts of the body contested with those deriving from physical instincts and biology. As regards the former category, the forms that enjoyed immense popularity in the Polish territories included ballet and sport, which, as a form of physical activity, was practiced in the spirit of nationalism and also feminism—in the case of developing a physical culture of women (Mathur 2013). On the other hand, sport constituted an important element of the popular culture of the day, “made widespread in the late 19th century as a way for the urban elite to spend their free time” (Biskupski 2013, 124). The popularity of forms of movement involving wild, natural, and sensual movement manifested itself, for instance, in the fascination with African American music and dance. In general, however, it was the more restrained and controlled forms of motion that constituted the dominant element of the culture of movement in Polish lands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

10 *Organ* was a specialist biweekly directed at professionals in the stage-entertainment industry, focusing on issues relevant for the circus, the theater, the cabaret, and so on. It was published from 1909 until the outbreak of World War I and issued in Polish, German, and Russian. In a sense, this reflected the cosmopolitan nature of the entertainment industry at the time. The scope of influence of the periodical reached well into the Russian Empire, including the Kingdom of Poland.

Foreign Cultures of Movement in the Context of Ethnographic Shows

In the latter half of the nineteenth century,

It was mass commercial entertainment that constituted one of the mainstays of the urban lifestyle . . . The mass culture of the nineteenth century . . . was associated with entertainment systems that took the form of complex conglomerates of sights broadly referred to as “shows” or “spectacles.” (Biskupski 2013, 78)

The period between the 1880s and the outbreak of the Great War marked the peak in popularity of ethnographic shows in Europe, which is reflected in the timeframe of the present analysis. The interest in performances of non-European people was generated mainly by the physical presence of inhabitants of distant lands and thus the opportunity for live contact. As opposed to static museum exhibits (cf. Weber 2016), the “exotic” Others were presented to the European public in zoological gardens, parks, circuses, variétés, and open-air theaters. They moved, produced sounds, emitted scents, and reacted to stimuli.

Nineteenth-century ethnographic shows became a democratized form of mass entertainment, which was undergoing a process of gradual institutionalization. The basic model of organizing such performances consisted in maintaining a constant tension between commonality and difference. In their initial phase, the shows were based on presenting everyday activities. In time, they evolved to more overtly staged numbers and professionalized performers (Ames 2004, 319). These changes resulted from the audiences’ rising expectations and the increasingly intense competition in the entertainment industry. Business owners reacted to the changing consumer sensibilities by expanding the programs of their ethnographic shows. The level of dramatization in these performances was also rising (see Demski in this volume). In this context, foreign cultures of movement played a crucial role. In the early days of ethnographic shows, even something as simple as basic types of physical activity presented by Others could be considered an attraction (e.g., running, swimming, horse-riding), yet later on the audience was more likely to be drawn to watch “exotic” dances, acrobatic performances, or displays of martial arts—that is, much more complex and structured forms of move-

ment (figs. 7.2 and 7.3). Furthermore, the physical fitness of Others and their skill in putting their bodies to work were among the important factors in the process of recruiting non-European people.¹¹

As a side note, the development of ethnographic shows in Europe also affected the “exotic” cultures of movement. In time, foreign practices of motion performed for European spectators came to bear more and more resemblance to theatrical shows (e.g., theater dance).¹² As noted by Adrienne Lois Kaeppler, a change observable in dances as a reaction to social transformations may manifest itself in several spheres: in the aspect of movement, in the structure or form of dances, in the use of dance within a community, or in the functions of and reasons for dancing (quoted in Royce 2015, 135). Consequently, those Others that toured Europe—performing, for example, war dances in order to earn money or entertain the public—were active participants in changes that were taking place in their “own” cultures of movement. These changes were associated with non-European people having to perform their private selves and habitual cultural roles without the use of conventional theatrical acting or fictional identities and with intercultural exchange in the aspect of culture of movement.

To return to the subject of ethnographic performances in late partition-period Poland, excerpts from the Polish-language press indicate, for instance, that foreign cultures of movement played a major part in the process of popularizing such shows. Many advertising campaigns made references to “exotic” bodies in motion or, more precisely, to the practices of movement performed by these bodies. In July 1892, for instance, residents of Kraków were persuaded to see a show by Dahomey Amazons: “The military exercises of the amazons, their singing and national dances are well worth seeing” (*Czas [Time]*, July 7, 1892).¹³ The performances of a troupe of thirty Japanese staged at the Devigné circus in Łódź in 1911 were advertised as follows: “Real geishas, who will perform a ‘geisha’ dance accompanied by an original Japanese orchestra, as well as the Tunnel of Death and the Turn of the Rising Sun,

11 Hilke Thode-Arora, in this volume, refers to Johan Adrian Jacobsen’s notes to state that he organized special competitions to recruit “Eskimos,” testing their skills in doing the “Eskimo roll.”

12 According to Eugenio Barba’s theory, “acting techniques are primarily physical activities that deconstruct the body in uncomfortable ways before reconstituting it counter-intuitively in performance” (Weber 2016, 320).

13 For more on the performances of Dahomey Amazons in the Polish territory, see Czarnecka 2020.



Figures 7.2 and 7.3. Equestrian shows in the Wrocław zoo, Carl Marquardt's troupe of Bedouin performers, 1912. The physical fitness of Others and their skill in putting their bodies to work could catch the audience's eye. Archive Zoo Wrocław.

also performed by the Japanese” (*Nowy Kurjer Łódzki* [*New Łódź Courier*], October 10, 1911). Turning to materials from a later period, one may note that a Japanese theatrical troupe directed by one “Tokudziro-Tsu-Tsui” (Tokujiro Tsutsui) performed in Warsaw and Poznań in 1931. The show was described thus: “The troupe has a number of dramas in its repertoire, and their shows are made more entertaining by exotic dances such as the ‘fox dance,’ the ancient Japanese masked dance, folk dances, geisha dance” (*Ilustracja*



Polska [*Polish Illustration*], February 15, 1931). The above examples indicate the course of changes not only in ethnographic shows but, more broadly, in “exotic” performances presented on the stages of Europe. These changes involved, among other things, an ever-increasing theatricalization of the performances and forms of movement.

Press descriptions also suggest that “exotic” dances (war dances, ritual dances, nuptial, national, warrior dances, etc.) were a form of movement that seemed particularly attractive to Polish audiences. The shows by Hagenbeck’s caravan of the Sinhalese staged in September 1888 in Łódź were summarized in the following fashion: “The most-liked of all the productions are the dances which, however savage, are performed artfully and spectacularly indeed” (*Dziennik Łódzki* [*Łódź Daily*], September 4, 1888). According to contemporaneous press articles, the Sinhalese performing in the Warsaw zoological garden presented a relatively wide array of forms of movement: “Their shows comprise dances, stalking, singing, working with elephants, riding zebu, and physical exercise, altogether forming an image of their everyday activities and games” (*Kurier Codzienny* [*Daily Courier*], August 19, 1888). A description of the activities of the African Ashanti people reads: “They do not practice gymnastics, but only produce song, national dance, various types of pantomime and serpent-taming” (*Kurier Codzienny*, January 18, 1888).

Circus arenas were dominated by practices of movement that required a high level of physical fitness and exceptional skill in using one’s body. Evidence for this claim is found, among other places, in the descriptions of the performances given by a Chinese troupe of jugglers and acrobats in Sellin’s theater in Łódź in 1900. The show was advertised as having been met with critical acclaim in Moscow and Saint Petersburg: “The juggler also presented a number of very impressive tricks. Thus, the slant-eyed types were much applauded, with the greatest ovation given to the artful young gymnast” (*Rozwój* [*Development*], February 13, 1900). In 1888, when the “Arabian troupe of Beni Zong Zong”¹⁴ performed in Schumann circus in Warsaw, the public’s attention was captivated by Hady Hassan, whom the posters described as “snake man”:

14 On June 21, 1886, performances of the Berber troupe (twenty people of Beni-Zoug-Zoug from the Sahara Desert) took place in Gdańsk (Demski 2019).

How Do These “Exotic” Bodies Move?

It is not merely plumage that makes Hady Hassan resemble a snake—the boy seems not to have a single bone in his body, and his back must be made of rubber, for the ease with which he bends himself into various poses. “Incredible—and yet true.” Hady Hassan has reached such levels of perfection that . . . he can sit on his own head. This is hardly a metaphor . . . (*Kurier Codzienny*, January 8, 1888)

The above excerpts indicate that the residents of Polish lands took an interest in the ways in which non-European people moved. The practices of movement presented in zoological gardens, municipal parks, and elsewhere were mostly interesting due to the existing cultural differences, whereas the spectators gathered in circus arenas were astonished and often awed by extraordinary skills in using an “exotic” body (often referred to as “tricks”), by the ability to transcend the limitations and abilities of the human body. This is not to say that no standard ethnographic shows were organized in circuses in the period in question. It may be stated that different models of presenting “exotic” bodies in motion were developed simultaneously and functioned at different “stages.”

How Do These “Exotic” Bodies Move?

“Extraordinary bodies” have been exhibited since ancient times (Garland-Thomson 1996). In fourth-dynasty Egypt (c. 2613–2494 BCE), Pygmies were brought to the royal court to dance for the pharaoh. At that time, however, the important element was not the culture of movement but rather human physical anomalies—“dwarves” were believed to bring good luck. Pygmies were also reported to dance for their masters in later periods to provide entertainment (Wiszniewski 2016, 28).

In late partition-period Poland, spectacles involving non-European people, in the form of ethnographic shows, could be accessed by practically everyone in society. The public was fascinated not only by the physical features of the “exotic” Others (which were associated with specific ethnic origins rather than with exceptional or pathological physical differences) but also by cultural differences.

As with all analyses aiming at comparing and interpreting diverse (and in this case also fragmentary) sources, a certain degree of generalization is

inescapable. The existing press materials suggest that the spectators' reaction to the movement of "exotic" Others depended on several factors (including the time and place of performance, the number of people involved, the individual skills of the "ethnographic actors," and the sound effects), not solely on the publicly displayed form of movement. Examining the descriptions found in the Polish-language press, one may notice several recurring motifs, around which the narratives about foreign cultures were then constructed in the context of ethnographic shows.

The following section presents a sample of descriptions pertaining to "Indian"¹⁵ dances, which will be used as the basic material for further analysis, to reveal certain mechanisms in the process of constructing otherness and difference in Polish-language press.

In May 1884, the Ciniselli family circus in Warsaw housed spectacles by a group of Omaha "Indians" (fig. 7.4).¹⁶ The way they moved or, more specifically, their dancing was widely commented on in the press of the day:

These visitors from the state of Nebraska show off their singing and dancing in the circus arena. The singing is either hollow or piercing, while the dancing appears as monotonous jumps to the equally repetitive sounds of the drum. (*Gazeta Polska* [*Polish Gazette*], May 10, 1884)

The Sioux tribe principally make an exhibition of their singing—wild, monotonous, disintegrating into the howling and screaming of winds—as well as dancing. The musical instruments are a drum and a type of pipe. The men are half-naked; the women's attire bears a slight resemblance to the fanciful dress of gypsies. (*Kurier Codzienny*, May 10, 1884)

Whoever came yesterday to Mr. Ciniselli's arena to watch these jovially smiling, benignly idiotic physiognomies of the red-skins from by

15 News articles at that time employed the term "Indians" to refer to the native inhabitants of North America. Fully aware of the negative connotations the word carries today, I have decided to use it interchangeably with the phrase "Native Americans." The choice is motivated by functional concerns and the wish to present the press materials of the day in a reliable manner. The term "Indians" appears deliberately in quotation marks.

16 In February 1884, the same troupe performed in Castan's Panopticon in Berlin (Weber 2016, 316). In Berlin, and in Poznań and Warsaw, the troupe was referred to as "Sioux" (*Dziennik Poznański* [*Poznań Daily*], April 25, 1884; *Kurier Codzienny*, May 10, 1884; see also Tomicki 1992).



Figure 7.4. Sioux “Indians” in Berlin Panopticon, 1884. The way the “exotic” Others moved played an important role in the process of conceptualizing “savagery” and “primitivism.” Clemens Radauer’s collection, *Illustrierte Zeitung*, February 2, 1884.

the Missouri [sic] was unlikely to realize that these slender and thin figures, draped in children’s ornaments, jumping to the beat of the drum as if doing the trepak or the kolomyjka, are the most savage, the most bloody human element in the world, an untamed force of the desert that imperils the life of men from other races as a leopard or a hyena would . . . The voices of the drum are joined by howls like those of wild beasts, and numerous shouts of joy made by individual male and female dancers . . . The younger ones lead the procession, leaning slightly forward, ringing chimes and shrieking shrilly; they are followed by their elders, who swing their maces energetically in all directions, and then by women. It is a strange symptom that Indian men laugh and play while dancing, whereas the girls move through their repetitious dance serious and unsmiling. (*Kurier Warszawski* [*Warsaw Courier*], May 10, 1884)

Having entered the arena, older women spread sheets in the center and sat on them, as men and the younger women began singing and dancing

to the sound of original, truly Indian military music. The dance is highly peculiar. It somewhat resembles a cossack in its wild melody; yet on the other hand the unceremonious racy movements of the women inadvertently bring the cancan to mind. Perhaps it is an influence from Paris, from where the Indians have traveled. Among the young women, a few are graced with a beautiful physique . . . (*Kurier Poranny* [*Morning Courier*], May 10, 1884)

They show off singing and dancing: the singing is hollow, sometimes only hitting a shrill note. The dancing consists in monotonous jumps around the campfire to the sound of a massive drum . . . Among the redskins there are two fairly pretty girls, who dance with gravity and *sui generis* style. (*Kurier Warszawski*, May 10, 1884)

The same “Indians” had, only a few days before, staged a show in the Poznań zoo.¹⁷ Comments on their performance were similar to those above:

At the beginning of their dance they take off their pants made from tanned skins of wild animals, as well as woolen blankets protecting them from the cold. A strong drummer grabs the drumstick and hits the drum, firstly pianissimo and then a truly Indian forte. The drum beat is accompanied by howling similar to that of wild animals, along with the songs of particular dancers. One young Sioux rises after another, demonstrating their Hun-like postures. The Indian youngsters lean somewhat forward and jump to the rhythm, jingling and shouting; others follow them, waving their clubs in all directions; finally women appear. It is a strange situation when men laugh and have fun dancing, while women jump around unsmilingly, with sadness. Indian women are obliged to do all works; one may conclude that this sad role makes it impossible for them to rejoice with men. After some time the drummer hits the drum for the last time and the dance stops, only to start again before long. (*Dziennik Poznański*, April 25, 1884)

17 The excerpts quoted here about ethnographic shows in the zoological garden in Poznań were found and made available to the author by Dagnosław Demski. For more on ethnographic performances in the Poznań zoo, see Demski 2018a, 2018b, 2020.

Nineteenth-century descriptions of public dance performances by Native Americans provide very little information on “Indian” practices of movement. Nevertheless, they remain an interesting source of data regarding how the foreign culture of movement was perceived and “understood” by the residents of Warsaw and Poznań. Since the way the “exotic” Others moved played an important role in the process of conceptualizing “savagery” and “primitivism,” it seems worthwhile to examine which properties of movement legitimized this perception in the minds of commentators at the time.

Indigenous dance performances were depicted in newspapers as wild, uninhibited, and exotic, and functioned as indices of a less developed culture. The Polish-language press described the movements of the Omaha “Indians” as “monotonous jumps around the campfire” to the steady sound of the drum and piercing wails. Attention was drawn to the differences in the way men and women moved and to the order in which the “procession” of dancers appeared on the stage (first the youths, then older men, and finally women). The dancing of men was portrayed as dynamic motion executed while leaning forward and accompanied by laughter and manifestations of joy, shouts, and hollow and monotonous singing. The way men moved contrasted starkly with the movements of the female dancers, even though both were based on jumping. The women’s dance was described as “repetitious” and “serious” but also as expressive and natural motion, which could even be considered provocative—“the unceremonious racy movements of the women inadvertently bring the cancan to mind.” Other elements of the existing press materials that deserve a mention are the close connections between motion and sound. Emphasizing these links reinforced the message and made the presented image more coherent. These connections also attested to the fact that in the case of forms of movement acted out during ethnographic shows, information was transmitted simultaneously through many channels.

Modern descriptions of the so-called primitive dances¹⁸ reveal the internal logic of the coexistence of motion and sound in foreign cultures of movement:

18 The first edition of Curt Sachs’s *World History of Dance* was published in 1933. The author presented a typology of dance, based on material from all over the world, differentiating between “savage” and “civilized” dances. “Indian” dances were incorporated into the former category (Sachs 1938).

Originally rhythmic sound accompaniment was provided by the dancers themselves . . . The rhythmic beat, however, was the most important element. This pulsation let all the dancers keep time together, and it helped them to remember their movements, too. By controlling the rhythm, the leader of the communal dance could regulate the pace of the movement. Primitive dancers also shared certain gestures and movements, which were drawn from their everyday lives. (Hamilton 2016, x–xi)

However, the descriptions published in nineteenth-century periodicals were constructed in accordance with a different set of assumptions and beliefs, in which the movements and the sounds made by “Indian” performers—juxtaposed with their half-naked bodies draped with “children’s ornaments”—were regarded as proof of the low level of their civilizational development. The fact that in “Indian” culture dance was ritual in nature, and did not serve as a means of artistic expression, was never taken into account (Sabot 2017, 56). The sense of superiority residents of Polish lands felt in relationship to non-European people is apparent from the descriptions of their performances. Native Americans were likened to wild animals in their movement and song, and were thus animalized and objectified. The representations of “Indians” published in periodicals at the time did not refer to the notion of primitive innocence. They were representations of barbarity. In the period in question, the concept of a barbarian denoted a human being that was not only savage, primal, and uncivilized, but also cruel, driven by primitive urges, and producing unintelligible sounds. It was Sioux “Indians” that best fit such stereotypical expectations of the audience.¹⁹ The descriptions of the movements and sounds made by Native Americans were important elements in the process of constructing representations of barbarity, which were emerging not to contest Europeans’ perception of non-European people but to reinforce and copy it.

In the context of the foreign culture of movement, the construction of representations of barbarity was based on at least several different elements. One of the most prominent involved numerous comparisons to wild ani-

19 The Bella Coolas, shown in 1885 in many European cities (including Wrocław [Ger. Breslau], in the local zoo; Czarnecka 2018), failed to capture audiences’ attention. They “lost” the competition with other “Indian” troupes, as they did not conform to the stereotypical expectations of the public (Weber 2016, 317).

mals. The press articles cited above imply that the “Indians” dance began with the performers removing their “pants made from tanned skins of wild animals” (*Dziennik Poznański*, April 25, 1884), while the dancers themselves were described as “the most savage, the most bloody human element in the world . . . that imperils the life of men from other races as a leopard or a hyena would” (*Kurier Warszawski*, May 10, 1884). The sounds made by the “Indians” during their dance were reported to resemble the howls of wild beasts. This “animal” energy was also manifested in the movement of the body, consisting in dynamic jumps and swinging one’s limbs in all directions. The uniformity of movement and the lack of more elaborate choreography was seen as indicative of the dancers’ “primitivism.” Compared to wild animals, “Indians” were to embody not only unstoppable natural force but also instinct, strength, and cruelty. The power of these men was to manifest itself in their dance through dynamic, broad, and dominant movement, their “Hun-like postures,” and the demonstrative swinging of their clubs.

The descriptions of both the movement and the sounds made by “Indians” during their dances, compared to the howling of animals, suggested that no “human” communication with these performers was possible. Thus, the press perpetuated European beliefs in which Native Americans were perceived as neither entirely human nor animal.

The motion of women was presented differently from the dancing of men, which indicates that the differences in the standards of moving applied in foreign cultures did not go unnoticed. The fact that women were the last to appear in the “procession” of dancers, behind all the men, and that they expressed no “joy” (as opposed to the male performers), was taken as an indication of their inferior status and subordination to men.²⁰ The dance of Native American women, although “primitive,” was associated with other emotions and stereotypes. The movements of women, whose costumes resembled “the fanciful dress of gypsies” (*Kurier Codzienny*, May 10, 1884), were described as monotonous, unceremonious, and suggestive. The compar-

20 The erroneous assumption that “Indian” women were fully subordinate to men acted as a significant benchmark differentiating Native American women from the ladies of Europe. This served to perpetuate the stereotype that women in Europe enjoyed a relatively high level of freedom and liberty, whereas female “Indians” were allegedly oppressed by their patriarchal system. These beliefs were, in fact, untrue. Native American women were not subjugated in their society but played a critical role. However “these ideas reinforced one of the traits that colonizers detected in backward, nomadic societies: that a society’s treatment of its women revealed the level of its civilization” (Sabot 2017, 50).

ison to the increasingly popular cancan²¹ was intended to inspire male sexual fantasies. The cancan was a highly energetic, physically demanding dance associated, on the one hand, with the sexualization of the female body and, on the other, with freedom of expression and women consciously exploring their own sexuality. References to the cancan suggest the sexualization (and consequently the objectification) of non-European women in the context of movement, especially since they appear alongside numerous comments on the beautiful physique of two young female dancers. Moreover, the remarks about the subordinate role “Sioux” women allegedly played in their society automatically negated the possibility of the conscious exploration of female sexuality and, consequently, of women’s agency to make decisions about themselves and their bodies.

To conclude, Native American dances, based on instinct and the biology of the body, stood in stark contrast with the “civilized” forms of movement of the day—“created with one’s mind,” rooted in control and sublimation of the natural reflexes, withholding, and perfecting one’s technique. It should be noted that models of movement, which are deeply rooted and mostly subconscious, cause us to distrust patterns of motion that differ from our own (Royce 2015, 193), leading to increased feelings of discomfort. It should therefore come as no surprise that nineteenth-century residents of the Polish territory, themselves used to the figures of the contredanse, the waltz, or country dances, perceived “Indian” dance performances as based on no principles and as “weird” in their violent intensity.

One feels equally compelled to discuss the fragmentary comments in the press that testify to attempts at finding some similarities between the foreign culture of movement and the forms with which residents of Warsaw were familiar: “The dance is highly peculiar. It somewhat resembles a cosack in its wild melody” (*Kurier Poranny*, May 10, 1884); “. . . these slender and thin figures . . . jumping to the beat of the drum as if doing the trepak or

21 As a French dance, the cancan began to develop in the music halls of the 1840s. Although initially danced by both men and women, it is now associated with a chorus line of female dancers. The dance, with its characteristic vigorous manipulation of skirts and petticoats, along with high kicks, splits, and cartwheels, was initially deemed scandalous and immoral in respectable society. From the 1890s the cancan’s popularity reached beyond the borders of France. It aroused fantasy. It was also “a venue of social mobility for working class women. This erotic, coquettish dance with cheeky gestures undermined Victorian values . . . The cancan was a dance of freedom, and dancers felt that if they chose to exploit their sexuality, they should be free to do it” (Hanna 2010, 221; see also Price 1998).

the kołomyjka” (*Kurier Warszawski*, May 10, 1884). The cossack, the trepak, and the kołomyjka are characterized by a lively, gradually increasing tempo, as well as jumps and stomping.²² The authors of the articles invoked these dances not so much to seek some common ground between the performers and the audience as to mitigate their feeling of discomfort and disquiet resulting from the confrontation with a foreign culture of movement (in this case, dance) in which all markers of otherness were accentuated and excessive.

Interestingly, one Warsaw periodical published a comment that hinted at a different aspect of the Omaha “Indians” stay in the city: “Their civilization reaches such levels that in their free time in Warsaw they danced . . . the quadrille, like any ordinary Parisian sales clerks” (*Kurier Codzienny*, May 20, 1884). This brief passage provides some interesting information. It proves that the Warsaw residents of 1884 had contact with the Native Americans outside the venues of ethnographic shows. In their spare time, the “Indians” went out on the town and entertained themselves. Furthermore, these “ethnographic actors” were familiar not only with the “Indian” dances they performed during their shows but also with European ones (the quadrille²³ was most certainly only mentioned as an example). This observation is significant given the fact that the ability to dance the quadrille, with all its complicated steps and patterns, which implied the need to “learn” this form of movement, undermined some of the stereotypes reproduced in ethnographic shows and pertaining to “exotic” Others. It also testified to the existence of intercultural exchange, which involved cultures of movement. The fact that outside the context of their shows Native Americans danced European dances proves that during public performances the “Indians” were consciously acting out themselves in their habitual roles, which they perceived to be the expectation of their audience.²⁴

22 All three dances developed in the East and were known to residents of Warsaw. The cossack and the kołomyjka (a dance of Carpathian highlanders) are Ukrainian folk dances, while the trepak is a traditional country dance from Russia and Ukraine.

23 The quadrille was an eighteenth-century salon dance that remained in fashion in nineteenth-century Europe and its colonies. It developed from the contredanse and was danced by a group of eight dancers forming a square. It was composed of four or five sets of the most popular figures borrowed from the contredanse (Royce 2015, 153).

24 This motif of “playing out” is also discernible in reports by Thomas P. Heenan, an American consul, sent to the US government from Odessa in May, September, and November 1896. The correspondence referred to an “Indian” man named Whirlwind, who was a member of a traveling troupe (from which he was ultimately expelled for drunkenness, after one of the Sevastopol performances) and toured the Russian Empire for

Surviving press materials pertaining to performances by non-European people from other parts of the world are less numerous than articles describing “Indian” shows presented in the Polish territory in 1884; yet these materials also include the motif of conceptualizing “savagery” and “primitivism” in the context of foreign cultures of movement. The Sinhalese troupe performing in Łódź in 1888 captivated the audience with their “exotic” dances, which the Polish-language press described as savage (*Dziennik Łódzki*, September 4, 1888). One writer reviewing the Sinhalese show staged in Warsaw in 1889 stated that the “savagery” of the otherwise friendly visitors from Ceylon was apparent in their dancing, brimming with mad passion (*Gazeta Polska*, August 7, 1889). “Savagery” went hand in hand with “primitivism,” which reassured the residents of the Polish lands of their own superior civilizational level. For instance, the Sinhalese show presented in the Warsaw zoo in September 1888 was described in the press as follows: “Their productions are unremarkable, the musical and choreographic performance has the appearance of very primitive sounds and jumps; yet all of this, as an overview lesson in ethnography, has its significance and is not without benefit to the wider public” (*Bluszcz [Ivy]*, September 12, 1888).

This is yet another example demonstrating that the sounds and motions made by the “exotic” Others on stage were frequently described together. The alleged simplicity of choreography was believed to testify to the “primitive” nature of foreign cultures of movement. In the eyes of the European public, jumping, as a movement that was physically demanding, fast, and dynamic, was a clear manifestation of “savagery.” Such an understanding of a foreign culture of movement resulted from the practice of comparing the exotic motions to what the Polish-speaking audience knew and perceived as the norm.

As a sidenote, the latter part of the above-cited passage also deserves attention. It accentuates the beneficial (educational) function of ethnographic performances. This seems interesting, given that not all periodicals published in the Polish territory under Russian administration presented a favorable view of the educational quality of this form of mass entertainment (cf. *Tygodnik Ilustrowany [Illustrated Weekly]*, July 13, 1889).

seven years, taking part in Wild West shows. The American consul in Odessa provided financial support to the “Indian” performer, who needed to purchase new attire—a tailor was tasked with sewing a special “Indian costume.” “This in turn allowed Whirlwind to secure employment in a small entertainment show in Odessa, presumably reprising his old warrior role on a much smaller stage” (King 2011, 134).

Returning to the core issue under analysis, it should be emphasized that the Polish-language press reviews from lands under Prussian administration also contained references to “savagery” and “primitivism” in relation to foreign cultures of movement. In August 1901 spectators visiting the Poznań zoo had a chance to see Sinhalese performers and a troupe from Togo. The groups performed together (see Demski 2018b). This is how their dances were described in the press:

Dancing and singing is accompanied by the monotonous beat from a drum of the simplest structure. While dancing, both tribes demonstrate incredible dexterity as their legs and their upper body are bending sideways in all directions. Their dances have nothing in common with ours. It is plain jumping performed by males and females. (*Wielkopolanin* [*Resident of Greater Poland*], September 12, 1901)

Several aspects of this passage appear noteworthy. The writer describing the Togolese and Sinhalese visit in the Poznań zoo emphasizes the dexterity with which the performers moved their legs and upper bodies while dancing and the fact that the motion involved bending and twisting the torso. Traditional European dances (courtly and pair dances, ballet and—to a lesser extent—country dances) relied on maintaining an upright posture and an unmoving torso. These were codes of dancing that served as a means to teach the need for controlling one’s emotions, instincts, and sexuality (Wiszniewski 2016, 143). Expressing feelings or instincts was associated with including the torso, the hips, and the chest in the movement of the body. In early twentieth-century Europe (Polish lands were no exception in this respect), these codes of movement were regarded as evident of remaining at a lower level of civilizational development.

In contrast with the other reviews cited above, the passage from *Wielkopolanin* describes practices of movement performed in public by two separate groups of “exotic” Others. Although one of them came from Asia and one from Africa, thereby representing cultures of movement based on dissimilar models and patterns of motion, the press review in the Poznań periodical does not mention that fact. Similarly disregarded are the differences in the practices of movement observed by men and women. This choice appears not to have been accidental. Even if the public performance involved all members

of the two groups simultaneously following the same scenario, its execution must have differed on the level of individual practice of movement (no two people move in exactly the same way). Given the clear statement regarding the lack of any common ground between “their” dances and “ours,” it seems that the decision to not point to any internal differences served the deliberate purpose of creating a rift between “Them” and “Us” and emphasizing its existence. In this context, any differences between foreign cultures were of secondary importance. The aim of such a representation was to consolidate and accentuate the division into two completely different groups: the “civilized” and the “savage,” the “modern” and the “primitive,” Europeans and people from outside Europe. In this model, geography served as a (true) instrument of racialization. Interestingly, the *Wielkopolanin* review, published in Prussian-administered lands, does not have a counterpart in any of the materials issued in Russian-governed parts of Poland. There, despite emphasizing differences between their own culture of movement and foreign ones, reviewers often tried to find some similarities by making comparisons to familiar forms of motion. The description taken from *Wielkopolanin* does not employ such techniques and therefore presents no common ground.

It would nonetheless be erroneous to think that the residents of the Polish territory under Prussian occupation were unable to see any differences between members of foreign cultures of movement. The analysis of press materials recounting performances of several “exotic” troupes (described individually) indicates that dissimilarities in the way Others from various parts of the world moved were, in fact, noted, albeit not always directly articulated in the press. This lack of detail in descriptions was often deliberate and helped create representations that involved certain “universals” regarding non-European Others—universals that were set in opposition to all things European, modern, and civilized.

Conclusion

Most Europeans had no direct experience of race before the 1950s. Many of them did not actually see a real “colored” person before attending ethnographic/exotic shows or viewing colonial movies . . . European imagination about “colored” . . . was mostly made of their performances. (Staszak 2015, 19)

The analysis of the Polish-language press reviews issued in Polish territory in 1880–1914 suggests that the elements of foreign cultures of movement presented during ethnographic shows were not only there to make the lineups more varied, but also served an important role in the process of constructing otherness and difference. Accounts of practices of motion may not have been as lacking in significance in this respect as, for example, descriptions of the physical features of non-European people, yet the accounts still constituted a clear marker of otherness.

Surviving press articles provide little data regarding foreign cultures of movement. They are, however, a reliable source of information on how residents of the Polish territory perceived and understood these cultures in the context of ethnographic shows in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. Descriptions published in periodicals indicate that the inhabitants of Polish lands based their attitudes on superficial images and representations and somewhat subjective oversimplifications, which were systematically reinforced and perpetuated by the press. In popular consciousness, ways of moving used by “Indians,” most African people (with the exception of for example the Ashanti), and most Asians (excepting the Chinese and the Japanese) were allegedly indicative of their “primitive” and “savage” nature and of the low level of their civilizational development. The beliefs held by residents of urban regions of late partition-period Poland were based on the assumption that foreign cultures of movement (or at least the majority thereof) were easy to decipher. This was because Europeans were accepting of universal conceptions about “uncivilized” people, which presented them almost as timeless societies that abhorred change and lacked a future. Such images were allegedly made manifest in practices of movement (though not only through them). The dances of “exotic” Others were not regarded as sophisticated and codified but as free and childish. The only attempts at comparing “exotic” and familiar forms of movement that I was able to find were published in periodicals from the Russian-administered part of Poland. However, in this case foreign and well-known dances were not compared to disrupt stereotypes but rather to alleviate the discomfort and anxiety associated with confrontations with a foreign culture of movement.

Any analysis of press descriptions of various aspects of ethnographic shows in late partition-period Poland ought to refer to the phenomenon *María Isabel*

Romero Ruiz (writing about the phenomenon of Josephine Baker) described as the “commodification of otherness” (2012, 135). Ethnographic shows staged in Europe indubitably belonged to the category of commercial entertainment, and as such were organized mainly to generate profit. This was a fact known to the entrepreneurs, to the institutions that hosted the events, and also to the “ethnographic actors” and the spectators themselves. Deliberate manipulation of fantasies associated with “exotic” bodies, especially bodies in motion, became an important market strategy. In most cases, the success of “ethnographic actors” depended not on their ability to disrupt the stigmatizing stereotypes associated with race or gender but on their providing an excellent illustration, or even caricature, of those stereotypes. In this context, foreign forms and practices of movement presented on stage played a significant role not only as activities and elements of the spectacle but also as practices of consumption. This being said, these stereotypes were sometimes transcended, as illustrated by the (slightly later) example of Josephine Baker.

Press descriptions (in this case descriptions of practices of movement) differed depending on the context and their target audiences as well as on the time and place of their publication. In this respect, they are “situated” while remaining mainstream cultural products. The press had a considerable impact on the functioning of the entertainment industry and on the perceptions shared by at least some residents of urban centers in late partition-period Poland. The descriptions of foreign cultures of movement published in the periodicals of the day were coherent with the society of their time. They represented the approach to movement that remained dominant more or less until the outbreak of World War I. Within this framework, manifestations of so-called savagery—that is, unrestrained, violent, and technically unsophisticated motions—were negatively valued, and performing them was associated with civilizational inferiority. Since the norm was constructed as white, many “exotic” practices of movement were described as “strange” and not conforming to the existing standards. Nevertheless, foreign cultures of movement could fascinate and sometimes even astonish European audiences. “Exotic” bodies in motion entranced them with their strength, speed, liteness, and dexterity; with their sense of rhythm; and—paradoxically—with their natural charm and lack of restraint.

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CHAPTER
EIGHT

The World of Creation: Press Accounts of Ethnographic Shows in Circus Performances in Upper Silesia

Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska

At the end of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century the towns of Upper Silesia were regularly visited by numerous traveling circuses. Artists appeared primarily in the larger towns—for example, Bytom (Ger. Beuthen), Gliwice (Ger. Gleiwitz), Katowice (Ger. Kattowitz), Opole (Ger. Oppeln), Racibórz (Ger. Ratibor), and Zabrze (Ger. Hindenburg). Somewhat less frequently they visited developing towns such as Chorzów (Ger. Königshütte) and Siemianowice Śląskie (Ger. Laurahütte). During their tours circus troupes traveled through consecutive towns, never staying longer than a few days in a single location. At the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century the rapidly developing industrial centers of Upper Silesia (see Heines 1976) provided a perfect space for such performances, and the number of shows presented—at least one big circus a year performed in larger towns—suggests that traveling circuses counted as popular sources of entertainment in that territory.

Despite numerous political upheavals, between the beginning of the twentieth century and the outbreak of World War II popular entertainment remained connected with circus. And even though over time the cinema grew ever more popular, until the mid-1930s Silesian towns eagerly welcomed traveling artists. From accounts in the press we can deduce that tickets for their performances usually sold out. Significantly, Upper Silesia was visited by circus companies founded not only in the territory of Germany but also in France and the Netherlands. Numerous circuses also kept returning to the territories discussed here with a new program every few to every dozen or so years, and circus directors gradually built an extensive advertising campaign around it. This chapter does not focus on all circus shows presented in Upper Silesia before World War II but intends to examine the circus shows that

included ethnographic performances in their main program.¹ In the twentieth century, the circus became a place for presenting “exotic cultures.” And although the ethnographic shows underwent deep transformation at arenas, they nevertheless replicated the essential quality of such performances: amusing audiences with radical otherness. The aim of this chapter is thus to analyze how such shows established their presence in the pre-war circus and simultaneously to examine the press descriptions and advertisements of circuses as sources of information concerning ethnographic shows.

Ethnographic shows developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, primarily in Europe, but also in the United States of America (Corbey 1993), though researchers have documented ethnographic shows as early as the sixteenth century, when Europeans brought residents of the New World to the Old World to present them at royal courts (see Denzin 2013; Fusco 1994). Therefore the notion of “ethnographic shows” encompasses a vast array of different types of show, ranging from quasi-scientific presentations in the style of an anthropological examination—the “human zoo,” exhibiting craftwork, dancing, and skills—to performances at circus arenas (Blanchard et al. 2008; Blanchard, Boëtsch, and Nanette 2011; Sánchez-Gómez 2013). Originally, organizers of ethnographic shows explained their activity as scientifically motivated (see Bogdan 1988). Moreover, the shows reinforced colonial policies as they demonstrated remote cultures and their representatives as uncivilized, and requiring civilizing by Europeans (see Arnaut 2011; Blanchard, Boëtsch, and Nanette 2011; Denzin 2013; Toulmin 2011).

As time went by, however, and towns gradually developed, their inhabitants grew more affluent and mass culture and technology evolved, thus enabling certain social groups to be afforded more—or some—leisure time. In consequence, the cultural significance of mass entertainment kept increasing (see Bogdan 1988; Otte 2006). As a result of these processes, ethnographic shows became more entertainment-related in character. Moreover, the shows continued to professionalize in order to satisfy the growing expectations of the audience, who—especially in larger towns—became familiar with such displays of the exotic. At the beginning of the twentieth century,

¹ Research for this study was carried out as a part of the project “Staged Otherness: Human Oddities in Central Europe, 1850–1939” (project no. 2015/19/B/HS3/02143) granted by the National Science Center, Poland.

spectators were no longer satisfied with the mere act of displaying representatives of foreign cultures on stage. Therefore, the shows had to be enriched, complemented with artistic stunts and elaborate costumes and scenography (cf. Demski in this volume). Analogous to European performers, artists from remote parts of the world were supposed to demonstrate exquisite skills and originality (cf. Czarnecka in this volume). The circus was one of the art forms enabling such transformation. It is thus essential to mention that in the twentieth-century European circus, shows included performances by representatives of distant cultures in their main repertoire. They became established as one of the main attractions of the circus programs, unlike the case of American circuses, at which such performances often constituted an element of the so-called sideshows—separate, smaller performances (Bogdan 1988, 46).

The circus show's primary goal was to present to audiences, above all, the "savage" and "barbarian" nature of the performers; it exemplified the human oddities displayed to audiences in the above-mentioned sideshows (Bogdan 1988, 177). In the enterprises discussed in the present chapter, the representatives of "exotic cultures" constituted professional artists, members of a troupe who delivered a complex dance performance, acrobatic stunts, or magic tricks—and not a mere demonstration of "uncivilized wild nature." This is, however, not to say that as a place of professionalization and artistic development of ethnographic shows the circus did not contribute to establishing and reinforcing existing stereotypes of the "civilized West" and "less developed exotic cultures" (see Bogdan 1988). There was, however, a different manner of achieving such reinforcement of stereotypes—namely, through emphasizing the distance and differences of the performing peoples from the representatives of Western cultures, simultaneously pointing to the orientalism and unusual character of the art they presented.

Importantly, information regarding ethnographic shows in circuses traveling through Upper Silesia can be found mainly in advertisements and press notes. In other German regions, more types of circus advertisements can be identified, and it is known that an important role in visualizing the image of "exotic cultures" was played by posters promoting ethnographic shows taking place in circuses (Ciarlo 2011). In the territory of Upper Silesia, posters, leaflets, and circus programs were not preserved, so it is difficult to determine whether the same advertising techniques were used there as in other

German cities. Only traces of visual representations of the shows are present on the letterheads of documents preserved in some local archives (figs. 8.1 and 8.2). Importantly, however, press advertisements printed in Upper Silesian newspapers were similar to those published in magazines in other parts of Germany. Moreover, advertisements with the same or very similar content were published in both German- and Polish-language newspapers. Press titles with a strongly anti-German profile, such as *Polak (The Pole)* founded by Wojciech Korfanty, advertised the German Jewish circus Blumenfeld and Strassburger and also, for example, the Dutch company Carré. Advertisements for circus shows mostly appeared in newspapers with large print runs, which seems consistent with the desire of circus directors to reach the maximum numbers of potential visitors.

Aside from press materials, very limited information about ethnographic shows was preserved in Upper Silesia, which is also true of other regions of Central and Eastern Europe. This situation significantly impedes the study of ethnographic shows. Therefore, the aim of the present chapter is, above all, to examine the possibilities of using press advertisements as a source of information concerning this phenomenon. The majority of research on ethnographic shows has concerned Western Europe and the United States (e.g. Bank 2002; Blanchard et al. 2008; Blanchard, Boëtsch and Nanette 2011; Denzin 2013; Sánchez-Gómez 2013). Analyses resulting from such research leave out or give only very general accounts of the territory of today's Central and Eastern Europe, across which the shows were also performed. Furthermore, literature cited in this article concerning the theme of ethnographic shows in Germany (Thode-Arora 1989; Dreesbach 2005) refers primarily to the territory of the contemporary German state and pays less attention to those areas currently within the Polish borders that were once part of the German territories but later became part of Poland—some areas, after World War I, and some, after World War II. The fact that contemporary state borders influence research concerning a phenomenon that occurred at the end of nineteenth century and during the first decades of the twentieth century is symptomatic. On the one hand, there are obstacles to accessing archival materials and, on the other, language presents a challenge—for example, Upper Silesia, formerly a part of the German state, was inhabited by Poles and thus some of the documents are written in Polish (while most are in German). Moreover, in the focus area, Polish-language newspapers,



Figure 8.1. Letterhead of Sarrasani circus, 1913. Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach, Odział w Gliwicach, Akta Miasta Gliwice, Magistrat Miasta Gliwice (Magistrat der Stadt Gleiwitz) I/1888, p. 462. Letter from the circus director Hans Stosch-Sarrasani to the Gliwice [Gleiwitz] Municipality, April 10, 1913.



Figure 8.2. Letterhead of Barum circus, 1916. Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach, Odział w Gliwicach, Akta Miasta Gliwice, Magistrat Miasta Gliwice (Magistrat der Stadt Gleiwitz) I/1888, pp. 561–62. Letter from the circus director Arthur Kreiser to the Gliwice [Gleiwitz] Municipality, February 19, 1916.

which today constitute one of the main sources of information on performances of that era, were issued along with German titles.

More importantly, studying sources originating from territories located within present state borders reveals a conviction that certain concepts and ideas—including those related to entertainment—were born in the political center. Studying ethnographic shows within this context sheds light on their role in the social and political conditions from which they originated. However, at the periphery such phenomena could acquire a different character, serve different purposes, and gain local specificity (see Baraniecka-Olszewska 2020; cf. Mesarič in this volume). Research on the ethnographic shows presented inside the present-day Polish territories that used to belong to Germany (Baraniecka-Olszewska 2019; Czarnecka 2018; Demski 2018, 2020) has proven that local particularities—not necessarily resulting from political issues but rather from the development of infrastructure or during a peculiar economic boom—define other contexts for interpreting these shows. A consideration of distance from the political center reveals that interpretations of ethnographic shows originating from the center are sometimes insufficient for describing the complexity of a phenomenon that traveled through lands, across local political boundaries, and between social contexts; what was happening on the periphery has to be taken into account.

Upper Silesia was distant from the political and ideological center of Germany. In this context it constituted a borderland, where at the turn of the century national identities were distinct (Kamusella 2005). Apart from Germans, Czechs, Poles, and Jews, a group identifying itself as Silesians resided there (Kamusella 2002). An analysis of press advertisements demonstrates that circus directors wanted to find audiences for their shows within each of these groups. However, my research on ethnographic shows in circuses traveling through Upper Silesia does not include an analysis of the social conditions of the region. I focus primarily on the described area as a place characterized by excellent infrastructure for traveling troupes. As I will demonstrate, the concentration of shows in a rather limited region, or even attempts by some companies to “conquer” others, and a visible, intense competition for economic success in Upper Silesia, in my opinion, enables us to understand the difficulties concerning contemporary research on ethnographic shows in circuses during the first decades of the twentieth century,

while at the same time revealing possibilities and limitations associated with using press materials in studying ethnographic shows.

The majority of circuses presenting ethnographic shows in Upper Silesia were registered in Germany. Some of them were not only traveling enterprises, but had their headquarters there—permanent circus buildings. In the cases of the Sarrasani circus (Dresden), the Busch circus (Berlin, Wrocław [Ger. Breslau]), the Hagenbeck circus (Hamburg), the Charles circus (hereafter referred to as the Krone circus; Munich), and the Barum circus, founded in Königsberg, all the owners were German. The region was also visited by companies owned by Jewish families, which had no permanent arenas but were in possession of headquarters for winter, namely Blumenfeld in Góra (Ger. Guhrau) and Strassburger in Strzelin (Ger. Strehlen). A Dutch circus, Carré, and a French circus, Angelo, also performed in Upper Silesia.

Egalitarian Entertainment

Nowadays the circuses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are perceived as an egalitarian form of entertainment. Marline Otte (2006) claims that performances at circus arenas facilitated a particular combination of popular and highbrow culture. The scenarios of the shows combined acrobatics, ballet, horse-riding, military drills, and clown performances, often occurring in a frivolous, erotic, and wild atmosphere (Otte 2006; Siedlecka 2017). Such performances could be viewed by all social groups: audiences included both royalty and laborers (Otte 2006). The circus became a place of mass entertainment consumed by mass audiences; thus, in a broad sense, it constituted egalitarian entertainment. The development of towns and cities, including industrial ones, such as in Upper Silesia, translated into a gradual increase of wealth of their inhabitants who, consequently, could afford to pay for entertainment.

Moreover, at the turn of the century the circus became a truly modern phenomenon. It used all the technical developments offered by its era. Thus in Germany this entertainment genre became a specific branch of business, not only for German but also for Jewish families (Otte 2006). The fact that different social groups were able to spend money on leisure time guaranteed that the circus could not only get by but could also be an investment. In turn, this provided the opportunity of using increasingly innovative technologies to arrange the performances, which attracted audiences interested in

viewing them. The electrification of the circus and illumination of the arena enabled a few shows per day to be performed. Other technical solutions made possible, for instance, filling the arena with water and offering performances on water, as at the Busch circus. At the same time, the development of communications infrastructure significantly contributed to extending the scope of circus troupe tours. Even the companies that had permanent venues embarked on tours. The development of a railway network and supply trains enabled circuses to spread their wings. Usually, circus companies possessed their own trains to transport people, animals, and equipment. For the duration of the tour these trains, moreover, became the place of residence for artists and circus employees. The correlation of the development of circus companies and the railway is clearly demonstrated in the case of Upper Silesia, where the network of connections between towns was extremely dense, due to the industrial character of the region and the necessity of connecting particular mines and ironworks.

Owing to this development, during tours through Upper Silesia, circuses performed their shows in consecutive towns within a rather limited area. The majority of towns mentioned in the present chapter are concentrated in a relatively small space. Today—except for Racibórz and Opole, which are about 70 and 100 kilometers away from these towns, respectively—the towns have grown together to form a single metropolitan area. At the turn of the century, however, they were a dozen kilometers apart at most. Interestingly, despite the towns' close proximity, circuses were still able to find audiences. At the same time, though, it was exactly the concentration of towns and, consequently, of performances that made Upper Silesia a difficult area for circus owners, who were kept in permanent mobilization and had to monitor the competition to attract spectators for their shows.

At the same time, circuses continued to refer to established aesthetic models and used effective methods of attracting audiences (Barcz 2014). In this sense, they were still rooted in the nineteenth century and transferred elements of the nineteenth-century atmosphere into the twentieth century (Barcz 2014, 188). One way of doing this was through ethnographic shows, incorporated into the programs of the twentieth-century circuses from nineteenth-century stages, which, combined with other components, constituted the amazing circus world (Baraniecka-Olszewska 2019). This type of entertainment was mainly intended to surprise the audience and prove that on

stage impossible things could happen (Siedlecka 2017; Cihlăr 2017). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the circus was intended for the general public who, regardless of origin or wealth, expected entertainment to bewilder them, allowing them respite from their mundane lives and everyday problems.

The Land of the Eerie: Ethnographic Shows' Place in the Circus

Circuses promised to meet the expectations of audiences and introduce them to a world of amusements that transgressed the laws of nature. The Upper Silesian press at the beginning of the twentieth century, both Polish-language newspapers and the dominant German-language newspapers, was full of circus announcements and advertisements. The region is peculiar not only due to its concentration of towns but also due to the large number of newspapers and magazines published there. A few Polish-language and several German-language titles were issued in almost every town. Apart from local titles, a regional Upper Silesian press was also published. Consequently, a large number of press advertisements and an immense amount of information related to circuses in this region were generated, providing an abundant source of material for interpretation.

Interestingly, all published advertisements of the shows, regardless of the place or decade, appeared to respond to specific aesthetic expectations and to promote a rather conventional package of attractions. They promised unforgettable experiences; exceptional, exotic performances; and an exquisite, unique level of artistic and technological solutions. The language and pathos of these advertisements seems funny nowadays, however; they also suggest that circuses did not want to be associated with cheap entertainment. The circus had the ambition to establish itself as a form of highbrow art, despite the fact that its foundations were democratic and open to all social groups, which was proven by ticket prices and information on the general availability of performances to everyone. The lowest social groups were to feel at home there and the highest ones were to be provided with the sophisticated experiences they were used to.

For that reason each circus company designed its press advertisements in a way that would appeal to the imagination of its potential audiences. They unveiled some secret that would be demonstrated in the arena, without giving

a full description of what would be shown. This could only be learned through participation in the show, but already the press descriptions constituted the first stage of creating the magical world of the arena. What appears significant in the context of the present analysis is that advertisements of circus performances were similar to each other and recommended shows in a similar vein during the entire period from the beginning of the twentieth century until the outbreak of World War II. For this reason the references to advertisements of the circus performances mentioned below have not been presented in chronological order. They are supposed to demonstrate the attempts of the circus directors to respond to specific expectations of their audiences, at the same time providing an introduction to a discussion on the role of press advertisements in studying ethnographic shows, which I will conduct later, using the example of advertisements from 1912 (a year with a particular abundance of circus performances in Upper Silesia). It was a period when Upper Silesia was visited by a number of famous circuses, which used the local press to compete for spectators and gain the highest rank among entertainment companies. At the same time, 1912 was a part of the so-called golden age of the circus—which came to an end by the outbreak of World War I—with performances presented at that time demonstrating the peak of artistic and technological solutions (see Otte 2006). The combination of these circumstances made the advertisements and announcements published in the Upper Silesian press in 1912 a perfect ground for analyzing press advertisements as a source of information about circuses and ethnographic shows of the era.

My starting point will be the advertisement of a relatively late show, the performance of the Strassburger circus in 1932, to demonstrate that, despite technological advancements and strong competition from the cinema, the aesthetic of the circus was based on methods of creating a world of wonders that had been elaborated through the decades. These wonders invariably involved transgressing the laws of nature through acrobatics and magic and creating an atmosphere of exoticism through presenting distant cultures whose representatives intrigued audiences with their mysterious appearance and behavior or untamed wild spirit, sometimes reinforced by the presence of wild animals on stage.

The advertisement from *Der Oberschlesische Wanderer (Upper Silesia Wanderer)*, June 14, 1932, concerning shows in Zabrze and Bytom introduces the main attraction in the following way:

The exotic ethnographic show (*Exotische Völkerschau*). 500 people. 500 animals from all continents. The most prominent artists from five continents. 40 stunts in each show. 150 most exquisite pure bred horses.

The exoticism of presented cultures and art performed by their representatives accompanied by trained animals was for many years considered the main attraction of the circus and a way of amusing the audiences. Ethnographic shows, combined with other elements of geographically distant exoticism, constituted one component of this eerie stage reality. Not surprisingly, the very same qualities of the performances were emphasized in the advertisements of other circuses. For example, before its arrival in Bytom in 1913 the Blumenfeld circus declared:

There has never existed a company as huge as to parallel the abilities of the Blumenfeld circus. The newest and greatest attractions will be presented, which have never been presented by any similar company. An amazing program of 15 stunts. One in the whole world. (*Katolik Codzienny* [*Daily Catholic*], April 1, 1913)

Further, the advertisement reads:

There is a performance of a lion mastering the art of horse-riding. There is a quadrille of Bedouins on 8 camels. There is Mr. A. Blumenfeld as a violin virtuoso on an elephant head! Apart from this sensational performance Mr. Blumenfeld will also introduce a group of trained elephants. There is the original training of director A. Blumenfeld Sr. with his small and smallest horses accompanied by a pack of dogs. There is Mr. La Roche with his astounding stunt entitled Secret Ball. There is catching of a cannon ball by gladiators called the Planetary Three.

Following the above list of attractions is a reassuring statement that the audience will, moreover, have the chance to watch “The show of most exquisite female artists of horse-riding and acrobats as well as supreme jockeys and horse-racing riders accompanied by clowns and augustes,² etc.”

2 An auguste is a type of clown who entertains the audience with exaggerated expressions and clumsy movements.

It appears that the director of this undertaking designed the program using all possible types of circus stunts, including ethnographic shows, to put the audience under a strong impression that the world on stage is completely different from the mundane one. Describing the shows of the Blumenfeld circus, *Głos Śląski (Silesian Voice)* announced that “each audience member left the circus satisfied as the program was splendid and sensational, one unlikely to be watched in a provincial town” (April 5, 1913). One could assume that such an accumulation of tricks contributing to the magic of the arena matched the preferences of the spectators. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by other advertisements as they demonstrate that directors of other circuses adopted similar strategies.

Advertisements of the Barum circus visiting Upper Silesia in 1925 reveal that its owner stuck to the same principle. In advertisements of this company, ethnographic shows were positioned as one of the main attractions. The advertisement published in *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost (East German Morning News)* on October 6, 1925 announced a “traveling show of people and animals from all parts of the world,” promising a performance that, according to the fashion established during the golden age of the circus, used the most innovative technical solutions and unusual skills of humans and animals. The advertisement read:

Barum brings entire groups of exotic peoples. Hard and firm silhouettes of northern Africans, Indians, the Chinese, magicians gifted by nature, traveling artists and fakirs, Arabs—avengers with fiery eyes. A complete ethnic show, an engrossing and educational experience.

Readings of the Upper Silesian press demonstrate that similar attractions were also offered by the French circus, Angelo, which visited Racibórz in 1909. The advertisement published in *Nowiny Raciborskie (Racibórz News)* on September 14, 1909 (see also *Neues Gleiwitzer Intelligenz Blatt [New Gleiwitz Intelligentsia Newspaper]*, June 29, 1909) promised an unforgettable performance featuring representatives of different ethnic groups:

Arabs as astounding jumpers. Bedouins building splendid pyramids. South Americans as masters of horseback riding. Russians as brazen steppe riders. Female horse-riding masters of all nationalities. Danes as

bold acrobats on bars. Norwegians as graceful funambulists. Indians as spectacular elephant tamers. Turks as wrestlers and gladiators. Frenchmen as classy jockeys. Italians as exceptionally hilarious clowns. Spaniards as acrobats. Englishmen as amusing jesters. Austrians as horse riders. Hungarians as rapid riders . . . Each program of this spectacular company includes 25 best productions, which is twice as many as in every other circus.

The year 1909 was important in the history of circus shows in Upper Silesia as the region was visited by the famous Sarrasani and Angelo enterprises, alongside the Olympia, Westfalia, and Maine circuses, which did not have ethnographic shows in their programs (*Der Oberschlesische Wanderer*, July 2, 1909). During this period more aggressive and more elaborate advertising campaigns were conducted; however, the really fierce competition in the circus world occurred in 1912. In this year press advertisements clearly demonstrated the limitations in using the press as the source of information about circuses and ethnographic shows presented during their performances. I believe that the press materials from 1912 provide a particularly interesting set of data for analysis. A number of renowned circuses visited Upper Silesia that year and, one after another, traveled to the same towns, published advertisements in the same newspapers, and competed for the same audiences. As a result, a geographically limited area became the arena of intense competition of particular circuses, whose owners were determined to sell all of their tickets. Some of their actions were visible in the press of the era.

In 1912, advertisements with content almost identical to the fragments of the one by the Angelo circus, quoted above, announced August performances of the Dutch Carré circus in Zabrze. Their advertisements were almost identical in visual design and announced exactly the same attractions as the advertisements of the Angelo circus from three years earlier (*Kuryer Śląski* [*Silesian Daily*], August 16, 1912; *Zabrzer Anzeiger* [*Zabrze Gazette*], August 16 and 18, 1912). The advertisements contained only text, but their typographical arrangement and content unequivocally prove that the Carré and Angelo circuses were promoted by the same advertisement template. From this one can conclude that there functioned a certain fixed canon of attractions offered in circuses, and advertisements referred to this list in order to maximize its efficiency in attracting visitors, while a detailed, realistic program of a particular

show was not that significant in an advertising campaign. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the circus was associated with a specific, defined aesthetic. Audiences were attracted to the circus by the promise of viewing everything they expected—namely, eeriness and exoticism.

Advertisements for the Carré circus drew a lot of attention, but not for copying the advertisements of the Angelo circus. Interestingly, the latter was not involved in the conflict described below. Accusations of unfair conduct toward the Dutch company were expressed by the Blumenfeld circus and regarded the copying of the advertisements of the Henry circus and the appropriation of a horse-training stunt called *Schulpferd und Ballerina* (Learning Horse and Ballerina), which had been presented in the program of the Blumenfeld circus. The Carré circus advertised the stunt in the following way:

Learning Horse and Ballerina. The newest, exquisite show of training during which the solo dancer performs the most difficult dances and the horse copies them precisely after her, followed by them dancing together. Not seen in any circus ever before! People are talking about it everywhere! (*Górnoślązak [Upper Silesian]*, August 29, 1912)

In response to announcements of the shows of the Dutch company, the Blumenfeld circus invested in a peculiar “black PR” campaign, comprising announcements entitled *Die Totengräber des Circus* (*Gravediggers of the Circus*). It spoke of a foul and treacherous promotion of the Carré circus by juxtaposing the press advertisement of this circus with the one by the Henry circus; it also pointed out appropriation of the Blumenfeld circus stunt by the Dutch artists (*Der Oberschlesische Wanderer*, August 19, 1912; *Zabrzer Anzeiger*, August 22, 1912). The Carré circus, in turn, published a huge announcement rejecting these charges and accusing the Blumenfeld circus of unfair competition and a disgraceful attempt at slandering Carré. To prove his point, the director of the Dutch circus quoted fragments of press articles praising the performances of his company, including the *Schulpferd und Ballerine* stunt (*Zabrzer Anzeiger*, August 23, 1912). This conflict seems to have taken place only in the press to make sure that its subject reached the greatest number of people, as it was intended to create noise in the media around the circus performances and attract audience attention rather than to prove that one of the parties was right.

In 1912 the competition among circus shows in the region was intense. The similar artistic and technological possibilities among circus companies of the era led them to look for different ways of emphasizing their uniqueness, while at the same time sticking to the well-established aesthetics of the circus. One of these tactics of suggesting the uniqueness of performances consisted in directing readers' attention toward a stunt that would distinguish a particular performance from others and making this stunt the showcase of a given circus. Ethnographic shows were sometimes used in this way (see also Baraniecka-Olszewska 2019). In 1912 Gliwice was visited also by the Hagenbeck circus. The following advertisement placed in *Der Oberschlesische Wanderer* (October 15, 1912) promised the following:

The Indian ethnographic show of the Hagenbeck circus: 150 Indians: men, women and children, elephants, bears, monkeys, snakes. Unmatched and most outstanding undertaking of this sort. Feast at the court of Maharaja from Maisur [contemporary Mysore]: the exhibition of the Indian prince, Guarani Indians—Acrobats, Magician, plate juggling, Temple dancers, elephants as working animals, acrobatic stunts on moving bamboo, flame-thrower, bear fight, jugglers and dagger throwers, monkey training, the tent—a parade to celebrate the Indian prince. Madras marketplace.

Upper Silesian audiences had a vast array of entertainment to choose from at the time. In the same year, the Strassburger circus (Katowice), with no ethnographic shows in its program at this time, and the Charles circus (Gliwice and Racibórz) presented their shows in the region:

An original worldwide circus whose troupe consists of the best genuine Arabs, the Chinese, Moroccans, Indians, only original exotic groups of animals and an original New European artistic quality. (*Nowiny Raciborskie*, May 7, 1912)

Such a concentration of similar performances in a small area explains the essence of elaborate advertising campaigns and anti-campaigns conducted by other circuses intended to guarantee the companies a permanent position in the entertainment industry of the given era. The Blumenfeld circus presented its shows in Upper Silesia in both 1911 and 1913; hence, the strug-

gle to achieve a favorable position among other circuses appears understandable. The actions of the director of the circus preserved in the press materials, however, gain specific meaning in the context of analyzing the role of press materials in studies on ethnographic shows.

The Circus in the Upper Silesian Press

The example of copying exactly advertisements of circus shows (it is difficult to determine whether it was done by circus directors or, rather carelessly, by editorial boards) provides us with yet another argument suggesting that press advertisements should be used with caution as sources of information on circus performances in the first decades of the twentieth century. Obviously, advertisements presented an imagined, exaggerated world of the arena, and the creation of this magical reality began at the stage of preparing advertisements or posters. In fact, the press itself constitutes a demanding historical source (Allen and Sieczkiewicz 2010; Baumgartner 1981); therefore, particular attentiveness is recommended when working with press material, especially when advertisements are used as material for interpretation. However, the entire field of ethnographic shows is immersed in a profound awareness that in their case, maybe even more intensely than with research of other phenomena relying on press sources, the image of the shows presented in newspapers is an act of creation itself. It constitutes an introduction to the performance, a sample of the eerie world established on stage during circus shows. In my opinion, performing remote, exotic stage reality started already at the level of advertisements of circus shows.

My research, however, was for a long time based on the conviction that even the most incredible and unbelievable image of the shows presented in press advertisements pertained to specific performances and resulted from the intentional activity of particular circus owners. It was thus supposed to provide the best promotion of their shows and was in a sense consistent with the other elements of a circus enterprise run by a particular director. As it turns out, press advertisements could also present the reality of somebody else's arena or some model stage, describing not so much the particular circuses and their programs or advertising strategies but rather general expectations toward circus companies.

The last insight reveals a lot about the world of circuses and ethnographic shows from the first decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, with most performances it is possible to confirm that a given advertising campaign constituted an element promoting a particular company and resulted from a policy adopted by its owner; consequently, the same advertisements could be found in all locations along the route of a particular circus tour. Some examples illustrating this are incredibly heated advertising campaigns of the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show (see Baraniecka-Olszewska 2020; Hlebowicz 2019) and the Sarrasani circus (see Baraniecka-Olszewska 2019). It is also intriguing to encounter such press advertisements, which are difficult to connect unequivocally with a specific circus company as it is not entirely clear who appropriated them or their rhetoric. The existence of such advertisements, although hardly credible as historical sources, at the same time reveals the precision of people's expectations toward the circus and elements that had to be included in the announced program in order to attract audiences. As we can observe in the case of analyzed press advertisements, ethnographic shows were also considered core circus attractions.

The majority of directors put a lot of effort into making their advertisements original and proving to their audiences that the program presented in a given year was a brand new show. However, reading through a few hundred advertisements and announcements of circus performances in Upper Silesia from the turn of the century to World War II made clear that all circus announcements referred to the same types of stunts, involved a common aesthetic, and, due to regional characteristics, competed for literally the same audiences. These audiences, though—also due to the concentration of circus shows in a very limited territory—were already used to a particular type of entertainment. Therefore, press sources concerning circuses and ethnographic shows revealed information primarily about the expectations of the people of that era regarding entertainment and their preferred ways of spending leisure time. Simultaneously, however, the press sources inform us about the emergence of a specific aesthetic of the circus, which was expected to be announced in advertisements and offered on stage. The circus became an independent entertainment form—recognized, liked, and, importantly, presenting its own artistic canon. Audiences were expected to realize this, which is why the content of press advertisements was strongly conventionalized.

The End of the Era of Traveling Circuses

The world created in the circus arena remained within the realm of a magical reality transgressing the laws of nature. Circuses performed on stage their own spatiality and temporality, transferring spectators to the world of wonders. The egalitarian nature of the circus assured its immense popularity. It might seem that a truly democratic, mass entertainment form was born in the circus, involving all social groups and superseding national and class divisions. Yet the moment of the circus's development and of its decline coincided with a period of extremely intense geopolitical transformations, which impeded its functioning beyond social divisions. The world created on stage enabled the spectators' detachment from the mundane. In no way, however, did this protect the circuses themselves from a confrontation with harsh reality. Consequently, regardless of the intentions of its directors, the circus was inscribed into the intricacies of political and social transformations. The European circus did not manage to establish itself as an apolitical phenomenon (see Otte 1999).

The twentieth-century history of Europe, including that of Germany, played a key role in this process. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the circus experienced an intense period of development. The golden age of the circus lasted until World War I. The major economic crisis that followed the war also impacted the condition of the circus. During the period of post-war reconstruction, the perception of the circus in Upper Silesia started to become governed and perceived through, among others, notions of intensifying national movements and nationalisms (see Kamusella 2002). After changes to the border following World War I, the Silesian Uprisings, and the plebiscite on Silesian self-determination in 1921, German circuses no longer performed in towns that belonged to Poland; they only traveled around the German territory. In other regions of contemporary Poland, appeals had appeared even earlier to boycott performances of German companies—for instance, the Hagenbeck circus in 1917. One could, therefore, assume that Polish national activists perceived the circus as a tool of Germanization.

The stage reality presented in circuses—"exotic cultures," oriental outfits, tricks, and wild animal training—did not constitute a commentary on political transformations of the era. The circus arena created its own world,

which transgressed the laws of nature and political and social phenomena. Circus companies, however, operated as a part of a specific reality, which led to the collapse of this field of entertainment in the form known in the pre-war period. The circus of the beginning of the twentieth century came to an end after World War II because of its links with politics and the economic crisis and due to the depreciation of circus art and the physical annihilation of Jewish circus families.

Since the beginning of the 1920s one could observe an even stronger politicizing of the German circus (Otte 1999, 541). Some circus companies, including the Busch circus, looked for support from the new political formation in Germany and openly supported the program of Adolf Hitler. Shows of the Busch circus took place also during the war on territories occupied by the Third Reich. However, in the context of the history of circuses performing in Upper Silesia one should emphasize particularly the stories of the Jewish Blumenfeld and Strassburger circuses. Most of the family members managing these circuses were murdered during World War II.

Even though the very idea of ethnographic shows, including those performed in circuses, has been criticized by most researchers due to unquestionable, significant ethical reservations (see Arnaut 2011; Denzin 2013; Fusco 1994), as suggested by Luis Sánchez-Gómez (2013), not all of the shows should be examined using a single set of standards. Shows representing distant cultures, also part of the circus, were underpinned by inequalities resulting from the colonial policy of European superpowers or attitudes toward non-European cultures, which were commonly positioned as inferior in relation to Western ones. The circus provided, however, a path for professionalization of these performances and enabled artists to earn money. The early twentieth-century circus ethnographic stage shows offered a new life. At the same time, the decline of circuses brought an end to this life. After World War II ethnographic shows basically vanished, similarly to the great traveling circuses established in the aesthetic traditions of the nineteenth century.

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PART
THREE



Across Local Contexts

**Racialized Performance and the Construction of Slovene Whiteness:
Ethnographic Shows and Circus Acts on the Habsburg Periphery, 1880–1914**

*Andreja Mesarič*¹

This chapter explores how encounters with racialized performers who visited the region with touring ethnographic shows² and circuses in the late Habsburg period informed Slovene notions of “race.” It discusses how this experience not only contributed to the dissemination of Western racial discourses regarding blackness, savagery, civilization, and modernity, but also tied the emerging Slovene national identity to Europeanness and whiteness. Like all racial categories, whiteness is a historically contingent result of specific social and political processes of racialization but its unmarked nature often makes it invisible (Ahmed 2007; Frankenberg 1997; Garner 2007; Mills 1997; Wekker 2016), even in some scholarly analyses. This is especially so in the context of Eastern Europe, which does not have a history of overseas colonial expansion and postcolonial migration that made questions of race so central to Western European debates in the twentieth century. This lack of attention to race in scholarship on Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe is increasingly being questioned by scholars (e.g., Baker 2018; Bjelić 2021; Chang and Rucker-Chang 2013; Herza 2020; Imre 2005; Rexhepi 2018a; Shmidt and Jaworsky 2020; Ureña Valerio 2019). Yet much work remains to be done, especially when it comes to historically informed research on the formation

1 I would like to credit Jana Milovanović for her involvement in identifying relevant newspaper sources in the initial stages of the research that informed the writing of this paper.

2 I use the term “ethnographic show” as a common translation for the German *Völkerschau*, as most of the performances I discuss fall within this mode of living human display popularized by the German entrepreneur Carl Hagenbeck (see Ames 2008). I am aware of the critique that considers the term “ethnographic shows” problematic because it could reinforce the view that these performances represented “ethnographic reality” rather than choreographed fiction. However, I believe the term “show” captures well the performative element of this mode of human exhibition. I avoid the term “human zoos,” which has been criticized for erasing the agency of people involved in living human displays.

of racial categories in these regions, and particularly the attachment of their dominant populations to whiteness. This chapter is intended as a step toward addressing this gap by exploring one particular phenomenon that contributed to the salience of race in a particular location: racialized popular entertainment forms in Slovene-inhabited regions of the late Habsburg Empire.

A substantial literature on living displays of indigenous people, commonly known as ethnographic shows or “human zoos,” argues that these performances offered Western audiences a palpable experience of their supposed racial and civilizational superiority. By portraying indigenous people as “savages” and placing them at a lower stage of human development, these shows served to justify Western imperial expansion (Atkin 2015; Ellis 2013; Lindfors 1999a; Manderson 2018; Mathur 2001; Poignant 2004; Purkayastha 2019; Qureshi 2011, 2012a, 2012b; Rydell 1993; Toulmin 2011; Vaughan 1996; Vinson and Edgar 2007; Welch 2011; Wiss 1994). The juxtaposition of non-European “savagery” and “barbarism” with modern technological achievements at a series of world’s fairs and exhibitions (Mathur 2001; Rydell 1993; Vaughan 1996), as well as the performers’ juxtaposition with audiences whose civilizational superiority as “modern man” they were meant to confirm, highlights modernity’s inseparability from coloniality, as theorized by Walter D. Mignolo (2011).

In an attempt to nuance analyses that emphasize the unequal power relations and objectification involved in such exhibitions, some scholars have highlighted performers’ agency in participating in shows and resisting unfair working conditions, as well as the variation in audience interpretations of the shows and the opportunities the shows created for interaction between spectators and performers (Ames 2008; Atkin 2015, 152–53; Ellis 2013; Qureshi 2011, 2012a, 2012b; Welch 2011). Despite these occurrences of “intercultural encounter” (Ames 2008, 88; Qureshi 2011, 8; Qureshi 2012a, 197–98), “the fundamental premise of cultural superiority and the hierarchical relationship between the observer and the observed would be shaken but never dismantled” (Ames 2008, 88). The shows remained inextricably linked to Western imperialism, both symbolically and materially. Most performers were recruited from European colonies and the North American West, and the characters they (as well as sometimes local performers) embodied featured in narratives that many spectators were familiar with through political press coverage and travel literature (Qureshi 2012b).

Furthermore, ethnographic shows played an important role in popularizing notions of race that developed earlier in the nineteenth century. They not only juxtaposed bodies racialized as black and brown with implicitly white audiences but also provided the audience with a frame for interpreting what they saw through pamphlets, lectures, and press releases, which inscribed the bodies on display with specific, racialized meanings. These interpretive devices in turn drew on scientific discourses, particularly ethnological and anthropological works, as well as travel literature and adventure fiction (Atkin 2015, 137–38; Qureshi 2011, 6; Qureshi 2012a, 2012b; Novikova 2013, 576–78; Strother 1999, 25). Ethnographic shows framed the otherness of the performers not only in cultural terms but also in racial terms. In acknowledgment of the shows' active role in popularizing ideas of race, I use the term "racialized otherness" and "racialized Others" throughout this chapter. By "choreographing" racial difference (Ames 2008, 102), the shows "made the idea of scientific racism visible" (Manderson 2018, 260) to the masses. In short, the shows signaled "the West's progressive transition from a 'scientific' racism to a colonial and 'mass' racism" (Blanchard, Bancel, and Lemair, cited in Novikova 2013, 576).

If "the context of the show was not necessarily the venue, but the political and ideological message that it conveyed" (Toulmin 2011, 270), what does this mean for ethnographic show performances taking place on European peripheries with only tenuous links to European imperial expansion?³ I focus on what encounters with racialized otherness embodied in ethnographic shows and circus acts might have looked like from the perspective of what could be considered a "double periphery"—Slovene-inhabited lands of the Habsburg Empire. Focusing on the period between 1880 and 1914, I examine Slovene-language newspapers published in the regions of Carniola, the Austrian Littoral, and Lower Styria as an example of a geopolitical and

3 I should add that while these links were tenuous, they were not non-existent. The Habsburg monarchy's rule of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1878–1918) is now widely recognized as colonial, and its civilizing mission in the region relied considerably on Slavic bureaucrats and medical professionals from various regions of the Habsburg monarchy (Fuchs 2011; Rexhepi 2018b; Ruthner et al. 2015). Furthermore, the Habsburg monarchy was not without overseas imperial ambition (Sauer 2012). We can also trace the region's broader colonial entanglements through Habsburg citizens' involvement in Christian missionary work (see below), commercial ventures, travel, and scholarship. Suffice it to mention Bronisław Malinowski, a native of Kraków, and his crucial contribution to British anthropology based on research in the Australian-controlled Trobriand Islands.

linguistic periphery within the Habsburg Empire. I supplement this examination with German-language sources published in the same regions.

One challenge of researching ethnographic shows in peripheral contexts is the relative lack of sources. In imperial metropolises shows were more frequent. One group of performers could stay for months at a time. In the regions discussed in this paper, groups were merely passing through and often stayed no more than a few days. Some records can be found in city archives, but they are few and far between. It is the traces of these performances captured in the local press that offer us most insight into the subject. Although many newspaper mentions of ethnographic shows are paid advertisements placed by tour managers, press releases, or short news pieces that offer scant information, we can occasionally stumble across articles that offer insight into how local audiences would have understood and engaged with these performances of cultural and racialized otherness. Glimpses into how performers might have engaged with audiences are even less frequent, not to mention filtered through the journalist's gaze.

My primary sources were *Slovenski narod* (*Slovene Nation*) and *Slovenec* (*The Slovene*), the main Slovene-language newspapers published during the period in question. *Slovenski narod* first began publication in the Lower Styrian town of Maribor in 1868 but moved its seat to Ljubljana, the capital of the neighboring crownland of Carniola, in 1872. The newspaper addressed a politically liberal Slovene-speaking audience and promoted a Slovene nationalist agenda. In 1873 it was joined by Ljubljana-published *Slovenec*, which shared its nationalist outlook but addressed a Catholic conservative audience and at times considered the political views promoted by *Slovenski narod* as adversarial as German nationalism (Oven 2016, 46; Vodopivec 2006, 84; Zajc and Polajnar 2012, 36). Although both newspapers were published in Ljubljana, they featured reports from other Habsburg provinces with Slovene-speaking populations—namely, Lower Styria, the Austrian Littoral, and Carinthia.⁴ This played an important role in popularizing the idea of a Slovene-speaking reading public and a Slovene national space. In addition to these two newspapers, I drew on *Laibacher Zeitung* (*Ljubljana Newspaper*), the principal German-language newspaper published in Ljubljana since the

4 But not the region of Prekmurje/Muravidék (now the northeasternmost region of Slovenia), which formed part of Hungary and was not conceived as part of Slovene national space until later on.

late eighteenth century, which doubled as the official gazette (Oven 2016, 27; Zajc and Polajnar 2012, 33). This was a welcome addition to my analysis not only because it offered a potentially different perspective but also because, especially in the early part of the period in question, German-language newspapers often provided more detailed information about circus and ethnographic show performances (cf. Demski 2020). I also drew on a number of smaller, more short-lived Slovene- and German-language newspapers published in Ljubljana during this period.

While I focused my analysis largely on Ljubljana, I followed clues that Ljubljana-based newspapers offered about performances in nearby regions. I therefore also drew on Slovene-language newspapers published in Maribor, Trieste, and Gorizia and on the German-language *Marburger Zeitung* (*Maribor Newspaper*). All of the towns and cities in question were multilingual. According to government census numbers, Ljubljana (Ger. Laibach) was the only one among them with a Slovene-speaking majority of around 80 percent and an elite German minority of around 15 percent (Matić 2002, 433). The situation in Maribor (Ger. Marburg an der Drau) was the reverse, with roughly 80 percent German speakers and 15 percent Slovene speakers (Ferlež 2012, 42–43; Jenuš 2011, 85), although the proportion of Slovene speakers in the rural areas surrounding the town amounted to nearly 80 percent (Jenuš 2011, 85). In Trieste (in Italian, Trieste; in Slovene, Trst; in German, Triest) and Gorizia (in Italian, Gorizia; in Slovene, Gorica; in German, Görz), just over half of the population was Italian speaking, roughly a quarter Slovene speaking, and a tenth German speaking, with the remainder composed of a mix of the monarchy's languages (Pletikosić 2006; Marušič 2013; Miklavčič Brezigar 2012).⁵

I begin by briefly discussing some of the opportunities local audiences had to encounter people from outside Europe earlier in the nineteenth century. I then move on to newspaper representations of ethnographic shows and racialized circus performers between 1880 and 1914. I tease out some of

5 Austrian census forms recorded the language of daily communication, which cannot be straightforwardly converted into native language, let alone national affiliation (van der Plank 2012). The percentages given above are averages for the period in question, with numbers fluctuating in different census years, sometimes considerably, due to migration, shifting allegiances, and irregularities in census data collection. In 1910, concerns around politically motivated misrecording of language data even led to the annulment of the census results in Trieste and Gorizia (Pletikosić 2006; Marušič 2013). While Ljubljana and Maribor are in present-day Slovenia, Trieste and Gorizia are in present-day Italy.

the common themes in the reception of ethnographic shows that extended to such performances elsewhere, particularly in relation to the highly racialized perceptions of performers and anxieties around racial mixing. I explore the interplay between wider media reporting, particularly on Africa, and the characters performers came to embody. I also observe the life those characters took on in media, political, and popular discourses at the turn of the twentieth century, beyond a direct link to African bodies. The chapter then turns to the question of how ethnographic shows and racialized circus acts were experienced from the perspective of an imperial periphery. I argue that the German *Kulturmission*, aimed at non-German Habsburg citizens in general and Slavs in particular, forms a crucial context for understanding how the reception of ethnographic shows might have differed in a Habsburg peripheral context. Viewing racially and culturally othered ethnographic show performers enabled a Slovene-speaking audience to assert its position as “civilized Europeans,” despite German claims that they could achieve this only by embracing the civilizing power of German culture. By extension, this embrace of generalized Europeaness, along with its assumed civilizational superiority, also implied an assertion of whiteness.

Encounters with Racialized Others on the Habsburg Periphery

While ethnographic shows in the true *Völkerschau* fashion did not appear in Carniola until the 1880s, this was not the first time local audiences had the opportunity to encounter people from Africa and Asia. A particularly interesting, while perhaps not obvious, example are public baptism ceremonies of African children brought to Carniola in the 1850s. Ignacij Knoblehar,⁶ a local Carniolan, and the Genovese Niccolò Olivieri were Catholic missionaries, who bought enslaved children in Sudan and Egypt and brought some of them back to Europe to train as missionaries. The Catholic newspaper *Zgodnja Danica* (*Morning Star*) regularly reported on the work of both missionaries, collected donations for the purchase of slaves from its readers, and reported on children arriving to Carniola, specifically to Ljubljana and Škofja Loka (Ger. Bischoflack; Frelih 2009, 150–52; Kolar 2003; Šepetavc 1994, 26–27). The children’s baptisms were elaborate ceremonies, open to the

6 Ignaz Knoblecher in German-language sources.

public, that attracted large crowds of spectators (Frelj 2009, 151–52). The public was not charged admission and the events were not claiming to introduce audiences to African customs, as would be the case with ethnographic shows, but the events nevertheless framed blackness as otherness in need of Catholic domestication. On the pages of *Zgodnja Danica*, missionary discourse blended into ethnography as frequent reports from Knoblehar's mission in southern Sudan included detailed descriptions of local customs. While a detailed exploration of Carniolan missionary engagement with Africa is outside the scope of this chapter, this phenomenon highlights how peripheries that did not sit at the centers of European imperial power could still be implicated in imperial projects (Wendt 2018).

In the same period, Carniolan audiences also had the opportunity to see non-European circus performers who came to the region with touring circuses. German and Italian circuses, along with other forms of popular entertainment such as panopticons, panoramas, and menageries, had been coming to Ljubljana since the late eighteenth century (Budna Kodrič and Pešak Mikec 1999; Drašler 2009). Newspaper sources mention non-European circus performers only in passing. For example, an 1854 issue of the *Laibacher Zeitung* mentions a troupe of Chinese jugglers that stopped in Ljubljana. The newspaper gave their performance a lukewarm review, noting that its highlight was “the appearance of the Chinese themselves. Once you have seen and heard them, the punchline is over” (*Laibacher Zeitung*, November 4, 1854).⁷ An 1876 issue of the *Laibacher Zeitung* is even sparser with information, briefly mentioning the “American negro⁸ violin clown Breatori” in its announcement of an upcoming performance of circus Sidoli that was making its way to Ljubljana from Zagreb (June 22, 1876).

Ljubljana saw a lot of passing traffic that did not necessarily make a stop in the city. It was positioned along the Southern Railway, the main transport link between Vienna and Trieste completed in 1857 (Judson 2016, 120). Trieste was the Empire's largest port, which held Europe-wide importance

7 The jugglers' performance is mentioned in Budna Kodrič and Pešak Mikec (1999, 33). The translation of the quotation is based on the original article in *Laibacher Zeitung*.

8 I use the term “negro” at several points in this chapter as a translation for the German *Neger* and Slovene *zamorec*. I recognize the problematic nature of all three terms, but I feel I could not write about the racializing effects of ethnographic show performances by omitting terms so crucial to nineteenth-century racial discourse. I limit the use of these terms to direct quotations and descriptions of newspaper reporting.

as a transport hub. Ethnographic show managers relied on existing international trade and transport networks in recruiting performers and planning tour itineraries (Demski 2020, 206; Ellis 2013, 195; Qureshi 2011, 108), which would have made Trieste and the Southern Railway an important route for performers traveling from Africa to Europe. This was the route taken by the “Nubian caravan” brought to Hamburg by Carl Hagenbeck in 1876 (Rothfels 2002, 55; on Hagenbeck also see Thode-Arora in this volume). In June of that year, the *Laibacher Zeitung* reported how a shipment of “interesting passengers” passed through Ljubljana’s train station on its way from Trieste to Hamburg zoo, including “lions, tigers, elephants, panthers, and other tropical inhabitants . . . accompanied by several negro keepers” (*Laibacher Zeitung*, June 21, 1876). While the newspaper does not name Carl Hagenbeck or Bernhard Kohn, who arranged the shipment of animals and recruited the performers at Hagenbeck’s behest (Ames 2008, 29), the dates and locations do match up. The reference to the animals’ “negro keepers” (*Negerwärten*) is particularly interesting as performers in Hagenbeck’s first “Nubian caravan” are known to have worked as animal traders prior to joining the troupe (Ames 2008, 29).

Ljubljana and other towns in the region did not have a zoo, a common setting for ethnographic shows in larger cities (e.g., Ames 2008; Balme 2007; Scott 1997; Thode-Arora 1989). Shows were staged in theaters, beer halls, public squares, and, towards the end of the period in question, open-air entertainment venues at the city edges. Performers who made a stop in Ljubljana were often passing through on their way to larger cities in Central or northwestern Europe. In February 1880 a five-member Zulu Kaffir troupe (in Slovene, *Culukafri*, in German, *Zulukaffern*) led by a proprietor from London called Wood⁹ stopped in Ljubljana. They did not set up in a dedicated performance space, where the troupe would live throughout their stay, as would be the case with future shows; instead, the troupe performed two shows at Ljubljana’s provincial theater (*Landestheater*) and stayed with their manager at the Elefant (Elephant) Hotel (*Laibacher Tagblatt*,

9 The local press unfortunately only gives his surname, which makes it difficult to establish his identity. It might be John Wood, who brought a Dahomey group to Europe in 1891–92 (see Novikova 2013, 579 for Paris and Czarnecka 2020 for Warsaw, Poznań, and Kraków); however, I found no conclusive evidence for this.

February 26, 1880).¹⁰ They came to Ljubljana from Gorizia (*Soča [Isonzo River]*, February 27, 1880) and continued on their way to Vienna (*Laibacher Tagblatt*, February 25, 1880). In June 1885, a “Sudanese caravan,” managed by Heinrich Möller¹¹ from Hamburg, stopped in Ljubljana for five days on its way from Trieste to the world’s fair in Antwerp. The group made up of sixteen men was accompanied by a number of animals including camels and gazelles and set up a performance space in one of the city’s public squares¹² (*Ljubljanski List [Ljubljana Paper]*, June 8, 1885; *Laibacher Zeitung*, June 8, 1885). In May 1899, the Sudanese “Shilluk village,” made up of twenty men, women, and children, also made their way to Ljubljana from Trieste. They stayed for ten days but, according to the *Laibacher Zeitung* (May 18, 1899), could not extend their stay any longer if they were to keep their three-month engagement at Amsterdam zoo. By then, Ljubljana had a dedicated outdoor entertainment venue called *Lattermannsallee* (in German) or *Lattermanov drevored* (in Slovene), which became the main setting for various forms of popular entertainment including circuses and ethnographic shows (Budna Kodrič and Pešak Mikec 1999, 29–30). The Shilluk group was housed in huts set up in *Lattermannsallee/Lattermanov drevored*,¹³ which doubled as their performance space (*Laibacher Zeitung*, May 18, 1899).

Another Sudanese group billed as Nubian came to Ljubljana in 1911 with manager Charles Crassé and stayed for just over two weeks between May 22 and June 5 (*Slovenec*, May 22, 1911; *Laibacher Zeitung*, June 3,

10 The building of the *Landestheater*, located in present-day Congress Square, now houses the Slovene Philharmonic. The Elephant Hotel continues to operate under the Slovene name *Hotel Slon*, although its building was entirely reconstructed in the 1930s. The institution was purportedly named after the first elephant that visited Ljubljana and was housed in the courtyard of an inn standing in the same location. The hotel’s advertising and local tour guides claim this was the famous Soliman or Suleyman, who accompanied the future Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II on his way to Vienna in 1552. An elephant from the Portuguese colony of Kotte in present-day Sri Lanka did make its way to Vienna via Lisbon and Habsburg Spain in the company of the future Emperor (Jordan-Gschwend 2010; Saurer and Hinshaw-Fischli 2003). However, historical sources show that the pair arrived in Austria via Tyrol, bypassing Carniola entirely. The story and its deployment nevertheless raise interesting questions regarding connections between provincial Habsburg lands and European overseas colonial expansion as well as past and present local attempts at insertion into that history. The hotel was most likely named after another elephant called Misbaba, who was exhibited at the location around 1818 (Pešak Mikec and Budna Kodrič 2002, 345).

11 This is most likely Willy Möller. Both the *Völkerschau* literature that mentions Willy Möller (Ames 2008, 74; Dreesbach 2005, 52–53) and the advertising in Ljubljana-based newspapers mention a man called Stüber as Möller’s collaborator.

12 Emperor Joseph’s Square, present-day Krek Square.

13 This was located on the grounds of present-day Tivoli Park.

1911). The twenty-five-member group arrived from Gorizia where they performed between May 7 and 14 (*Soča*, May 6, and 13, 1911). The newspapers do not mention the next stop of the Sudanese group, nor its final destination. The *Laibacher Zeitung* does mention, however, that Crassé stopped in Ljubljana sixteen years earlier as part of another “big tour of Europe” with his “Suaheli” or Swahili group (*Laibacher Zeitung*, May 19, 1911). I unfortunately could not locate evidence of this earlier group in the local press in Ljubljana; however, mention of Crassé and a Suaheli group from East Africa appears in Maribor-published *Marburger Zeitung* and *Slovenski gospodar* (*Slovene Landowner*) in March of 1892 (*Marburger Zeitung*, March 6, 1892; *Slovenski gospodar*, March 3, 1892). The group—made up of sixteen or seventeen men, women, and children—performed at the Götz beer hall in Maribor for four days and continued on to the Styrian capital of Graz after leaving the city (*Marburger Zeitung*, March 6, 1892).

The presence of non-European performers, and their billing as such, in circus troupes seems to have intensified around the turn of the century (see Baraniecka-Olszewska in this volume). Circuses included these performers as acrobats or horse riders but also framed them as representatives of “their peoples.” For example, the German Strassburger circus, which visited Ljubljana and Maribor in July 1911, featured *Völkergruppen* including “Mamluks, Arabs, Riff Kabyles, Chinese, Japanese, and Indians, who will display the most outstanding in their native arts” (*Marburger Zeitung*, July 18, 1911). A few months earlier, another German outfit, the Schmidt circus, stopped in Ljubljana. It included Chinese acrobats and “black Sudanese” in its program, although the act performed by the latter was not specified in the press (*Slovenski narod*, May 31, and June 1, 1911). While these circus performances attracted a significant audience, it was the Americans Barnum and Bailey and Buffalo Bill’s visits in 1901 and 1906, respectively, that really drew crowds. Buffalo Bill came to Ljubljana via Trieste and continued on to Zagreb, Maribor, Klagenfurt, and Graz, while Barnum and Bailey’s tour avoided the Austrian Littoral, coming to Ljubljana from Hungary via Zagreb and continuing on to Maribor and Graz. If press coverage is to be believed, Barnum and Bailey’s two shows in Ljubljana on May 30, 1901 attracted 30,000 viewers, including an estimated 8,000 nonresidents who came to Ljubljana specifically for the occasion (*Slovenski narod*, May 31, 1901; Budna Kodrič and Pešak Mikec 1999, 34). Buffalo Bill’s show five years later had a

slightly lower turnout, with *Slovenski narod* (May 17, 1906) claiming that both of the shows attracted 11,000 viewers, while *Slovenec* (May 17, 1906) stated that the afternoon performance attracted 9,000 visitors, while the evening show attracted a somewhat larger audience.¹⁴ While both of these estimates put the number of visitors lower than for Barnum and Bailey's show, *Slovenec* nevertheless observed that "wherever you go these days, all anyone talks about is Buffalo Bill" (May 22, 1906).

It is interesting to note that advertising and reporting on Barnum and Bailey's shows do not focus on racialized performers, even though it is known that the circus included exhibits of non-Europeans in its program (Qureshi 2011, 141–42). The only reference in the local press that we could find is to a "Hindu, who grew a second body" in a review of Barnum and Bailey's "abnormalities" sideshow in *Slovenski narod* (May 31, 1901). This lack of emphasis on racialized difference might be a reflection of Barnum's focus on displaying human oddities that built on the freak-show tradition, in which "physical oddity trumped national character" (Ames 2008, 70), distinct from the *Völkerschau* approach in which performers were framed as "typical" representatives of their peoples (Ames 2008, 70–71). Advertising and reporting on Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, in contrast to coverage of Barnum and Bailey's shows, feature the wide array of "peoples," including Bedouins, Japanese samurai, and Cossacks, and particularly its one hundred Native Americans, who performed in the show (cf. Barabas in this volume; Baraniecka-Olszewska 2020).

Ethnographic Shows and Racialized Circus Performers in the News

Newspaper coverage of ethnographic shows and circus acts involving non-European performers in Ljubljana and other towns and cities in the wider

14 Ticket sales for performances are difficult to verify. One factor that might have contributed to the large attendance at Barnum and Bailey and Buffalo Bill's shows is the intensive marketing campaigns undertaken by the shows' promoters (cf. Baraniecka-Olszewska 2020; see also Barabas in this volume) and the fact that both stopped in Ljubljana for only one day, while other circuses and ethnographic shows stayed longer and would have had visitors distributed over the entire duration of the stay. For example, *Slovenec* and *Slovenski narod* report the number of visitors for the Nubian ethnographic show in Ljubljana in 1911 for only two days out of its fifteen-day stay. The show was reportedly attended by 1,300 adults and 336 children on May 25 and by 2,317 adults and 279 children on May 28—the latter, being a Sunday, attracted a larger number of visitors. Over the entire stay this could have added up to a significant number.

region is in many ways reminiscent of what we know about ethnographic shows elsewhere. While members of ethnographic shows often performed an act involving skill, such as dancing, singing, and mock fighting, the main point of interest for the audience was their appearance. This is reminiscent of the *Laibacher Zeitung* description of the 1854 Chinese juggling troupe, wherein seeing and hearing the performers was considered to be the main act (see above). However, reports from later in the century pay much closer attention to describing the physical characteristics of the performers, especially of Africans, including routine references to black men's strong bodies and descriptions of black skin (cf. Qureshi 2011, 170). An article in the Gorizia-based newspaper *Soča* used the following words to describe the performance of the Zulu Kaffir troupe in 1880:

Last Monday the Zulu Kaffirs presented themselves in the local theater. Despite the bad weather, the space was bursting with people streaming in. But their curiosity was poorly rewarded. We saw, and unfortunately also heard, five savages [*divjaki*] with dark, almost black skin, completely naked apart from some sort of fur wrapped around their head, waist and under their knees. The men have a handsome full body with limbs of steel, but their heads are somehow clumsy. It is especially their thick protruding lips that disfigure their physical looks. They sang some sort of war songs, of course in the Zulu language comprehensible to no one, threw swords at a target and wrestled each other. It was all very savage and not very enticing for a cultured person. (*Soča*, February 27, 1880)¹⁵

This description demonstrates that although the Zulus were performing a show involving skills (singing, sword throwing, and wrestling), it was the performers' physical appearance that was of primary interest to the audience. The news item contains another commonplace trope in newspaper reporting on ethnographic shows—the focus on African “savagery,” which was explicitly or implicitly opposed to (European) civilization and culture. A letter from a reader to *Slovenski narod* in response to the 1885 “Sudanese caravan” in Ljubljana highlights the role noise played in defining this “savagery”:

15 See also Zajc and Polajnar 2012, 79.

Thank God, the wild Sudanese, who made a racket all day long and savagely screamed and disturbed the public peace on the square and of local inhabitants, have left . . . The black-brown Sudanese screamed like wild animals. I wonder how the city elite can allow such buffoonery on a public square among public school institutions and public imperial and royal finance offices. How it was possible to officiate among loud screaming, three-hour long drumming sessions and rattling, only God knows. (*Slovenski narod*, June 19, 1885)

Not only are the Sudanese contrasted with the civility of “imperial and royal” public life that should be allowed to proceed undisturbed, but the Sudanese performers are likened to animals, specifically through their production of noise. The association of the performers with animals would also have been strengthened through the advertising for the show, which clearly identified the troupe’s manager, Heinrich Möller, as an animal merchant (fig. 9.1).

A front-page article in the Catholic conservative newspaper *Slovenec* (June 16, 1885), commenting on the same Sudanese exhibit of “sixteen seminaked negroes,” denounced the displaying of people for profit on principle, “even if they are savages.” Signing the article simply as “Philanthropist”



**Sudanska
karavana
v cirkusu**
na cesar Josipovem trgu.
Danes in sledeće dni do
uštevsí nedeljo 14. dan
junija.

Predstave so dopoldne od 10. do 1.
ure in popoldne od 3. ure dokler se
stemni.

Z velespoštovanjem
HENRIK MÖLLER,
živalski trgovec iz Hamburga.

(355--1)

Figure 9.1. Advertisement for the Sudanese caravan in Ljubljana. *Slovenski narod*, June 12, 1885.

(*Človekoljub*), the author disapproved of the audience's mocking attitude to the performers, arguing that they deserved pity instead. He expressed dismay that such a thing was possible in "today's nineteenth century of enlightenment, culture, and freedom." The author's choice of pen name and newspaper are revealing. Christian missionaries and philanthropists were often critical of the exploitation involved in human displays and of the neglect of the spiritual welfare of the performers (Qureshi 2011, 106, 139, 169; Qureshi 2012a, 189–90; Ames 2008, 91). As Amit Rai argues, missionary discourse used sympathy to reinforce racial and social difference. Sympathetic identification with racial Others—in this case the ethnographic show performers—enabled the construction of the Self as a moral being. However, this identification could never be full in order to maintain the boundaries between the white, male Self, and the racial Other (cited in Atkin 2015, 149). After all, the "Philanthropist" was not concerned only with the welfare of the Sudanese performers but also about the possibility that their performance might fool an uncritical audience into thinking there is credibility to "Darwin's theory of man and ape" (*Slovenec*, June 16, 1885). Despite expressing compassion, the author nevertheless asserts racial hierarchies by framing the performers as reminiscent of animals.

Some of the quotations referenced above point to another feature used in newspaper reporting to mark African performers as "savages," their purported nakedness (cf. Peacock 1999, 91–92). Dress played an important role in framing performers as "authentic," and managers made sure costumes matched audience expectations (Qureshi 2011, 119–20; Scott 1997, 56–57; Strother 1999, 25–28). This included not only conforming to specific ethnic stereotypes but also the notion of the "savage" as (half-) naked. Clothing was used as a marker of human development (Qureshi 2011, 119–20) and performers' costumes conveyed "coded messages about the inferiority of non-Europeans" (Atkin 2015, 136). After all, a lack of clothes connotes a lack of culture (Strother 1999, 7). Performers could be ascribed an inherent nakedness even when they appeared to be clothed in European fashion. *Slovenski narod*, for example, noted that the Shilluk "are prevented from displaying themselves to the audience in their original African nakedness by the police and even more so by our cold" (*Slovenski narod*, May 15, 1899). Although most strongly associated with Africans, nakedness could be used to mark the "savagery" of other Others as well. The Trieste newspaper *Edinost* (*Unity*), for example, reported



Dirkališče slov. biciklistov.
 Od sobote 13. do vključno ponedeljka 22. maja t. l.
Vas Šilukov iz Sudana.
 Moški, ženske in otroci.
 Izvajanja njihovih domačih šeg in navad ob 3., 4., 5. uri
 popoldne in ob 6., 7. in 8. uri sveder.
 Odprto od 10. ure dopoldne do mraka. (897—4)
Vstopnina 30 kr. Vojaki do narednika ter otroci **15 kr.**

Figure 9.2. Advertisement for the Shilluk village in Ljubljana. *Slovenski narod*, May 15, 1899.

that Buffalo Bill's opening act brought together all of the show's performers "from half-naked Indians decorated with feathers and painted with vivid colors to brilliantly uniformed cavalry men of the United States of America" (*Edinost*, May 16, 1906), suggesting a sartorial scale of civilization (fig. 9.2).

Newspapers attributed greater skill to non-European circus performers than to African performers in ethnographic shows. Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, and the praise afforded to the horsemanship of its performers, can be observed as a paradigmatic example of this tendency. Despite the emphasis on displaying skill and Buffalo Bill's greater similarity to the circus than to classic ethnographic shows (Baraniecka-Olszewska 2020), performers in this show were not spared the racializing lens of the press. Newspapers routinely referred to Native American performers as "redskins" (in Slovene *rdečkožci*, in German, *Rothhäute*). While their supposed "savagery" was not emphasized to the same extent as Africans', newspapers made sure to contrast Native American performers with European civilization. Parroting the shows' advertising campaign that presented Native Americans as a people on the brink of extinction (Barabas in this volume), *Slovenec* urged its readership to go and see "real Indians" before they were finally tamed by civilization:

The redskins are the last representatives of native tribes of the north American land . . . All participants accompanying colonel Cody belong to nomadic tribes who live in tents and who will soon disappear from human society . . . It will show how simply they lived for so many centuries of fighting that now finally ended and made way for the increasing welfare of growing civilization and peace. (May 15, 1906) (figs. 9.3 and 9.4)

Buffalo Bill's Wild West

A. Congress of Rough Riders of the World
najdrznejši jahači na celem svetu

osebno vodi in predvaja
Col. W. F. Cody, „Buffalo Bill“

Nikoli trgovsko prevara, res zadnji tounee!
Ne pridejo nikdar vseč Popolno neodoljivo! Oglejte si razstavo!

**Trije posebni vlaki.
800 mož, 500 konj.**

Ameriški Zoavi, civilno vojaštvo Združenih držav, Arabci, Beduini, Riffiens, Riff-roparji, Ruski kozaki, Rooseveltovi Rough Riders, Ameriški cowboys.

„Buffalo Bill“
mojster strelcev na konju s svojimi čudovili in srečnimi vajami na dirajočem konju

Amerika ob časi prvih pionirjev.
Brzopoto v Deadwood napadejo v vlni roparji.

Dresura divjih konj.
Pony-pošta. — Jahanlo-umetniška kadrla. — Vpepetenje naseljske kočice.
Četa japonskih „Samuraj“ z njih antiko in moderno vojaško vajo.

100 hrabrih rudečkožcev.
Najgledljivi prizor divjih bojevnikov. Bitka Little Big Horn ali zadnji zavetišč kusterjevo

(Predstave se vrše v polnem obsegu, najpomembnejše brez vsakega okrajšanja v velikanski areni. Razsvetljeno po specialnem električnem načinu. Predstave se vrše ob vsakem vremenu. 1906 2-2

V Trstu od 13.-15. v Zagrebu 17.-18. maja.

Cene prostora Buffalo Bill: Prvi sedež K 2.—, numerirani sedež K 4.—, rezervir. sedež K 5.—, sedež v loži K 8.—, loža (6 prostora) K 48.—. Otroci pod 10 let vstari plačajo polovično ceno.

Vstopnice se prodajajo sedeži a 5 in 8 K od 9 ure dop. na dan predstave pri **Oton-u Fischer, knjigar in antikvartet, Tonhalle** (Kongresni trg).



Figure 9.3. Advertisement for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in Ljubljana. *Slovenec*, May 12, 1906.

TRST — Samo za 3 dni — TRST

Počitaki z nedeljo 13. in ponedelj 14. in 15. maja

Zemljišču Wildi

(KROGLU bitzu domobranske vojašnice)

Prva predstava ob 2^h, tri pop. — Druga predstava ob 8^h, tri zvečer.

Vsega se odpreja ob 7. in peti uri pop. in ob 7. in peti uri zvečer.

Predstava in večera predstava sta jatanji!

Buffalo Wild



Bill's West

Zbor najdrznejših jahačov na svetu.
A Congress of Rough Riders of the World
pod poveljem svetovno ja. zadrževanov

vojvoda M. J. Cody „Buffalo Bill“

ki je sodil nepremisljeno na svojem zadnjem potovanju. Temo potovanja
že je obse od 8. tona. — Je zadržel 3 tona železa in 1000

**Štirje posebni vlaki — 500 konj — 800 oseb
100 Rudečkožcev (Indijancev)**

Četa „Samurajev“ Japoncev v svojih vojnih vojah starih in modernih
Buffalo Bill — mojster strelcev na konju
v svojih čudovilih svetovnih vajah in krasni dirki, ki jih izvaja na konju.

Prizori iz življenja na meji. — Napad na poštini voz. — Vojni pleši Indijancev. — Napad na celo povorko Indijancev



Kako zajesti „Mushing Bronchos“ divje konje. — Garljivo zgodovinski prizor „Little Big Horn“, ali zadnja obramba Custerja

Krasna večerna razsvetljava v posebnih električnih svetlobah.

Vstopnice k Buffalo Bill: Prvi sedež K 2.—, drugi K 4.—, tretji K 5.—, četrta K 8.—, peti K 12.—, šest K 15.—, sedem K 18.—, osmi K 22.—, devet K 25.—, deset K 30.—, enajst K 35.—, dvanajst K 40.—, trinajst K 45.—, štirinajst K 50.—, petinajst K 55.—, šestnajst K 60.—, sedemnajst K 65.—, osemnajst K 70.—, devetnajst K 75.—, dvajset K 80.—, dvajset K 85.—, trideset K 90.—, štirideset K 95.—, padeset K 100.—, šestdeset K 110.—, sedemdeset K 120.—, osemdeset K 130.—, devetdeset K 140.—, sto K 150.—

V Trstu 11., v Ljubljani 18., v Zagrebu 17. in 18. maja.

Figure 9.4. Advertisement for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in Trieste. *Edinost*, May 11, 1906.

While a greater number of performers were men, some shows included women and children. Sometimes newspapers encouraged the audience to observe how men, women, and children compare to each other in their appearance. *Slovenski narod* noted of the Shilluk exhibit:

The women are as strong as men with solid figures, but their faces are considerably more appealing, less savage and they have smaller, thinner lips. Some of them are up for a laugh and stand out with their big black eyes. Especially adorable are the two children, who are cheerful and have really handsome faces. (May 15, 1899)

The ultimate “savages” were therefore not Africans in general but specifically African men.¹⁶ Another interesting aspect of the quotation is its description of the women as “up for a laugh,” suggesting a degree of interaction between performers and audience members. We get only glimpses of these interactions in newspaper accounts—for example, when *Soča* informs us that after the show, the Zulu Kaffirs “scattered throughout the theater so that everyone could see them up close and give them a feel” (February 27, 1880). Newspapers also mention the attention paid to female spectators by male performers. This press coverage is permeated with discourses on the threatening nature of African masculinity and “savage” sexuality. Ethnographic shows not only invited the audience to confirm its racial and civilizational superiority but also raised anxieties about sexual encounters between performers and audience members, particularly between black men and white women (Ames 2008, 94–102; Atkin 2015, 151–52; Ellis 2013, 204; Herza 2016, 98–102; Qureshi 2011, 143–46, 162–64). The *Laibacher Zeitung* noted of the performers of the “Sudanese caravan”:

They are powerful figures . . . with features that are hardly surpassed in beauty by a white man. And Muhamed Nenir, the most beautiful and powerful of the men of the Hadendoa tribe, seems to be aware of this and is clearly seeking to impress the weaker sex of the palefaces, who, despite their natural shyness and fear of the “savages,” cannot get enough of the Nubian Apollo. (June 12, 1885)¹⁷

According to Robin Ellis (2013, 204), “the very presence of the performers’ foreign bodies suggested the threat of interracial sex.” This posed a threat to social order and the racial purity of the nation and therefore fueled criticisms of ethnographic shows (Ames 2008, 94–102; Atkin 2015, 151–52; Ellis 2013, 204; Herza 2016, 98–102; Qureshi 2011, 162–64). The tone of the above article in the *Laibacher Zeitung* seems to suggest that its author was taking pleasure in observing the interaction between Sudanese perform-

¹⁶ This does not mean African women were not portrayed as savage. The displaying of Sara Baartman in Britain and France in the early nineteenth century is a classic example (e.g., Strother 1999; Qureshi 2004). For an example temporally and spatially closer to our case, see Czarnecka’s (2020) work on Dahomey Amazon shows in 1890s Poland.

¹⁷ This is also a rare reference to a named individual as most performers remained unnamed in the press.

ers and local women. The same cannot be said of the person who penned a full-page article in *Slovenec* titled “Novi pripomoček k versko-nravni vzgoji, ka-li?” (“A New Tool in Religious-Moral Education, Is It?”; June 16, 1885). This article also noted the attention performers paid to female spectators, yet its author found the excitement this created in the “weaker and more sensitive sex” incomprehensible. Even worse, the author was shocked to find that a local school had breached Christian morals by bringing its female pupils to see the show: “Even more incomprehensibly incomprehensible [*nerazumljivši nerazumljivo*] is that our uncorrupted innocent delicately shy female school youth can withstand this without their cheeks blushing when watching half naked people clothed only in loin cloths, even if they are savages” (*Slovenec*, June 16, 1885).

The author seems to have found this so unfathomable that a single “incomprehensible” could not have conveyed the sentiment fully enough. It is also worth noting the string of adjectives employed by the author to construct young (white) women’s innocence, which at the same time contains a vulnerability to corruption through contact with black male bodies, even if only visual. Furthermore, the author found it particularly concerning that the school in question was a teacher-training college, an institution that educates future teachers of “our Christian Slovene people” (*Slovenec*, June 16, 1885), once again linking issues of interracial sexual contact to questions of national concern.

School visits to ethnographic shows would have probably been quite common. Advertising often promised reduced entrance fees for children and additional discounts for school groups (cf. Qureshi 2011, 156; Qureshi 2012b, 33; Czarnecka 2020, 293; Demski 2020, 214, 227). This can be interpreted as a reflection of the supposed educational nature of ethnographic shows, linked in turn to the purported authenticity of the performers and the customs they performed. Ethnographic shows aimed to both entertain and educate (Atkin 2015, 145; Balme 2007, 34–43; Mathur 2001, 492; Purkayastha 2019, 4; Welch 2011, 344–45). Show managers drew on scientific language, particularly that of ethnography and anthropology, to increase their credibility. They played a crucial role in providing audiences with tools and knowledge, through promotional materials, lectures, and visual cues such as costumes and props, which helped audiences interpret performances in specific, racialized ways (Ames 2008, 7, 65–70; Ellis 2013, 195–96; Qureshi

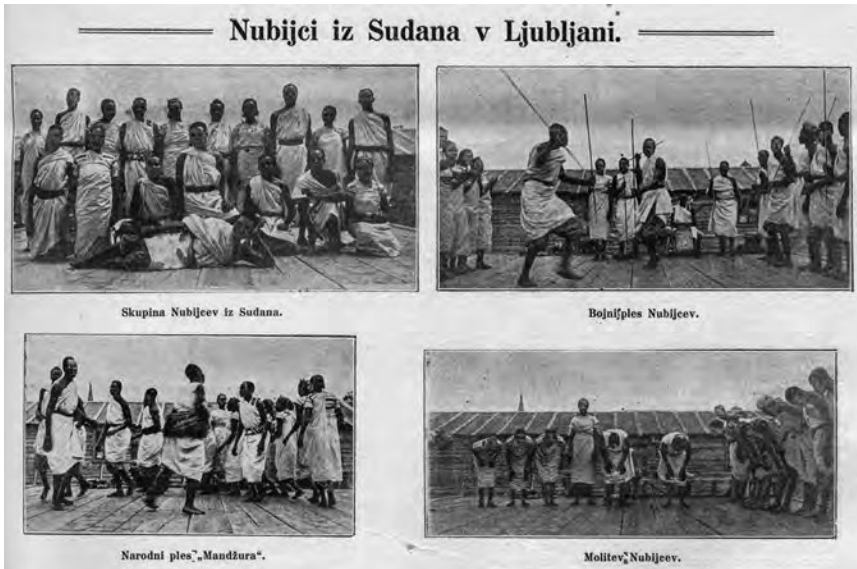


Figure 9.5. Photographs from a newspaper article about the 1911 Sudanese performance in Ljubljana. *Ilustrovani tednik*, June 2, 1911.

2011, 101–25; Qureshi 2012b; Poignant 2004, 14; Lindfors 1999b, 64–65; Strother 1999, 24–31).

On the southwestern periphery of the Habsburg Empire, the educational and ethnographic value of the shows was stressed by both the German- and Slovene-language press, which often relied on information provided in advertising materials and press releases. *Slovenski narod*, for example, described Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show not as a circus, but as “factual . . . an ethnological exhibition of various peoples where their authenticity awakens a keen interest in what they do as riders and as exemplars of a courageous life of a warrior and nomad” (May 14, 1906). When it came to African performers, advertising and press coverage sometimes stressed how freshly arrived from Africa they were as a way of strengthening their claims to authenticity. In the case of the “Sudanese caravan” in 1885 and the “Shilluk village” in 1899, newspaper coverage emphasized that after Trieste, Ljubljana was only the second city in Europe they had visited (e.g., *Slovenski narod*, June 9, 1885; *Laibacher Zeitung*, June 9, 1885, and June 3, 1899). Some newspapers made a similar claim for the Nubian group in 1911, which apparently performed only in Gorizia before their show in Ljubljana (*Laibacher Zeitung*, May 19,

1911). However, Gorizia newspaper *Soča* mentions in its announcement of their performance that the group had performed in “almost all European cities, zoos and exhibitions” (May 6, 1911) (fig. 9.5).

This highlights the flipside of the emphasis on ethnographic accuracy—namely, suspicions about performers’ authenticity. It was not uncommon for performers to embody characters whose ethnic origin did not match their own. The same group could tour under different names, consist of members of various origins, and include European- or American-born members (Ames 2008, 103–40; Ellis 2013, 198; Herza 2016, 96; Vinson and Edgar 2007, 47–48; cf. Warsame in this volume). Even when touring under their own name, performers were still portraying a character. Ethnographic show performances were choreographed by managers. The authenticity of ethnographic shows was always a performed authenticity that responded to audience expectations shaped by news reporting, travel literature, scientific discourses, and promotional material informed by those sources (Ames 2008, 74–76; Atkin 2015, 137–38; Ellis 2013, 192, 196; Novikova 2013; Poignant 2004, 1–14; Qureshi 2011, 6; Strother 1999, 25).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, ethnographic show performers were increasingly professional entertainers (Ames 2008; Poignant 2004; Qureshi 2011, 135–37), becoming “living signs of themselves” (Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, cited in Mathur 2001, 492). This points to a “tension between authenticity and performance inherent in all *Völkerschau* exhibitions” (Ellis 2013, 195). Nonetheless, audiences felt duped if the ethnographic masque slipped. For example, an article in *Laibacher Tagblatt* (*Ljubljana Daily*) entitled “Zulu Swindle” (*Zuluschwindel*, February 26, 1880) expressed suspicion that the people on stage might have been “ordinary negroes” (*gewöhnliche Neger*) rather than actual Zulu Kaffirs, a sentiment echoed in *Slovenec* (February 26, 1880). A quarter of a century later, *Slovenec* ran an article stating that they had received news from Zagreb that the Cossacks performing as part of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show had been exposed as Russian Jews from the United States, having been given away by their fluent “Jewish German” (*Slovenec*, May 25, 1906). This threw suspicion on the authenticity of the show’s other performers, who had wowed the local audience just a few days earlier.

The way performers were framed depended more on what resonated with media representations of current events than with who they were. Sadiah

Qureshi convincingly argues that ethnographic shows were designed to be relevant to political and military events and that their topicality was a crucial element in their commercial success—the people on display became exemplars of political activity (Qureshi 2012a). In the case of the Zulu Kaffir group, who performed in Gorizia and Ljubljana in 1880, it was the Anglo-Zulu war that provided the context that made the group interesting to the audience. The relevance of political press coverage for the reception of ethnographic show performances is revealed by the same *Laibacher Tagblatt* article that expressed skepticism about the Zulu Kaffir's authenticity. The reporter opined that the troupe manager's description of conditions in Zululand that introduced the performance did not correspond to what was being reported in "English newspapers" (*Laibacher Tagblatt*, February 26, 1880), a further reason to suspect the performers as inauthentic.

While the *Laibacher Tagblatt* reporter found the manager's talk unconvincing, the fact that the performance was framed by the manager's introductory talk nevertheless highlights the importance of managers and promoters in influencing how audiences understood what they saw on stage. The very name Zulu Kaffir was popularized by the ethnographic show manager Charles Henry Caldecott, who brought a group of performers to London in 1853 at the height of the Kaffir (Xhosa) wars. Although Zulus and Xhosa were known to be distinct peoples, Caldecott conflated the two in order to capitalize on the popular interest in the South African military conflict (Qureshi 2011, 171; Qureshi 2012a, 184–86). Zulu Kaffir groups once again gained political relevance later in the nineteenth century during the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879 (Qureshi 2012a; Vinson and Edgar 2007, 45–46), as demonstrated by the Zulu Kaffir show in Ljubljana and Gorizia in 1880. Both German- and Slovene-language newspapers reported on the developments of the Anglo-Zulu war in considerable detail the year before the Zulu Kaffirs' visit, and Zulu Kaffir warriors would have been familiar characters to local audiences. That is why the *Soča* reporter could conclude the review of the performance in Gorizia with the following words: "Now we know what the Zulu, who last year killed the French prince Lulu, are like" (February 27, 1880), referring to the death of prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte in the South African military conflict (Morris 1994, 529–30). Linguistically domesticated as *culukafri*, the Zulu Kaffirs captured the popular imagination (Zajc and Polajnar 2012, 74–84). An article about an intruder at a car-

nival party in Ljubljana, for example, informs us that he was “escorted out by four Zulu Kaffirs and a few harlequins” (*Edinost*, March 3, 1880), suggesting that by 1880 Zulu Kaffirs had become such a familiar character that they appeared as a carnival costume.¹⁸

A number of colonial conflicts served as context for the reception of other ethnographic show performances. Franco-Dahomean Wars (1889–90 and 1892–94) and the British occupation of the Ashanti Empire (1895–96) contributed to the popularity of Dahomean and Ashanti ethnographic shows across Europe (Herza 2016, 97). Samoan troupes became popular in Germany after the country colonized the islands in 1900 (Akeli 2015; Balme 2007). Taking it a step further, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show promised to reenact the conquest of the American West (Rydell and Kroes 2012; Welch 2011). Another imperialist conflict in Africa served as the context for the arrival of the “Sudanese caravan” to Ljubljana in 1885. The Sudanese performers were billed as warriors from Mahdi’s rebel army (e.g., *Slovenski narod*, June 9, 1885; *Laibacher Zeitung*, June 9, 1885), who resisted Ottoman-Egyptian and later British forces (Searcy 2011). Performing “warrior dances,” something that formed part of the repertoire of these and later African shows, had the dual role of portraying African men as fighting “savages” and offering a glimpse into what Europeans encountered on African battlefields. These ethnographic shows therefore promised not only an opportunity to observe “authentically” performed customs, dances, and songs but also to see a news story firsthand (Qureshi 2012a).

Press coverage, including satirical publications, and souvenir photographs ensured that types embodied by ethnographic show performers became familiar to a much greater number of people than those that attended a show (Qureshi 2011, 112, 155; Toulmin 2011, 266). Ethnographic shows did not necessarily have to perform in an area to reach its public. Scattered mentions of ethnographic shows that did not take place locally can be found in newspaper sources. The reading of newspapers published elsewhere in the Empire,

18 The proximity of this date to the Zulu Kaffir group’s arrival in Ljubljana also raises the question whether their performance might have influenced the choice of carnival costume. Various forms of blackface in the context of carnival celebrations are still a relatively common, largely unchallenged practice across much of Central and Eastern Europe today. This report is therefore a particularly valuable insight into how these practices first developed and the role ethnographic shows might have played in informing them.



Figure 9.6. Satirical illustration of the bishop of Ljubljana dancing with the Ashanti. *Osa*, February 10, 1906.

particularly Vienna, by bilingual elites (see Verginella 2009) would have also served as an important avenue for “ethnographic types,” along with racializing language, to find their way into local media and popular discourse. This is how the Ashanti (*Ašanti*) became another familiar character in the Slovene popular imagination. Although Ashanti troupes never performed in Slovene-inhabited lands, the Viennese Ashanti exhibits of 1897 and 1898 (Scott 1997; Kim 2005) became known well beyond Vienna. An 1897 issue of *Slovenec* denounced the rioting of Viennese parliamentarians by comparing their behavior to that of “Ashanti-negroes” (Zajc and Polajnar 2012, 21). The memory of the Ashanti was still alive and well in 1906 when the satirical newspaper *Osa* (*Wasp*) mocked the bishop of Ljubljana, Anton Bonaventura Jeglič, for considering dancing a sinful path to temptation. The newspaper speculated that he might consider the Ashanti to be of higher morals, as they do not dance in pairs (Zajc and Polajnar 2012, 80) and accompanied the piece with a profoundly racializing satirical illustration (fig. 9.6).

Even more common than references to Zulu Kaffirs or the Ashanti in Slovene media discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centu-

ries was the use of the term *zamorec* (pl. *zamorci*). It literally means “someone coming from beyond the sea” (see also Baker 2018, 119) and was used as a translation for the German word “Neger.” The term was used as a catch-all for people of African descent and formed part of racializing discourse about Africans.¹⁹ It was often used to refer to African performers in ethnographic shows. As demonstrated by Marko Zajc and Janez Polajnar (2012, 74–84), the word also took on a life of its own outside of direct reference to Africans. Politicians denounced their opponents as “negroes” or “*zamorci*” and the press referred to futile endeavors as “the washing of negroes” (*umivanje/pranje zamorcev*) (cf. Lyons 1975), highlighting how racial categories came to permeate public discourse at the turn of the twentieth century.

Contextual Meanings of Racialized Performance

The above discussion demonstrates that press coverage of ethnographic shows on the southwestern periphery of the Habsburg Empire shared many characteristics with their reception in Western imperial metropolises. Yet racialized displays of otherness did acquire specific meanings and purposes on the periphery. I argue that the Slovene case is peripheral in two ways. Firstly, Slovene-inhabited lands represented a geopolitical and economic periphery within the Habsburg monarchy. With the notable exception of Trieste, the Empire’s largest port, urban settlements in Slovene-inhabited crownlands of the Empire were small provincial towns with only nascent industries. They were not major destinations of ethnographic shows but merely short stops along the way. Especially when bigger shows and circuses whose reputations preceded them came to town, it gave these peripheral places an opportunity to feel they were a part of something “bigger and better.” News reports would list the cities in which shows had made a name for themselves, such as Paris, London, New York, and Vienna. Barnum and Bailey sent a press release emphasizing that they would not leave out any part of their usual program in their Ljubljana performance (*Slovenski narod*, May 20, 1901), alleviating concerns that smaller places would get a smaller show. When Buffalo Bill came to Ljubljana, *Lattermansallee* “felt as lively as Prater” (*Slovenec*,

19 It was also part of earlier missionary discourse and appears in *Zgodnja Danica* in the form *zamurec* and the diminutive *zamurčik* or *zamurček*. The word *zamorec* is still used as a racial slur in modern Slovene.

May 19, 1906), giving Ljubljana a taste of Viennese life. Newspapers also informed readers of the numbers of people attending the show who were not local residents (*Slovenec*, May 16 and 17, 1906), turning Ljubljana into a destination rather than merely a stop on the way.

The Habsburg state was an empire that did not possess overseas colonies. In contrast with ethnographic shows in British, French, and to some extent German contexts, which introduced audiences to their colonial subjects, living displays of foreign peoples in the Habsburg context provided an opportunity for local audiences to indulge in “imperial fantasies” (cf. Křížová in this volume). Ethnographic shows served as a way of producing knowledge about the Other. They provided an opportunity for ordinary people to not only observe but also to “know” the Other (Welch 2011; Purkayastha 2019, 3; Qureshi 2011, 10). In the sources I surveyed, the press coverage of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show emphasized this particularly strongly. Newspapers stressed the necessity of learning about peoples whose lifestyles were about to be erased by the progress of modern civilization almost as a duty (see also Cvirn 1994). This gave the reporting an air of “salvage ethnography” (Gruber 1970) and an air of imperial conquest of the wider world and knowledge about it. According to *Slovenski narod*, “Buffalo Bill’s exhibit shows us representatives of all tribes known for their riding art and offers us a once in a lifetime chance to travel around the world” (May 15, 1906). *Slovenec* chimed in by calling the show “a treasure for anthropology” and by telling readers that the show was “indispensably necessary to know various tribes” (May 14, 1906). Local audiences could participate in the possessing of knowledge about Others as a form of vicarious imperialism.

Furthermore, for Slovene-speaking audiences, these encounters with otherness served as an opportunity to reassure themselves of their cultural and racial “Europeanness” in the face of German—and, in the context of the Littoral, also Italian—discourses that highlighted their Slavic inferiority. German nationalists in the Habsburg Empire saw the German nation and culture as synonymous with progress, education, and development. While they allowed for the option of national conversion—that is, for someone to become German via cultural assimilation—they understood “Slavic culture” to be inferior to “German culture” and considered Slavic nationalisms to contradict the very liberal values they considered synonymous with “Germanness” (Judson 2016; Okey 2007; Rampley 2017). In the late nine-

teenth century, differences between the Empire's peoples were increasingly becoming viewed in terms of different levels of civilization and modernity (Judson 2016, 239–41; Telesko 2015; Ash and Surman 2012). Robin Okey notes that the ethnicization of progress was not specific to German liberalism. It was characteristic of European liberalism as a whole. Nevertheless, in contrast to the British, French, and Dutch, who used these developmental notions to justify racial dominance in their overseas empires, in the Habsburg context this ethnicization of progress “occurred inside Europe itself, in the encounter of German-speaking bourgeois with their own Slav neighbors” (Okey 2007, 82). Differences between Germans and Slavs were usually framed in terms of distinct cultures; however, differences between the Empire's peoples could also be framed in (biologically) racial terms (Bartulin 2013, 44–70). In her work on the 1897 Ashanti exhibition in Vienna, Marilyn Scott (1997, 59) argues that we should understand the Ashantis as “ciphers of racialist thinking.” They not only represented themselves or even Africans as a whole but rather stood in for all “lower races,” including the Empire's own Slavs and Jews.

This context gives new resonance to Slovene-language press reporting that positioned ethnographic-show performers as “savage” and “uncivilized” in contradistinction to the audience and the newspapers' Slovene readership. Positioning Slovene-speaking audiences as the “cultured” and “civilized” viewer of the “savagery” on display, implicitly, puts them on equal terms with German-speaking audiences without requiring their conversion to German culture, language, or nationhood. A statement in relation to the Nubian exhibit in 1911 found in *Slovenski narod* is revealing: “Anyone who sees these people can judge for themselves whether they please us Europeans” (*Slovenski narod*, May 24, 1911). This subsumed the newspaper's Slovene-speaking readership under a unified European label not marked specifically by “Germanness.”

There is other material that suggests that local receptions of ethnographic shows were refracted through political discourses on German, Italian, and Slavic or Slovene culture and the civilizing mission that accompanied them. For example, an author in *Slovenec* was displeased that the Zulu Kaffir group who visited Ljubljana in 1880 held its performance in the German-language provincial theater: “It is indeed strange that the Ljubljana Theater is now spreading German culture via savages from Africa or wherever they

are from" (*Slovenec*, February 26, 1880).²⁰ The author wonders how it was that "African savages" made it into the provincial theater, an institution that was meant to enlighten the populace with "superior" German culture. What seems to bother the author more than the fact that Africans are performing in the provincial theater, and in their own language, is that Slovenes are not.

Another relevant example is Italian objection to the printing of Slovene-language posters to advertise the appearance of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in Trieste (*Edinost*, May 6, 1906; see also Ličen 2018, 11; Cvirn 1994, 2). It is likely that the use of Slovene on public posters would have caused a similar reaction regardless of the type of event being advertised. However, the content of the event nevertheless adds another dimension. By being directly addressed as an audience of racialized otherness, Slovenes become subjects invited to view objectified Others on display, on a par with Italian and German audiences.

I want to highlight another example, not directly related to ethnographic shows, in support of my interpretation. In 1901, Franc Bratuša,²¹ a wine grower from Lower Styria, was tried and convicted of murder and cannibalism of his daughter at the provincial court in Maribor (Studen 2016; Bischoff 2011, 169–71). Evidence against him included a book found at his home that described cannibalism in Australia (Studen 2016, 135–36).²² Although he was later released when his daughter was found alive, the story is of interest because of the newspaper debate that developed in its wake. Styrian German-language newspapers including the *Marburger Zeitung*, *Pettauer Zeitung* (*Ptuj Newspaper*), *Deutsche Wacht* (*German Watch*), and *Grazer Tagblatt* (*Graz Daily*) published a series of articles that ascribed Bratuša's inclination for cannibalism to Slovene "savagery" (Studen 2016, 140). Cannibalism was the ultimate mark of the Other (Poignant 2004, 10–11). In German-language news reporting, Bratuša was framed not as a deviant individual but as an example of generalized Slovene "savagery," serving as the Other to German civilization and culture.

20 This relates to suspicions about the troupe's authenticity discussed above.

21 Franz Bratuscha, in German-language sources.

22 The book in question, titled *Australia and Its Islands* (*Avstralija in nje otoki*), was written by Ivan Vrhovec and published in Klagenfurt (in Slovene, Celovec) in 1899 by the Hermagoras Society (in Slovene, Mohorjeva družba; in German, Hermagoras Verein), a publishing house specializing in Slovene-language publications (Studen 2016, 135–36). Books such as this, which framed indigenous people as savages, were another avenue for popularizing Western racial discourses among a Slovene reading public.

A sense of *Kulturmission* was a central feature of German liberalism in regions with Slovene-speaking populations, which is evidenced by regular denunciations of *Kulturträgers* or “bringers of culture” in the Slovene-language press (Oven 2016). These denunciations were commonplace throughout the period under study. What is particularly interesting is that they occasionally appear in relation to European endeavors in Africa. *Slovenski narod*, for example, wrote about the attacks of the Abyssinian army on “Italian culture bringers” (June 27, 1896). In 1896, the newspaper also published a two-part article under the title “Nemška kultura v Afriki” (“German Culture in Africa”) about the arrest of a plantation owner in German East Africa for brutality toward his black workers (*Slovenski narod*, July 27 and 29, 1896). In a twist of perspective, it was the Germans who lacked European civility and culture, not Slavs (cf. Herza 2016). It is no coincidence that *Slovenski narod* targeted German and Italian imperial endeavors, rather than the more influential British or French, as it was German and Italian nationalisms that competed with Slovene nationalism and sought to civilize Slovenes.

Conclusion

Exploring the forms and reception of ethnographic shows on European peripheries, we find both similarities and points of departure with the incarnations of living human displays in the centers of Western imperial power. As many of the shows that toured Central and Eastern Europe were organized by the same promoters as those that visited the West, the shows came equipped with the same racializing language that relied on the scholarly authority of anthropology and the excitement of travel literature. Performances were framed as a mix of education and entertainment and were tinged with political relevance parading a series of colonial battlefields before European audiences. Other common themes are the focus on performers’ physical appearance and supposed “savagery,” and the anxieties around sexual mixing and racial purity. It is this very framing of racialized difference established by ethnographic shows that served as an important avenue for popularizing Western discourses on race and racial stereotypes in the Slovene-speaking Habsburg periphery and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe (cf. Czarnecka and Demski 2020).

The ways ethnographic shows that took place on the southwestern periphery of the Habsburg Empire were reported in Slovene- and German-language newspapers were remarkably similar and often read as if copied from promotional material and press releases. Even when we can discern an authorial voice, the view of ethnographic-show performers expressed in Slovene and German sources did not seem to differ considerably (cf. Demski 2020). What differed somewhat was how those perceptions figured in how German- and Slovene-speaking audiences saw themselves. The reception of ethnographic shows needs to be considered not only in the context of European imperial expansion but also in the context of late nineteenth-century nationalist projects (cf. Czarnecka and Demski 2020; Baraniecka-Olszewska 2020; Kontler 2020) and attendant discourses about specific national cultures, which often positioned them hierarchically. It is this internal othering that I found to be specific to the case I considered and other Central and Eastern European contexts (e.g., see Novikova 2013). While Slovene engagement with ethnographic shows was no doubt underwritten by racist ideas, the classic interpretation that these performances reinforced the supposed racial superiority of white Europeans and legitimized imperial expansion acquires a slight inflection. I argue that it allowed Slovene audiences to partake in a similar feeling of superiority, while deflecting German and Italian nationalist discourses that positioned them as the uncivilized Other. It is primarily this that distinguishes the impact of ethnographic shows on the Habsburg periphery from that in London or Paris and perhaps even the Habsburg metropole.

In her work on the Viennese Ashanti exhibit in 1897, Marilyn Scott argues that ethnographic shows provided a means for the city's increasingly multi-ethnic population to overcome their differences and achieve a common identity defined against the radical difference on display at the zoo (Scott 1997, 51). Scott is not alone in her reasoning. The literature offers similar interpretations of the role of ethnographic shows in forging a common American identity out of a multitude of immigrant groups in the United States (Vaughan 1996, 231). However, I find Irina Novikova's interpretation of the role of ethnographic shows in Riga, part of the Russian Empire but dominated by a German elite, most relevant to my case. Novikova argues that viewing racialized African performers allowed Latvians to position themselves within "the meta-frame of Europeaness" and provided them with "a generic model of racial identity" (Novikova 2013, 588). My material led me to a similar con-

clusion. Whiteness does not merely refer to the color of one's skin but is intimately connected with the idea of Europe as a space of civilization and modernity, defined against the savagery and barbarism that surrounds it and requires its intervention (Mills 1997; Baker 2018). An important role of ethnographic shows was that it allowed Slovene audiences, themselves perceived as lacking in terms of civilizational progress, to position themselves as civilized Europeans, through a supra-identity of Europeanness as whiteness, which did not require a "national conversion" to "Germanness." The staging of ethnographic shows contributed not only to racializing the performers as black or brown, or indeed "red," but also to specific ways in which audiences adopted an unmarked identity of whiteness. While a Slovene or Slavic identity could be marked by cultural, as well as sometimes racial, inferiority, this supposedly neutral identity of white Europeanness was not.

My contribution only begins to unpack the history of living human displays, racial thinking, and colonial entanglements on the Habsburg peripheries partly inhabited by Slovenes. The newspapers I relied on as my primary source did not merely operate in a context of nationalism but were themselves promulgators of nationalism. Therefore, not all Slovene- and German-speaking audiences would have necessarily shared the views of Slovene and German newspapers. This is particularly pertinent given recent historiographical work that has demonstrated the relatively slow pace of the spread of nationalism among the general population in the Habsburg Empire and the persistence of national indifference (Judson 2016; Stergar 2012; Zahra 2008). Much of the audience of ethnographic shows that we discuss would have been multilingual and might have shifted national allegiances or perhaps avoided them completely. Moreover, the analytical focus on the role that a universalized notion of German culture played in othering Slovenes and in shaping Slovene engagement with ethnographic shows neglects the perspectives of other audiences who shared the same geographical space, particularly Roma and Jews, themselves subject to intense racialization during this period. I was also unable to consider Italian-language sources, which would have added another perspective and additional valuable data on Trieste and Gorizia.

Furthermore, relying on newspaper coverage comes with a number of limitations. Given the nature of the sources, we capture moments in the life of ethnographic shows and might even learn about their final destination, but it is difficult to reconstruct entire routes, unless we are dealing

with well-researched, large outfits such as Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Reconstructing routes would be an important next step in understanding how groups moved between different parts of Europe and what guided those trajectories. The most glaring omission in relying on newspaper sources is a lack of the performers' perspectives on their task of performing otherness and on their view of audiences (cf. Atkin 2015, 152; Qureshi 2011, 9). We cannot recover a complete picture of how audiences engaged with ethnographic shows from newspaper coverage, nor do we find out much about audiences themselves. We know shows were attended by men, women, and children, including school groups, but we cannot know much about who they were. Apart from the occasional comment on the pleasure female audience members took in attracting the attention of male performers, most mentions of the audience are limited to estimating the number of visitors and the shows' drawing in visitors from outside the city.

An interesting future topic of research would be exploring the involvement of locals with the shows. In 1906, for example, *Slovenec* (May 17, 1906) and *Slovenski narod* (May 17, 1906) both reported the disappearance of local soldier Andrej Vičič. He was suspected of leaving Ljubljana with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show on account of being seen talking to Buffalo Bill's Native American performers and because he had previously worked for Barnum and Bailey. Another fruitful research avenue would be exploring resistance to attending ethnographic shows and circus performances. In this article, we touched on the criticism directed at exhibiting people by Catholic conservative circles, but there seems to have been a broader resistance to the frivolous spending of money on such forms of entertainment that was captured in both the conservative and liberal press particularly in relation to Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show (e.g., *Slovenec*, May 30, 1906; *Slovenski narod*, May 19, 1906; cf. Baraniecka-Olszewska 2020). Particularly important work would be to compare the phenomenon of ethnographic shows in Central and Eastern Europe as the geopolitical periphery of Europe and the peripheries within Western Europe itself. This could elucidate which aspects of ethnographic show reception were specific to Central and Eastern Europe and which were characteristic of peripheries and provincial regions more broadly.

The study of ethnographic shows and racialized circus acts is worthwhile not only because it is an under-researched area of Central and Eastern European history but also because it can expand our understanding of how

ideas of race became popularized among non-academic publics. The analysis presented in this chapter demonstrates how racialized performances of otherness through popular entertainment forms contributed to the popularization of racial discourses in a specific provincial location within the Habsburg Empire at the turn of the twentieth century. The framing of these performances taught audiences to recognize the difference between themselves and the performers in racialized ways. This simultaneously solidified the association of non-Europeans with various degrees of “savagery” and enabled audiences to recognize themselves as white, not only through skin color but also through association with Europeaness, civilization, and modernity, the legacies of which are still with us today.

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- Soča* [Isongo River], February 27, 1880; May 6 and 13, 1911.

A Century of Elision? Ethnic Shows in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, 1879–1914

Maria Leskinen

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, exhibitions of “exotic” human beings for the Western European public were promoted as displays of “savage” or “primitive” people from other continents. According to some scholars, the popularity of exhibiting otherness was based on a tradition of exhibiting human deviations—“human monsters” and “freak shows” in mobile circuses, at local fairs, carnivals, and so on (Blanchard et al. 2008, 6; Böetsch 2011). Today, the various forms of live displays of non-European people of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are called ethnic shows, ethnographic shows, living ethnological exhibitions, anthro-zoological exhibitions, native villages, colonial exhibitions, and *Völkerschauen/Völkerausstellungen*, among other terms. The term “human zoo”¹ is used today as a general term for this type of exhibition; however, its use is criticized for having a degrading tone that suggests discrimination and violence and for not taking into account the context of the events and indigenous agency (see e.g., Abbattista 2015; Sánchez-Gómez 2013; Thode-Arora in this volume).

The history of “exotic” human exhibitions in the United States and Western Europe has been studied extensively (e.g., Abbattista 2015; Adams 2010; Blanchard et al. 2008; Böetsch 2011; Corbey 1993; Poignant 2004; Qureshi 2011). The history and geography of touring ethnic exhibitions organized by Carl Hagenbeck in Western Europe have been especially well researched (e.g. Ames 2008; Thode-Arora 2008) and in Scandinavia

1 In Russia, the term “human zoo” is used most frequently regarding live displays of “exotic” people in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mostly in Russian contemporary media and popular literature (e.g., *Chelovechesky zoopark—sbokiruyushcheje razulechenije evropejtsjev v 19 veke*; *Briemya belych* by Igor Eliseyev; *Tak vyglyadit Chelovechesky zoopark* by Varvara Lyutova; *Negry v zoosadah Evropy (Istoricheskije syuzhety)*). There is insufficient information on corresponding events in the Russian Empire and the research is in the early stage in Russian science.

(Andreassen 2015). In contrast, little is known about ethnic shows in Eastern Europe, including the Russian Empire. Recent research on this cultural phenomenon in the region compared to Western Europe has revealed noticeable differences and new contexts (e.g., Czarnecka 2018, 2020; Demski 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Herza 2016).²

We know that “exotic” human exhibitions occurred in several cities in the Russian Empire (e.g., Warsaw and Łódź within partitioned Poland, Riga, Vilnius, Helsinki, Odessa, Kiev, Moscow, and Saint Petersburg) as part of long-running European tours organized from the 1870s to the 1910s; yet Russian sources have provided limited information about a small number of performances in Saint Petersburg and Moscow.³ Some details of “black villages” (*negritianskije derevni*) and Dahomey shows in Moscow and Riga have been published only recently, relying mainly on advertisements published in Russian newspapers of the time (Bogdanov 2014; Leskinen 2018; Novikova 2013; Savitsky 2018) and on Latvian-language newspapers (Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020). It is known that Robert A. Cunningham’s “cannibals” toured Europe in 1886, when Australian Aborigines visited several cities of the Russian Empire, including Helsingfors (Helsinki) and Saint Petersburg (Arkadija⁴), and then performed in the Moscow zoo at the end of the summer season (Poignant 2004, 181–83).⁵

Recent Russian studies on entertainment and leisure in the urban Russian landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include mentions of similar living human exhibitions of *inorodtsy*—that is, indigenous non-Slavic peoples from the Russian North (e.g., Samoyeds/Nenets, Voguls/

2 I am grateful to Professor Dagnosław Demski and Dr. Dominika Czarnecka for their comments on this chapter and for information on the latest publications related to ethnic shows in Eastern Europe.

3 Moscow was the capital of the Tsardom of Russia (1547–1712 and 1728–30). Saint Petersburg was the capital of the Russian Empire (1713–27 and 1732–1918).

4 Arkadija (the Arcadia Garden) (1886–1923), an amusement park with a restaurant of the same name, was at first intended for the wealthy public of Saint Petersburg (Alyansky 1996, 17–20). Cunningham’s Australian group visited Arkadija just after its opening.

5 I thank Professor Demski for the link regarding the “cannibals’ tour,” which visited Moscow in 1886 according to Poignant (2004). Unfortunately, I did not find any additional details on their performance or visit to the Moscow Anthropological Laboratory at the university, except for an advertising poster announcing a performance in the zoo: “Every day, twice daily on an open stage, will be shown . . . Australian Aborigines tattooed cannibals, the Man-Eaters [*Ludoedy*], hunters and boomerang throwers, men, women and children. Admission price is 30 kopecks. In case of rain, savages [*dikariz*] will be shown in a closed theater” (*Moskovsky listok* [*Moscow Sheet*], August 12, 1901).

Mansi, Sami/Lapps,⁶ etc.) in Moscow and Saint Petersburg zoos (e.g., Bokova 2009; Denisenko 2003; Ruga and Kokorev 2005). Notes concerning these exhibitions, however, lack detail and verifiable information (such as exact dates or printed publications).

Ethnic shows in Russia were mentioned neither in pre-revolutionary nor in Soviet and post-Soviet historiography. Contemporary books and articles devoted to ethnic and racial perceptions and prejudices in Russian society during the imperial period do not consider these shows, either.

One might expect that the experiences of watching such ethnic shows would have been described in various personal memoirs (e.g., Gershenzon-Chegodavaeva 2000; Minchenkov 1980). However, such memoirs of eyewitnesses are sporadic, except for notes about the circus, *balagans*,⁷ and music performances with the participation of black people. A lack of documents describing individual experiences is striking considering there was significant interest among the general public in the appearance and lifestyle of people from different parts of Russia and the rest of the world. This interest was reflected in a popular and educational literature on geography and ethnography and in active attendance at scientific and art exhibitions during which ethnic and racial Others were the main subjects of the presentation—via paintings, photographs, mannequins, and reconstructions—and enjoyed notable attention from the press (Leskinen 2010, 98–130).

Russian literature of the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century did not refer to any ethnic shows or living ethnographic expositions in Russia (I mean here the works of popular writers such as Leo Tolstoy, Nikolay Leskov, Pavel Melnikov [alias Andrey Pechersky], Anton Chekhov, Alexander Kuprin, Vladimir Mikhnevich, Vasily Nemirovich-Danchenko, Vladimir Gilyarovskiy, etc.) except for a sin-

6 “Nenets” (or “Samodeic people”) is a contemporary ethnonym. During the period of the Russian Empire until the 1920s they were called Samoyeds. The Mansi was a Finno-Ugric ethnic group; in the Russian Empire they were known as Voguls. “Sami” is an ethnonym for the Finno-Ugric people (Lapps or Laplanders in European sources since the sixteenth century or Lopars in Russian sources since the Middle Ages). All these ethnic groups are the indigenous peoples of the Russian North and Siberia and belong to reindeer-herding cultures. The author uses the old and modern scientific ethnonyms as synonyms.

7 *Balagans* is a word that entered into Russian language probably from Tatar languages *balagan* (a shed, a tent) or from Farsi *balabana* (a balcony). They were temporary wooden buildings for theatrical and circus performances, which became widespread at fairs and folk festivals in Russia from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century in cities and towns. *Balagans* were also places (gardens or squares) where people celebrated holidays and where carnivals were held (at *Maslenitsa*, *Sviatki*, in the weeks after Easter, and so on).

gle work—Ivan Bunin’s story *The Idol* (1930) (see also Leskinen and Jablovkov 2019). This is despite the popularity of stories describing circus performances and reports about all kinds of entertainment provided by writers and reporters of Moscow and Saint Petersburg during the period under consideration. Those stories usually included reflection and discussion of various moral aspects of urban leisure in the last third of the nineteenth century, which could have been relevant to ethnic shows. Can we define this lack of information as an elision? If yes, such an elision of the phenomenon in cultural and social history seems to be rather peculiar.

Before we look at this subject in more detail, I would like to collect and chronologically systematize information about these events and their circumstances. I have found some documented facts and a few vague mentions about ethnic shows of “savages” (*dikari, dikije*) in the zoos or (more rarely) in city gardens in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. Thus, I will present and verify this information via original Russian-language sources, primarily newspaper and magazine advertisements and reviews published in the years 1901–11—in periodicals such as *Moskovsky listok* (*Moscow Sheet*), *Novosti dniya* (*News of the Day*), *Iskry* (*Sparks*), *Vsemirnaya Illustratsiya* (*World Illustration*), *Rampa i zhyzn’* (*The Limes and the Life*), *Illustirovannoje Pribavlenije k Moskovskomu Listku* (*Illustrated Supplement to the Moscow Sheet*), and *Stolica i usad’ba: Zhurnal krasivoy zhizni* (*Capital and Estate: A Magazine of a Wonderful Life*).

The main goal of this chapter is to present new facts regarding ethnic shows and exhibitions including representatives of both non-European and indigenous peoples of the Russian North in the cities of the Russian Empire in the years 1879–1914. Finally, I will try to answer the question of whether the elision of ethnic shows in Russian cultural and social history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was deliberate.

The Zoos in Saint Petersburg and Moscow as Places of Public Entertainment

Ethnic shows took place mostly in Russian zoological gardens and so-called amusement parks—namely, Luna Park in Saint Petersburg,⁸ Petrovsky Park,

8 Luna Park in Saint Petersburg, in Demidov Garden, at Officerskaya street (1912–18), was situated far from the center of the city at that time. It was an amusement park, modeled on London’s Luna Park (1903), built by the English company at the expense of a Russian millionaire. There was a rollercoaster, new tech-

and the Manege in Moscow⁹ (Ryabova 2016, 44–110). These kinds of shows were a part of folk festival amusements and circus performances at which it was customary to see guest performers from overseas or actors pretending to be from faraway places. Therefore, when the city did not have a permanent circus or zoo, the imported ethnic exhibitions were often held precisely in public places where seasonal fairs, festivals, and traveling circuses were usually organized (for example, in Moscow it was at the Devichye pole¹⁰).

The oldest permanent zoos in the Russian Empire, the Moscow and Saint Petersburg zoos were established almost simultaneously (in 1864 and 1865, respectively). The Saint Petersburg zoo was located near the city center, on the territory of Aleksandrovsky Sad (Alexander's Garden, 1845) on the Neva riverfront opposite the Peter and Paul Fortress. At first, a couple called Gebhardt, who were German by origin, ran the place as a private menagerie. Ernest Rost (1842–1908, director of the zoo 1873–97), the second husband of the zoo's owner, Sofia Gebhardt, developed his zoo into a successful enterprise with a restaurant and two theaters (summer and winter) and organized public (including ethnic) shows there. Extravagant shows, vaudeville performances, and operettas were staged for visitors. "A more sophisticated audience could enjoy symphony concerts (including the organ)" (Maksimov 1917, 108). After Rost, at the beginning of the twentieth century, most residents of the Russian capital associated the zoo exclusively with one institution—a restaurant called (since 1889) the Zoological Garden (Alyansky 1996, 137–41). It had "a rather scandalous reputation" as even "gymnasium students were strictly forbidden from entering the garden in the evenings" (Piskarev and Uralab 2007, 160, 205). After 1880, Rost began to run ethnic shows in his zoo. The first documented performance was "Nubian caravan" from August 14 until September 1880 (Zefeld 1890, 39, 43). In 1898 Rost left Russia, the zoo fell into disrepair, and finally it was

nical attractions, a theater for operettas, and so on. It was extremely popular among Russian citizens. The Somali troupe performance took place there soon after its opening (Alyansky 1996, 197–98; see also Warsame in this volume).

- 9 The Moscow Manege (built in 1817) was an oblong building close to Red Square near the Kremlin. In the beginning it was used as a traditional riding school. Since 1831 it has been used as a place for exhibitions and performances, concerts, and entertainment events during the holidays.
- 10 Devichye pole was on the outskirts of Moscow before the 1880s. It was located between the Garden Ring and Novodevichy Convent. In the nineteenth century it was used for seasonal and holiday fairs and *balagans*.

closed in 1909. In 1911 a new owner, Semen Novikov, put it into order. In 1918 the capital's zoo was nationalized.

Unlike the privately operated Saint Petersburg zoo, the Moscow zoo was created in 1864 under the direction of the Imperial Russian Society for the Acclimatization of Animals and Plants, which sought to educate and enlighten the public. Anatoly Bogdanov¹¹ was the main initiator of its creation. The zoo was (and is) situated close to the Garden Ring (*Sadovoje Koltso*), near old ponds where in the past festivities and leisure activities were enjoyed by the public. The Moscow zoo was created as a scientific institution following a European model. However, from the very beginning the zoo was not able to cover its costs through visitor admissions and sponsorship, as had been planned initially. In 1874, the Society had to transfer operation of the zoo to a private entrepreneur for several years. As this did not solve the financial problems, the Society had to rent out part of its territory and buildings. The menagerie had been in the main (zoological) part of the zoo's site, while a cafe and a restaurant were located in the so-called botanical area, in which there were no aviaries or cages. Between May and September 1864, a pavilion was constructed for performances such as operettas, extravaganzas, colorful music shows, fireworks festivals, balloon rides, and so forth (Bokova 2009, 477). The troupe of touring artists performed in this part of the zoological garden after Christmas, Easter, and other seasonal festivities alongside other traditional entertainment held for the public. It should be taken into account that the Russian zoological gardens of the second half of the nineteenth century were usually a part of the urban gardens—an entertainment area and a place for having public festivities (see Ryabova 2016).

Ethnic Shows in Saint Petersburg Zoo

The history of the ethnic shows in the Saint Petersburg zoo is poorly documented. Ernest Rost became a long-term partner of Carl Hagenbeck (Denisenko 2003, 60–61). They actively collaborated in taking ethnographic

11 Anatoly Bogdanov (1834–96), a professor at Moscow University and an outstanding Russian scientist (zoologist and founder of Russian anthropology), founded the scientific societies: the Committee on Acclimatization (1853) and the Imperial Society of Devotees of Natural Science, Anthropology, and Ethnography (1863). He also organized several famous scientific exhibitions: such as an ethnographic (1867), an anthropological (1879), and a technical (1872) one.

tours to Saint Petersburg,¹² an activity which was described by the zoo's inspector, Alfred Zefeld. He mentioned four "exotic" tours in the 1880s and 1890s (Zefeld 1890, 39). For instance, in August 1880 the Nubians replicated scenes of hunting, war dances, and battles. Zefeld wrote:

Berabras (as the Nubians called themselves) camped in the arena, in front of the open stage. This camp can be depicted as a motley and highly interesting place. The Nubians reproduced their battles and hunts here. One can see them in their everyday mode of life. The greatest interest was attached to a significant number of African animals: black single-humped camels, old and young riding dromedaries, zebras, giraffes, wild buffaloes, Sanga bulls, Nubian riding bulls, goats, and white donkeys. The spectacular finale of the shows was the reproduction of the caravan procession, which always impressed the viewers. (Zefeld 1890, 40)

At the same time, one could see a "scientific" ethnographic collection (i.e., household items, jewelry, musical instruments, and so on) as well as zoological exhibits (animals and fish) in the zoo (Zefeld 1890, 40, 43).

From Zefeld (1890, 44–45) one can learn that besides the "Nubian caravan" in the Saint Petersburg zoo other exhibits were staged, including in summer 1881 a small group of Zulu Kaffirs, "a tribe of dwarfs living in the steppes of Kalahari (South Africa) between Lake Ngami and the Orange River"—probably the Bushmen from South Africa who came in summer 1886—and thirty-seven Sinhalese people from Ceylon who arrived "at the end of summer 1889" (fig. 10.1). Based on named performing groups and

12 "Exotic" tours through Europe were possible thanks to an accelerated development of railway infrastructure in the second half of the nineteenth century. The main railway lines in the European part of the Russian Empire from the 1850s to the 1900s were the following, where the year indicates when railway traffic opened: Warsaw–Vienna (1848); Saint Petersburg–Tver–Moscow (1851); Saint Petersburg–Pskov–Dinaburg/Dvinsk (1860)–Vilnius/Vilno–Grodno–Białystok–Warsaw (1862) with the branch Lentvaris–Virbalis/Wierzbolów–Eydtkuhnen (1861); Kaunas/Kovno–Lentvaris (1861); Riga–Dinaburg/Dvinsk (1861)–Vitebsk (1866)–Orel (1868); Moscow–Vladimir–Nizhny Novgorod (1862); Moscow–Serpuchov–Tula–Kursk (1868); Moscow–Jaroslavl (1870); Odessa–Balta (1865)–Elizavetgrad (1869)–Kiev (1870); Moscow–Smolensk (1870)–Brest (1871); Libau–Minsk (1873)–Gomel (1873)–Romny (1874) with a branch from Radviliskisto Dinaburg/Dvinsk (1873); Moscow–Rzhev–Velikiye Luki–Jelgava/Mitau–Vindau (1901); Moscow–Bryansk (1899)–Kiev (1899)–Poltava (1901)–Kovel (1902). From the 1870s one could get to Berlin, Vienna, or Paris from Saint Petersburg (most often through Virbalis/Wierzbolów or Lentvaris in Russia and then through Prussian Eydtkuhnen and Königsberg, Bromberg to Berlin, or through Grodno and Warsaw) by railway.



Figure 10.1. Sinhalese show in Saint Petersburg zoo, 1889. From Elena Denisenko, *Ot zverincev k zooparku. Istoriya Leningradskogo zooparka* (Saint Petersburg: Iskustvo-Ptb, 2003), 71.

short descriptions of their shows in Zefeld's book, one may conclude that these shows were the same ones that Hagenbeck had staged and launched for tour in the European cities. Thus, thanks to Rost's zoo, Russians in Saint Petersburg got an opportunity to visit well-organized, high-quality ethnic performances.

African shows were extremely popular in the Russian capital. The season of these performances lasted in Saint Petersburg for three to four months, usually from May to September when more than 20,000 people

visited the zoo every day (Denisenko 2003, 72). Moreover, public interest in various African shows increased in the early 1900s. In May 1912, the "Somali village" was staged in Saint Petersburg (cf. Warsame in this volume). This is a well-known event in Russian historiography due to numerous remaining photographic images. However, the "Somali village" was organized at the Luna Park and not at the zoo. The Somali troupe's performance took place in Luna Park soon after its opening. The "exotic" group came from Riga and consisted of men and women with little children. Africans stayed in Saint Petersburg during the summer. Visitors to this "village" could view a carver, a baker, a gunsmith, a shoemaker, and other village dwellers, who settled down in separate booths to demonstrate their craft. The shows included dances, songs, and a demonstration of throwing spears at the target (Bekkin 2011; Savitsky 2018).

Black Amazons in Moscow

I found no information on whether Hagenbeck's ethnic shows ever took place in Moscow. But we know about Dahomey Amazon dance shows (per-

formed by an all-female cast and, later, by a larger group) in Moscow in the 1900s. According to Suzanne Preston Blier, the Dahomey tours of the British entrepreneur John Wood started at the European zoos in 1891, after the first Franco-Dahomean War (Blier 2008, 161), but the Amazons' shows took place earlier—for example, in Warsaw in 1889 (Czarnecka 2020). These shows were very attractive for European spectators and for the Russian public, who could watch “exotic” dances, military exercises, and the “authentic” life of African people.

So far the earliest information I have discovered about Dahomey shows in Moscow is from 1901. On April 4 (April 17), 1901,¹³ the Moscow newspaper *Novosti dniya* published an announcement of the impending arrival of the “group of Amazons . . . who will be acting in the Manege . . . The group performs fascinating dances.” The Moscow newspaper *Moskovsky listok* also published an advertisement of the Amazons' show in the Moscow Manege in April 1901:

For the time of the Easter festivities, the Directorate of the Manege announced an Amazons squad from Africa, forty-eight women from the wild tribe of Dahomey under the leadership of the commanders-in-chief Princess Mormon and Zomba and tribe's warlords Prince Alfa and Mani. They will perform the following: 1) sacred dances of fire worshipers, performed by Amazons Morey and Amara, 2) Amazons' military evolution performed by twenty-six women, 3) BOND0—the prayer before the battle—MOMO, 4) military exercises and sword fights under the leadership of the commanders-in-chief Mani, 5) “African saber game” performed by Rodges, Frabel, Bondoboy, Suy, Makalli, Taffa and Piknet [?], 6) Amazon national dances performed by Zamba, Bok, Ticci, Zaffi, Zambo and Kuy, 7) the fencing tournament performed by twenty-six Amazons, 8) African Amazons' militant songs, 9) fighting of two feuding tribes under the leadership of the commander-in-chief Prin-

13 The first date is given according to the Julian calendar (so-called Old Style date); the second date is according to the Gregorian calendar (New Style date). The Gregorian calendar had replaced the Julian calendar, which had been used in Catholic and Protestant Europe from 1582 until the end of the eighteenth century. Russia changed its state calendar in 1918, but in the nineteenth century both of these dating systems were used in documents, the press, and everyday notes (newspapers, letters, diaries, etc.). In the nineteenth century, the difference between the Old and New Style was thirteen days.

cess Mormon and tribe's warlord Alfa, 10) African pantomime "Night in Dahomey, or Attack on the Amazon camp and kidnapping of their princess" performed by all women and commanders-in-chief. (April 4, 1901)¹⁴

This troupe performance later moved to the zoo (*Moskovsky listok*, April 12, 1901). One can read a description of the Dahomeans in a sketch titled "Resettlement of Dahomey: Something African":

Almost forty people of strange and scary look, with dark bronze faces, with huge lips, curly, muscular, very noisy and warlike. There are men who look like women (*baby*), and women who look like men. Some are dressed in motley rags, others in European dress, but with bare feet. One is wrapped in a bright red blanket and screams the most . . . The Dahomeans and their warlike Amazons who finished their tour in the Manege are going to the zoo, where they were engaged for the summer. (*Moskovsky listok*, April 12, 1901)

After Easter, the newspaper *Novosti dniya* announced: "Yesterday, in the zoological garden Dahomeans launched their performances and will show their dances and military exercises three times a day during the weekdays, five times a day on weekends" (April 16, 1901).

The arrival of the Amazons from Dahomey attracted many visitors, including children, to the zoo. Researchers who study the perceptions of Africans in the Russian Empire (Novikova 2013, 580; Bogdanov 2014, 114) frequently cite a fragment from Boris Pasternak's novel *Safe Conduct* (1930), in which a poet describes his child's impression of the Amazons in Moscow:

A military corps of Dahomey Amazons was shown in the zoo in the spring of 1901. [I remember] how the first sensation of womanhood interconnected with the feeling of naked women in array, of suffering in close order, a tropical parade accompanied with a drum . . . I became a slave of forms because I saw the uniform of enslaved women too early. (Pasternak 1989, 4)

14 Announcements about the Amazons' shows were published in this newspaper from April 4 to April 8, 1901.

However, it is still difficult to say for sure whether the Moscow performances were part of the same tour or if some similar troupes existed “independently” and imitated Amazons for the naive Russian public. Similar groups became “professional Dahomeans” almost immediately, and only anthropologists could identify the ethnic background of the participants (Blanchard et al. 2008, 14). We do not know whether the African group that visited Moscow in April 1901 was exactly from Dahomey.

Evgeny Pasternak, in his father’s biography, commented on the excerpt above, stating: “Those Amazons were probably actresses” (Pasternak 1997, 42). His doubts were justified, as extravaganzas and performances in “Dahomean style” were very fashionable in Russia at that time due to the popularity of the Dahomey ethnic performances. Moreover, Galina Ul’yanova, a researcher of leisure and entertainment in Russian cities of that time, has no doubt that participants of the show in Manege were “actors in African style makeup” (Ul’yanova 2011, 468). Manege and circus performances in which wrestlers with black skin makeup portrayed representatives of African peoples were widely known (Razin 1963, 54).

Thus a Russian spectator could not often understand whether he or she was seeing an “exotic” performance presented by real “savages” from Africa (“professional savages”) or a show put on by local artists. An illustration of one such confusing experience is a note in the memoir of circus artist Dmitry Al’perov, who mentioned a “performance of the Dahomey troupe” in Kasimov (a small town in Ryazan Governorate¹⁵) in the summer of 1912:

They demonstrated the everyday life of “wild” black tribes. They walked nearly naked along streets. They had only straw skirts. The women had many beads. In my opinion, their appearance attracted crowds, and the show made a good profit. They performed a military dance, walked bare-foot through broken glass, and drank hot tin. (Al’perov 1936, 324)

This description has nothing to do with the usual programs of Dahomey shows, but it is very typical for circus performances (especially physically extreme ones).

15 The railway connection between Moscow and Ryazan was established in the 1870s.



Figure 10.2. “In memory of Princess Gumma’s troupe,” 1909. Private collection of Russian postcards of Antonina Leskinen.

In 1909, an “African corner” was arranged in the Yasnaya Polyana Garden in Moscow,¹⁶ which was a part of Petrovsky Park: “The tents of Princess Gumma troupe were staged in the garden” (*Rampa i zhyzn’*, August 1909). On the photographic postcards “In memory of Princess Guma’s troupe” (this title is in Russian with one *m*), black women armed with rifles and bayonets were dressed up as Dahomey Amazons in the Jardin d’Acclimatation in Paris. A similar performance of the “war-

rior-queen Gumma” was arranged by Hagenbeck in 1893, and later many different copycat groups performed as “fearsome Dahomey women-warriors” (Ciarlo 2011, 95) (fig. 10.2).

In the same year, the Russian anthropologist Arkady Elkind¹⁷ made “detailed anthropological measurements” of the Dahomey dancers in Moscow zoo, and he published his article in *Russkiy Antropologicheskii Zhurnal* (*Russian Anthropological Magazine*) in 1912. He did not express any doubts concerning the anthropological and ethnic background of show participants, identifying their “anthropological type as Sudanese Negros”:

A small number of representatives of Sudanese Negros, namely, those of them who were known as Dahomeans and speak *ewe*, could be seen in 1909 in Moscow, in the Zoological Garden, where during the second half

16 Yasnaya Polyana Garden was situated in the Petrovsky Park in the northwest of Moscow (1827). In the 1880s to 1900s, one part of this park became a very popular place among rich Moscow merchants, artists, and writers who frequented restaurants with Roma dancers and singers and daily live entertainment (e.g., Yar, Strel’na, Mauritania, Eldorado, etc.).

17 Arkady Elkind (1869–1920) was a doctor, Russian anthropologist, and specialist in the anthropology of Poles and Jews.

of summer a show was run by the group of thirty persons—natives of Dahomey and its neighboring areas. (Elkind 2004, 436)¹⁸

In addition, we know that a painting made by the Moscow artist Nikolay Kasatkin depicted a scene at the Moscow zoological garden during the stay of the Dahomeans. We first learned of this from the description given by another painter, Yakov Minchenkov, a member of the group known as the Wanderers (see Novikova 2013; Bogdanov 2014):

He [Nikolay Kasatkin] painted the picture *At the Zoo*. Negroes were brought and exhibited like animals. A lady [*dama*] with a child came up to the fence behind which negroes were placed. A negro woman saw the child and reached out to kiss him. (Minchenkov 1980, 228)

The memoirist added that the picture Kasatkin painted was supposed to be presented as a gift to the American president.¹⁹ Genrietta Burova made notes for Minchenkov's publication and indicated that Kasatkin's painting was exhibited in 1903, and its location was "a private collection in Kiev" at the time of publication (Minchenkov 1980, 450). My attempts to find a reproduction of this canvas were unsuccessful for a long time, because this picture was not listed in any of Kasatkin's catalogs, biographies, or inventories of his artworks. Finally, I managed to find a black-and-white reproduction only in the catalog of a Wanderers exhibition held in Moscow (*Illustrirovannyj katalog* 1903, N 14). It indicates that the small canvas (36 x 40 centimeters) was called *Women of Dahomey in the Zoological Garden*. The reproduction depicts the

18 The name "Sudan" in Elkind's text has nothing to do with the state of Sudan. In the introduction to his article he presents the history of the region and a review of the ethnic groups and languages of Dahomey. In particular he writes: "The negroes, living between . . . the Senegal and Niger rivers split into two large branches: Sudanese negroes, inhabiting the Sudan and the coast of Upper Guinea, and Bantu negroes, living in sub-equatorial and southern Africa. The basis for this division is the difference in languages" (Elkind 2004, 435–36). He also mentions some of their anthropological (physical) features. Peoples speaking the language *ewe*, as he writes, lived between the Kufo River and Mono River and also on the plateau Abomey and to the north of Abomey. Elkind describes twenty-two men and three women from Dahomey towns (in French: Ouidah, Porto-Novo, Abomey, Cotonou, Grand Popo) who spoke the language *ewe*. Nevertheless, all French colonial territories in West Africa (Upper and Middle Niger and Senegal rivers) were called, collectively, "French Sudan" in Russia in the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.

19 Kasatkin was probably planning to take part in the Russian art exhibition at the world's fair in St. Louis, Missouri, which was held the next year (1904).



Figure 10.3. Painting by Nikolay Kasatkin, *Women of Dahomey in the Zoological Garden* (1903). In the center of the picture, a young dark-skinned woman (Dahomeyan?) is leaning over the fence to kiss a laughing child in the arms of the female spectator, and this move is accepted. Dark-skinned participants are shown in bright sunlight and dressed in light-colored clothes, while white spectators are depicted in dark clothes and in the shade—in this way the straightforward opposition between black and white is neutralized both in color and in symbolic meanings. *Illyustrirovannyj catalog XXXI Vystavki Tovarishchestva peredvizhnyh hudozhestvennyh vystavok*, fig. N 14.

scene, in which visitors and “exhibits” were separated by a low hedge, not a fence (as Minchenkov wrote), which allows, as shown in the picture, an African woman to kiss a child in the hands of a visiting lady; both women were smiling and seemed quite friendly. Most likely, Kasatkin painted this picture in 1901–2, as the Wanderers’ exhibitions were held annually and the artists showed only recent works (fig. 10.3).

Were representatives of exotic tour groups exhibited near the animal cages when they stays in zoos? This is a difficult question to answer. The archives of the zoological gardens in Moscow and Saint Petersburg from this time have not survived.²⁰ Visual evidence (e.g., photos and postcards) of ethnic exhibitions before the 1900s has not been preserved. The only documented exception, apart from Kasatkin’s painting, is a very important and rare photograph of Leo Tolstoy.

Leo Tolstoy and the Dahomeans

In 2014, a photograph appeared on several websites and blogs,²¹ yet with different captions: *Leo Tolstoy near Africans’ huts*; *Leo Tolstoy at the Moscow Zoo*; *Leo Tolstoy at Devichye pole balagans in Moscow*, and so forth. The date given was the same for all versions posted online—1892—and Ilya Tolstoy, the son of the writer, was credited as the author of the photo (fig. 10.4).

20 The former burned down during the uprising in 1905; the latter was completely destroyed in 1940.

21 For example: Lev Tolstoy i begemoty 2014; Mitrofanov 2018.



Figure 10.4. Leo Tolstoy in the zoological garden near African huts. A dark-skinned woman (Dahomeyan?) to the left of Tolstoy leans against the fence in a relaxed posture. It seems like there is no barrier between them to inhibit communication. Photo by Ilya Tolstoy, 1892. Leo Tolstoy State Museum, Moscow.

The original photograph was taken from the archive of the Leo Tolstoy State Literary Museum on Prechistenka Street in Moscow. It shows the writer examining the inhabitants of a “black village” through a fence. The museum captions the image “Leo Tolstoy in the Zoological Garden in Moscow near African huts, 1892.” According to the museum’s curator, Marina Loginova (personal communication), the photo was made by the writer’s son, Ilya Tolstoy. Information about the shot came from the typewritten list of the photo collection of Pavel Sergejenko, with a different caption: “In the Moscow zoological garden. Leo Tolstoy looks at the savages [*dikije*]. Photo by Ilya Tolstoy, 1892” (Tolstoy 1892). In the 1903 and 1908 editions of Sergejenko’s book *Kak zhivet i rabotajet L.N. Tolstoy (How Leo Tolstoy Lives and Works)*, this picture was published with the caption “Leo Tolstoy at people’s holidays in Moscow” (Sergejenko 1903, 67; Sergejenko 1908, 67). In the first edition of the book this photograph is absent (Sergejenko 1898). It is notable that the photo’s caption changed between the archive inventory, the printed publications, and the museum’s photo posted online.

The photograph clearly shows the round shape of dwellings and cone-shaped roofs covered with reeds that extend almost to the ground. No fences are present: we see only a low plank hedge. In the background to the right, one can see a black man standing with a smile on his face and with a pelt across his chest. The writer is near one of the huts, looking at a notebook or a book; close to him, a black woman stands on the other side of the hedge.

The place and the date need to be verified, but the building in the background seems to be one of the zoo's pavilions of that time. What kind of "savages" (the word used in the caption that was replaced for publication with "African huts") did Leo Tolstoy see at the Moscow zoo and when exactly was the photo taken? The "black village" or Amazons show at the Moscow zoo were not mentioned in Tolstoy's published works, in his diaries, or in the diaries of his wife Sofya (Tolstaya 2000) and son Ilya (Tolstoy 2000). Tolstoy's biographers (Opul'skaya 1979, 1998; Gusev 1960) do not mention any visits by the writer to the Moscow zoo or even the existence of ethnic exhibitions of black people at that time anywhere in Moscow.

The clothing depicted in the photo reveals that it was a warm season. In 1892, Tolstoy lived in his Moscow house in Khamovniki until January 23 (Opul'skaya 1979, 247; Gusev 1960, 59–64). The winter of that year was very cold, and therefore the writer would have been dressed in heavier clothing than is shown in the photo. In addition, meeting Africans at the Devichye pole (if we take into account this option) was permitted only on holidays before (*Maslenitsa*²²) and after a week of Lent. *Maslenitsa* that year fell in the last seven days of February. The writer was no longer in Moscow during those months. At the same time, I have not yet found any references to African exhibitions or Dahomey shows either at the zoo or at the Devichye pole in Moscow newspapers and illustrated magazines published in spring 1892. There is one more piece of evidence, albeit indirect, confirming that we should abandon the current dating of this image. It is entirely appropriate to assume that this

22 *Maslenitsa* is an Eastern Slavic religious and folk holiday, celebrated during the last week before Lent, eighth week before Eastern Orthodox Pascha (Easter). A strictly kept Lent excludes parties, secular music, dancing, and other distractions from spiritual life. Thus *Maslenitsa* and the post-Easter weeks in Russian cities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, before the revolution, included theatergoing, circus entertainment, dances, and amusement rides. Special festival/carnival places were organized for those seasons with a lot of food vendors, merchandise vendors, games of chance and skill, thrill acts, animal acts, and so forth. *Balagans* were important elements of the cities' carnivals.

information was “omitted” because it had not been taken yet. The appearance of the photograph suggests that it might have been taken during the period between 1898 and 1903. We know about Dahomeans in that Moscow zoo in April 1901 and about Tolstoy’s staying in Moscow in April 1901. He was sick and emotionally involved with public reaction—from condemnation to delight and demonstration of support by his admirers—to his excommunication from the church on February 24 (Gusev 1960, 376–79). However, it can be assumed that Tolstoy could visit the zoo, in which the Dahomeans were performing in the spring of that year. It could have happened between April 12 and May 8, when he left for his estate Yasnaya Polyana (Gusev 1960). Regardless of the actual date of the photo, we have in our possession important documentary evidence of two facts: the living exhibition of the Africans took place in the Moscow zoo, and Leo Tolstoy attended the exhibition without leaving any written description of the visit.

Samoyeds/Nenets in Saint Petersburg and Moscow

According to some researchers, representatives of peoples from North Russia (Samoyeds/Nenets, Sami/Lapps, Voguls/Mansi, etc.) were also a part of ethnic exhibitions in the zoological gardens (Bokova 2009, 477; Denisenko 2003, 72; Ruga and Kokorev 2005, 208–9) at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. However, such general statements were made without references to any sources; I have not managed yet to find any mentions of such entertainment in Moscow newspapers from these years that could back up those statements.²³

Information about these exhibits partly goes back to publications about Russian zoos’ history from the 1930s. The following record was published in *The Diary of the Moscow Zoo in Reports of the Zoological and Anthropological Societies in Moscow*. Under note 19, dated July 3, 1879, was written: “Samoyeds arrived. 6 people” (*Dnevnik Zoologicheskogo sada* 1880, 247). Pavel Manteyfel²⁴ mentioned this record in a book of historical stories

23 See Leskinen 2019 on the history of Samoyeds/Nenets in Saint Petersburg and Moscow from the end of the eighteenth century until 1914.

24 Pavel Manteyfel (1892–1960) was one of the Moscow zoo managers, a famous zoologist and naturalist, and the author of popular books for children about animals.

of the Moscow zoo of 1937. One story described the zoo before the revolution and the customs of tsarist Russia. He provided a detailed comment on the note from the zoo's diary:

These four words vividly depict the condition of the northern ethnic minorities under the tsarist regime. Powerless, deliberately doomed to extinction, they were not even considered human beings. In the zoo, the Samoyeds, that is, the Nenets, were sent as exhibits. They were settled in a *chum* (a raw-hide tent made of reindeer pelts) at one of the squares of the garden and showed for a fee, like strange beasts. In winter, the Nenets lived in the same chum in the middle of a frozen pond and were obliged to entertain the Master visitors by riding on reindeer. Many Nenets caught cold and became sick; some died. (Manteyfel 1937, 156)

I did not find any references or evidence to support his story. Moreover—and this should be emphasized—this story was not published in the numerous subsequent editions of the book; this story was included in only the first edition of 1937.

Manteyfel wrote about the Samoyeds' stay confidently—he knew exactly where and how the Nenets/Samoyeds (he used both ethnonyms) had been placed and knew that they were shown for money. His moral disapproval regarding “showing people for fee” among the animals is beyond doubt. As the text of the footnote was not dated, it remains unclear whether his comments refer to the zoo diary's date or to the repeated presence of the Nenets in other years as well. The information is presented in such a manner as if it was received from eyewitnesses. Perhaps they were former employees of the zoo who heard the story from their predecessors (almost sixty years had passed since 1879, and it was hardly possible to find eyewitnesses among active employees). Or did Manteyfel mean a similar reindeer-riding attraction of a later time, although still “under the tsarist regime”?

In 1940, the director of the Moscow zoo, Lev Ostrovsky, published an article that made reference to the earlier exhibitions of Samoyeds/Nenets. Ostrovsky tried to prove that cruel treatment of animals in zoos before the revolution was ordinary. At the same time, scientific activities were not carried out. He stated:

In the pre-revolutionary years, the zoo was not a scientific, but an entertainment institution . . . along with animals in the Garden, people were shown for a special fee . . . The old personnel, who have taken care of animals for forty years, told me that Samoyeds were exhibited at the Zoo in 1907. (Ostrovsky 1940, 13)

The date was different, but could the source of information used earlier by Manteyfel have been the same?

How could Samoyeds end up at the Moscow zoo in the summer of 1879? Were they there in 1907 as well? I have managed to obtain information that may explain the circumstances of their stay in 1879 with a high degree of certainty.

In 1879, the first scientific anthropological exhibition organized by the Imperial Society of Devotees of Natural Science, Anthropology, and Ethnography took place in Moscow. The exhibition was open from April 3 to September 8 with a total of 100,000 visitors attending it (*Antropologicheskaya vystavka* 1879). From July 22 to August 6, the Anthropological Science Congress was held; world-famous European anthropologists such as Rudolf Virchow, Paul Broca, Gustave Le Bon, Paul Topinard, Johannes Ranke, and Felix Kanitz were invited. The Russian Empire, inhabited by more than a hundred different nations and groups, as the organizers stressed, had rich resources for anthropological research of the representatives of various physical types, and thus offered an exhibition that provided “an opportunity for anthropologists to see living representatives of some Russian peoples” (*Antropologicheskaya vystavka* 1879, 229). Some European guests expressed a desire to get acquainted with these peoples. The organizers paid close attention to the request and decided to show Roma people and Karaimes (of those who lived in Moscow) and to invite *inorodtsy* (“reindeer people”) from the Russian North, Lyuli,²⁵ and representatives of “peoples from Turkestan”²⁶ to the exhibition.

25 Lyuli or Jughli is an ethnic group living in Central Asia, primarily Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan (at the end of the nineteenth century these regions were in the Russian Empire). They speak a Tajik dialect and practice Islam.

26 Turkestan is an area in Central Asia between Siberia to the north and Iran, Afghanistan, and Tibet to the south. The land that became Russian Turkestan (in the 1860s–70s) is now divided between Kazakhstan in the north, Uzbekistan across the center, Kyrgyzstan in the east, Tajikistan in the southeast, and Turkmenistan in the southwest. The ethnic groups of this region are Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkmens, and others.

Detailed information about the Nenets' participation could be found in correspondence concerning the organization of the anthropological exhibition. Since a decision on the delivery of the Samoyeds had been made in the spring, certain difficulties arose. Most Samoyeds had already migrated to the tundra toward their summer camps. "The family of Samoyeds from the Kaninsky tundra" agreed to come to the exhibition: "Vasily Kanyukov, sixty-five years old, with his wife and son (about three years old), and Bobrikov, twenty-one years, with his wife of twenty years and his daughter of a year and a half" (Antropologicheskaya vystavka 1879, 232).

Thus, in total, six Samoyeds arrived at the exhibition (cf. Savitsky in this volume). The letter by Prince Leonid Ukhtomsky to the organizing committee indicated that the participants "have with them some household belongings, a summer *chum* and a winter one, spears and poles . . . for setting the tent . . . and for laying the floor . . . Unfortunately, the Samoyeds remaining in Arkhangelsk during summertime did not have reindeers" (Antropologicheskaya vystavka 1879, 232).

Another important issue was that members of the Society and volunteers supporting the exhibition offered to host Samoyeds at their own houses in Moscow. Samoyeds, however, did not want to live in houses and asked organizers to build their *chum* as their regular living quarters. "Samoyeds insisted on staying in the open air," and for this very reason they "were placed in the zoological garden" (Antropologicheskaya vystavka 1879, 232).

Apparently, the guests of the anthropological exhibition who arrived from Arkhangelsk at the invitation of its organizing committee were those "six Samoyeds" noted in the zoo diary of July 3, 1879, which were later mentioned by Manteyfel. However, the zoo was chosen as their place of residence, as we see, neither for commercial reasons, nor out of disrespect, nor in order to "demonstrate them" at the zoo. The explanation was much more straightforward. The Imperial Russian Society for the Acclimatization of Animals and Plants, which had established the Moscow zoo, had close connections with the Imperial Society of Devotees of Natural Science, Anthropology, and Ethnography. Members of the organizing committee of the anthropological exhibition (such as Anatoly Bogdanov and Nikolay Zograf) were active members and heads of divisions in both societies. The choice to arrange the Samoyeds' *chums* at the zoo was also due to its relative proximity to the Moscow Manege, where the exhibition and congress took place.

Figure 10.5. Samoyeds in the zoological garden, Moscow. Photograph by Alexey Saveljev, *Iskry*, 1911, no. 3: 22.

In addition, the program for foreign guests included a visit to the zoo on July 31. But we do not know whether Virchow or other European anthropologists saw these Samoyeds.

We also have information about Samoyeds riding reindeers in the Moscow zoo in the early twentieth century (Ruga and Kokorev 2005, 208–9; Bokova 2009, 477). Lev Ostrovsky (1940, 13) mentions Samoyeds staying at the Moscow zoo in 1907. Indeed, Samoyeds were giving reindeer sleigh rides around the frozen pond for a fee—one can find photo reports in illustrated magazines from 1907 and 1911 (Leskinen 2019). Illustrated periodicals from these years published a photo report about the stay of the Samoyeds at the zoo in winter—*chums*, reindeer sleigh, and *narta* (dog sleigh) rides on the pond (*Illustrirovannoje Pribavlenije k Moskovskomu Listku*, February 25, 1907). Several photographs with similar content can be found in the illustrated *Iskry* magazine (during *Maslenitsa* in 1911). The zoo's pond was situated between the menagerie area and the botanical area with the garden. There is no mention or visual evidence of barriers or fences in place even in those documents (fig. 10.5).

Natalia Gershenson-Chegodava (born in 1907) remembered her childhood impression of the Moscow zoo:

On another lot, we saw a big *Yurta* with a Samoyed (now they are known as Nenets) family in it—father, mother, and their children. They were put on public display along with beasts. I understood everything in a moment and appreciated it as I should have. I will never forget the hateful and gloomy faces of these people. (Gershenson-Chegodava 2000, 82)

The memoirist did not mention any details referencing the date of the event. Nevertheless, Vladimir Ruga and Andrey Kokorev argued (without supporting data) that her visit to the zoo dated to 1914. Researchers reported



Samoyeds (Nenets) and Zyryans (Komi) “touring” Moscow that year (Ruga and Kokorev 2005, 209). Yet I did not find any information about their visit in the Moscow newspapers or in illustrated magazines such as *Iskry*, *Ogoniok* (*Twinkle*), *Niva* (*Cornfield*), or *Vsemirnaya Illustratsiya* for 1914.

As for the Samoyeds in Saint Petersburg, there is much evidence to confirm their visits from Arkhangelsk province to give public rides in reindeer sleighs during the winter holidays (*Sviatki*²⁷) in the Russian capital since the time of Catherine II’s rule (1762–96) and until the 1910s (Leskinen 2019). Thus, this kind of entertainment and the Samoyeds’ appearance and their everyday life were not particularly exotic for Saint Petersburg—more precisely, this was “well-known exotic,” like, for example, the Finnish *Veiki*.²⁸ Again, Samoyeds in the Russian capital were not located at the zoo. They always placed their dwellings on the Neva River ice, near the central bridges.

The *Vsemirnaya Illustratsiya* newspaper often published materials about the Samoyeds’ (or Lapps’) giving *narta* rides to volunteers along the Neva for a small fee. This kind of entertainment was especially popular in the Russian capital during *Maslenitsa*. In the March issue of 1870, a short article was posted under the heading “Samoyeds on the Neva in Saint Petersburg,” with an illustration captioned:

Samoyeds come to Saint Petersburg each year for *Maslenitsa* with reindeers, sleighs, and tents, have their camp on the Neva ice, and attract a lot of interest that brings them a considerable income. Our drawing represents a sleigh with three reindeers. The driver is a Samoyed, and the passengers are curious Petersburg citizens. (*Vsemirnaya Illustratsiya*, March 14, 1870)

In the same journal, an illustration of Samoyeds, drawn by Arnold Carl Baldinger, was published seven years later (*Vsemirnaya illustratsiya*, March 12, 1877), accompanied by an extensive commentary: “Petersburg scenes and types. Samoyeds’ *Yurt* and reindeers on the Neva” (figs. 10.6 and 10.7). The piece began with an explanation that the drawing “represented a

27 *Sviatki* (“sacred days, holy days,” the Twelve Days of Christmas, winter saints) is a folk holiday series in winter, consisting of the twelve days from Christmas to the Baptism of the Lord.

28 *Veiki* are Finns who flocked to Saint Petersburg from suburban villages on *Maslenitsa* to work as horse teamsters for a fee; the name comes from the Finnish word *veikko* (friend) and it was used only in the Saint Petersburg region.



Figure 10.6. Samuel Edmund Waller and C. Roberts, “Laplanders Encampment on the Neva in Saint Petersburg.” *The Graphic*, February 14, 1874.

snapshot of the scene well known to every Saint Petersburg resident.” Three reindeers with a sleigh were ridden by a Russian “peasant from Arkhangelsk” in Samoyed clothes.

The tent of the Samoyeds was built right there, it resembled Kyrgyz *yurts*²⁹ and is called *chum*. Wild inhabitants of the *chum* were hidden from the curious eyes of the public inside the dwelling; those who wished to look at them and talk to them can satisfy their desire for a small fee.

Similar descriptions from both the 1860s and the 1890s were found in memoirs (*Stolica i usad’ba: Zhurnal krasivoy zhizni*, March 15, 1916).

The famous Saint Petersburg essayist and satirist Nikolay Leikin wrote a short story, *Samoyeds* (1879, 250–54). This narrative consisted of comments made by a crowd that had gathered to look at the Samoyeds in their *chums* and to ride in a reindeer sleigh. Leikin considered this kind of ogling and

29 An explanation of the appearance of a *chum* by comparing it with a Kyrgyz *yurt* did not mean that the Kyrgyz could be viewed at ethnic shows in Russia. For readers from Saint Petersburg, *yurts* and Kyrgyz might be more familiar than a *chum* and their inhabitants.



Figure 10.7. Arnold Carl Baldinger, “Saint-Petersburg: On the Neva River in Winter.” Lithograph after a painting. *Vsemirnaya Illustratsiya*, March 12, 1877.

commenting quite calmly. No moral aspects were raised.

I have not found any evidence to support the statement that representatives of peoples from the Russian North were shown at ethnic exhibitions in Russian zoos just as African and Asian inhabitants from the overseas colonies were exhibited in European countries at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Undoubtedly, residents of both capitals had an opportunity to observe and examine the appearance

and everyday routines of the reindeer herders for a fee during various winter holidays, *Maslenitsa*, and *balagans*. However, I did not find any evidence of any exhibition organized for demonstration of *inorodtsy* beyond the type of entertainment mentioned above, although information about their presence in the territory of the Moscow zoo is quite reliable. A representation of several Nenets was definitely organized during the All-Russia Industrial and Art Exhibition at Nizhny Novgorod in 1896 (see Savitsky 2017). Yet the forms of exhibiting remain unclear, especially from the point of view of the relationship between the audience and the “exhibits.” Riding on reindeer on the frozen pond at the zoo and even the installation of *chums* by ethnic representatives for general viewing and for their appearance at the anthropological exhibition in 1879 do not equate to living exhibition.

Conclusion

Studies of stereotypes of Poles, Finns, and Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia within Russian society in the second half of the nineteenth century have

revealed a universal mechanism of their formation and means of distribution (Leskinen 2010). Such ethnic stereotypes and images were created and disseminated via personal experiences (communications and travel), visual sources (exhibitions, illustrations in magazines and books, photographs, paintings, posters, advertising, and caricatures), and scientific and educational literature. Interestingly, ethnic shows left almost no trace in the sources mentioned above, even though one might expect such shows to be an important part of the ethnocultural legacy.

Research on ethnic shows in the Russian Empire is in its early stage, especially when compared to other European countries. Thus, the goal of this chapter has been to compile and analyze available publications and to bring to light new facts regarding imported ethnic shows and ethnic exhibitions of indigenous peoples of the Russian North in Saint Petersburg and Moscow in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I am not ready yet to reconstruct the whole picture of the phenomenon, but differences between ethnic shows in Russia and those in Western Europe already seem notable with regard to the availability of historical and historiographical sources, especially when it comes to the Russian audience's reaction or attitude to participants of ethnic shows and "exotic" exhibitions. The comparison reveals the elision of the phenomenon in the Russian case.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the urban inhabitants of the cities of the Russian Empire were familiar with ethnic shows with participants from non-European continents—similarly to contemporary shows in Western and Eastern Europe. According to Russian sources, acquaintance with blackness was made mainly in theatrical (musical, dance, and circus) forms in the years 1890–1911. Less is known about ethnic exhibitions such as "Negro villages," which did not include an artistic performance as part of their program. There are only few visual pieces of evidence of such exhibitions available to researchers—for example, Nikolay Kasatkin's painting and the photo of Leo Tolstoy in Moscow.

Moreover, available publications (mostly posters and announcements in newspapers) did not provide definitions of the "genre" or detailed descriptions of these events. The terms "exhibition," "performance," and "show" were not used, only the names of ethnic groups—for example, "Amazon squad," "Dahomeans," "negroes," "blacks," "cannibals"—which, in the absence of additional materials, complicates the identification of the content of these

events. At the same time, numerous sources from literature and newspapers include some evidence of fraudulent practices, with Russian actors performing under the guise of “real” Dahomey Amazons, “African princesses,” or “Somalis.” Russians dressed up and wearing makeup like those persons gave successful performances mostly with traveling circuses and *balagans* touring in the Russian provinces (see Novikova 2013; Leskinen 2018; Savitsky 2018). Subjects for future research include who the performers in the ethnic shows were, especially in the Russian provinces, and whether their identities mattered for analyzing the audience’s perceptions and attitudes.

While ethnic shows were greeted with the same level of public enthusiasm in Russia as in other European countries, only a few isolated cases occurred of publication in the media and elsewhere about such events in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, and these references totally lacked any comments, observations, and reflections. It is still difficult to reach a conclusion as to the probable cause for such elision.

It remains a question whether ethnic exhibitions of reindeer herders from the Russian North were held at all (despite the confidence on this matter expressed by several researchers) and whether those displays were similar to the imported displays with representatives from other continents. Reindeer rides on the pond at the Moscow zoo, the installation of *chums* by ethnic representatives for general viewing, and their appearance at the anthropological exhibition in 1879 do not equate to the Western ethnic show/exhibition model. Furthermore, the materials discussed above indicate that public perceptions of the Lapps and Samoyeds differed in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, since these peoples were known and familiar in the capital but not in Moscow (Leskinen 2019). Thus, further analysis of data about public perceptions and attitudes should take into consideration the significance of the place where exhibitions were organized.

From today’s point of view, various kinds of ethnic shows in the Russian cities could be interpreted from the perspective of a “racialized gaze.” Yet we need to take into account how contemporaries perceived and reflected them. Four accounts from memoirs published much later (in the 1930s) are quoted above. So far I have managed to find only one emotional reaction from an actual eyewitness (see Gershenzon-Chegodavaeva’s childhood memories). Neither Leo Tolstoy nor his son, who took pictures, left any notes about visiting the “African village” in Moscow. Anton Chekhov, who iron-

ically described (in 1878–80) the behavior of the visitors at the Moscow zoo and criticized the conditions of the animals did not say a word about the presence of the Samoyeds. Nikolay Leikin directed his satire against the cultural “wildness” and “backwardness” of onlookers gazing at Samoyeds in Saint Petersburg, but the entertainment setting per se did not surprise him.

Russian scientists—anthropologists and ethnographers, the organizers of the anthropological exhibition—also did not consider it offensive to invite representatives of various peoples of the Russian Empire to participate in the exhibition as “exhibits” for conducting anthropometric research. Elkind did not deal with the ethical aspects of organizing the Dahomey shows in Moscow in his scientific research. However, it is too early to make conclusions about the comparative elision and the reasons for it within Russian public reflections of that time regarding “exotic” ethnic shows or exhibitions.

It can be assumed that the historical realities of such a multiethnic and multiconfessional state as the Russian Empire affected public perceptions regarding “exotic” entertainment differently than in other European countries. Various Others coexisted in Russia across ethnocultural borders—both in European Russia (especially in the Volga region) and in Siberia. The appearance, cultural practices, and traditions of diverse ethnic/racial groups were not exotic within the Russian environment. Representatives of different ethnicities in their traditional costumes and dwellings and with objects of their culture were seen during fairs and holidays, during long trips around the country. The exhibits were especially popular among the educated public of that time (for example, along the Volga to Astrakhan or later to the Caucasus region). Yet to accurately understand public attitudes toward representatives of non-Russian peoples within the Empire during ethnic shows/exhibitions, it is necessary to continue this research, paying special attention to the Russian context.

Even though I did not find any documented instances of ethnic shows of Russians’ “own Others” (Arctic peoples of the Russian Empire), Russians’ attitudes and stereotypes concerning *inorodtsy* (beyond the ethnic exhibitions) have been described in more detail in other publications (e.g., Slezkine 1994; Leskinen 2019).

In general, future research on ethnic shows in Russia should take into consideration several aspects, especially when it comes to public perceptions. Modern Russian, Western European, and American historians of the

Russian Empire's national policy and Russian ethnical identity have revealed a number of specific features regarding the perception of Others (ethnic, racial, confessional) in Russian society over the period under review (Werth, Kabytov, and Miller 2005). First, we need to avoid generalizations while interpreting the perception of ethnic or national characteristics in the case of Russians or the Russian Empire. This kind of experience cannot be applied to the inhabitants of the Empire as a whole—in each case, the assessment should be differentiated, as ethnocultural interaction with ethnic neighbors had been ongoing for centuries by the period considered here. Second, it is also known that the Russian upper class tended to perceive peasants as ethnocultural Others until the abolition of serfdom in 1861. Audiences' attitudes toward the participants of ethnic shows in Moscow and Saint Petersburg reveal to a greater extent the perception among urban dwellers, whose class and educational level were very heterogeneous during this period, after the reforms of the 1860s and 1870s (see Piskarev and Uralab 2007, 151). In this case, the viewers in cities could understand the “exotic” Others as representatives of other social (rather than ethnic) groups. One way or another, there is no doubt that in the Russian Empire the interpretation of exoticism, viewers' perception of ethnic shows, and attitudes toward spectacles of this kind might be different from those of the viewers in other parts of Europe. Could this difference explain the elision of the phenomenon? We will learn by continuing this research.

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CHAPTER
ELEVEN

“When Winter Arrives, the Sinhalese Go Back to Ceylon and Their Elephants Go to Hamburg”: Hagenbeck’s Sinhalese Caravans and Ethnographic Imagery in the Polish Press during the Partition Era

Izabela Kopania

Displays of ethnic Others, known in German-speaking regions as *Völkerschauen*, constituted a flourishing branch of the entertainment industry in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. Among many entrepreneurs and impresarios employed in the business, there is one figure of particular importance: Carl Hagenbeck (1844–1913). Starting out as the son of a humble Hamburg-based fishmonger, not only did Carl Hagenbeck build a thriving animal trading company but he also developed an impressive showbusiness enterprise specialized in touring exhibitions of non-European people. What has been called Carl Hagenbeck’s empire of entertainments (Ames 2008) constitutes a well-established subject of academic investigation. Research conducted so far has shed light on how Hagenbeck’s business was organized; on the network of recruiters, impresarios, and managers; on exhibiting practices and structures of the shows; on the intermingling of Europeans with ethnic Others; and finally on how the shows were perceived by various groups of hosting communities (Ames 2008; Ciarlo 2011, 77–81; Rothfels 2002, 82–142; Thode-Arora 1989, 2008; see also Thode-Arora in this volume).

There are still, however, relatively uncharted chapters in Hagenbeck’s business odyssey. One that has emerged in recent years is the company’s presence in Eastern and Central Europe (Czarnecka 2018; Demski 2018a, 2018b; Kurek and Mayer 2017). This chapter will investigate this issue by focusing on the anthropological and zoological exhibitions of the Sinhalese in Warsaw and Łódź.¹

1 Research for this study was carried out as a part of the project “Staged Otherness: Human Oddities in Central Europe, 1850–1939” (project no. 2015/19/B/HS3/02143) granted by the National Science Center, Poland.

Between 1888 and 1891, the Hagenbeck company traveled with at least three groups of Sinhalese through the lands of the Russian Empire and the region of Galicia, which was under the Habsburg monarchy.² Along their way, which started in Hamburg and concluded in Riga (in the case of the 1888 show) or Saint Petersburg or Moscow (the 1889 and 1891 exhibitions), the troupes performed dozens of shows in numerous towns including Warsaw, Łódź, Kraków, Lviv, Vilnius, and Riga (on ethnic shows in Riga see Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020). There are also claims that the company visited Odessa and Kiev.³ Announced as “caravans” or “anthropological and zoological exhibitions,” these shows offered a spectacular form of entertainment dedicated to and consumed by the masses. Drawing on “exoticism,” claims of ethnographic “authenticity,” and captivating programs of performances, these exhibitions constituted institutionalized and strongly commercialized presentations of otherness. Not only did the shows present an ethnic Other but, first and foremost, they created his or her image and disseminated cultural and racial stereotypes that fed the common imagination. There were multiple agents to inform this image, including impresarios, host institutions, and performers themselves.

I focus on a short period of Sinhalese shows in this part of Europe—a sequence of three exhibits that took place between 1888 and 1891. The performances I discuss took place in the towns of the Kingdom of Poland, which then, in political and economic terms, constituted part of the Russian Empire. Judging by press accounts, the shows offered, to some extent, similar programs; and some actors who performed in the first show came back with the following year’s troupe. These displays seem to have constituted a coherent sequence of events arranged, financed, and driven by Polish, first and foremost Warsaw-based, hosts. Moreover, it seems that these shows were separated by at least a decade from the subsequent shows given in the former Polish lands—in Kraków and Poznań (Ger. Posen) in 1901.⁴ What also sets

2 The political and historical geography of the regions mentioned needs a word of explanation. In the period under discussion, the Russian Empire encompassed part of the land that used to be the Polish and Lithuanian Commonwealth, which had been partitioned by Russia, Austria (which annexed the region later named as Galicia), and Prussia between 1772 and 1795. Poland did not gain independence, control over its territory, and statehood until 1918.

3 This data is based on press notes, which often provided readers with troupes’ itineraries (see references throughout the text).

4 The shows in Poznań were discussed by Krzysztof Kurek and Mateusz Mayer (2017) and Dągnosław Demski (2018a, 2018b). Those in Kraków have not been examined yet.

these late 1880s shows apart from the exhibitions in the early 1900s are the political, social, and cultural milieux that provided the context. The situation in the Russian partition, with the politics of imposing Russian culture on the locals, differed from the one in Galicia (part of Austria-Hungary), which enjoyed relative political and cultural autonomy, and from the Prussian partition, where strong processes of Germanization were run by Prussian authorities. These three parts of former Poland differed immensely in terms of almost all areas of social, political, and cultural life—in fact, they constituted parts of different cultural and political entities.

A series of exhibitions the Hagenbeck company organized in Eastern and Central Europe and Russia stemmed from the success of the 1886 shows of the Ceylonese in Berlin and Paris. These shows exemplified a seminal change in both the structure and the nature of ethnographic exhibitions. They differed from the early 1870s shows, when usually a small group of non-Europeans was on display (Ames 2008, 80, 85). Caravans and anthropological and zoological exhibitions of the mid-1880s and 1890s reached sometimes enormous dimensions in terms of scenography and the number of performers and offered a rich program of distractions, including jugglers, acrobats, and animal races, as well as ceremonial processions that could still be perceived as “ethnic” peculiarities. The shows were “democratic” events, attracting people from various social strata. The organizers—both the Hagenbeck company and host institutions—were very flexible as to the requirements of the audiences: the organizers were prepared to reduce prices and to offer private viewings for women, schoolchildren, and scientists. However, the more flamboyant and the more “circus-like” the shows became, the less interesting they were in academic circles (Schneider 2008, 145–46). Contrary to the 1883 show of the Sinhalese (*les Cinghalais*) in Paris, when anthropologists, pathologists, and naturalists flocked to the Paris zoological garden to investigate the newcomers, the 1886 show aroused little or no scientific interest among French scholars (Schneider 2008, 146). Similar processes have been identified in cases of German anthropologists’ endorsement of *Völkerschauen*. The support of ethnic shows provided by such figures as Rudolf Virchow reached its peak around the mid-1890s and at the turn of the century scholars distanced themselves from events that drew on “commercial ethnography” (Bruckner 2003, 140, 143). This shift in the perception and, first and foremost, nature of Hagenbeckian ethnographic exhibitions seems to be of importance with

respect to shows performed in the Polish towns under discussion. The audience there faced colorful parades of foreigners reenacting customs and occupations whose ethnographic purity was sometimes even mocked (e.g., see *Kurier Świąteczny* [*Holiday Courier*], April 26 [May 8], 1890,⁵ front cover). Judging by press notes, commercial and entertaining factors outweighed the exhibitions' ethnographic value.

The first exhibition of the Sinhalese in Warsaw in 1888 coincided with the establishment in 1887 of the first Polish ethnographic journal—*Wisła* (*Vistula*)—and the consolidation of ethnographic, folklorist, and anthropological milieu around the Warsaw zoological garden and ethnographic museum. It seems, however, that Warsaw ethnographers, those working and researching in situ, due to the political and cultural reasons elaborated below, were relatively uninterested in ethnic shows. Their place was taken over by journalists and reviewers for illustrated magazines, who usually commented on “exotic” visitors and the country of their origin.

The present study has several goals. The first is to outline, in terms of both geography and chronology, the itineraries that the three groups of Sinhalese followed in Eastern and Central Europe and Russia. The data at my disposal comes mainly from the Polish-language press published in the towns of the former Polish and Lithuanian Commonwealth that Hagenbeck's troupes visited. Contemporary periodicals provide much information on the journeys made by the Sinhalese. I hope that extracting this information will facilitate other scholarly research on exhibitions in Russian- and German-speaking milieux—that is, the towns of Kiev, Odessa, Vilnius, Riga, Saint Petersburg, and Moscow.

Secondly, reviews and articles in the press usually give an insight into the everyday lives of “exotic” guests in the places they visited. Such mundane commentary can reveal a lot about the temporary status of non-Europeans in the host communities—on intermingling with the people, direct encounters, and exchanges of gifts. My aim is to peek inside this mundane aspect of Sinhalese shows as it seems crucial to the image of the visitors—namely, their status of Others.

5 In the case of the press titles published in the Russian partition, the dates of the issues are given as in the original. The first date is given according to the Julian calendar (so-called Old Style date); the second date is according to the Gregorian calendar (New Style date).

Finally, drawing on press articles, this chapter will consider the relationship between the presentation of non-Europeans on stage and the development of popular ethnography. Utilizing Hagenbeck's Ceylonese caravans as a case study, I will focus on how the journalists described, pictured, and interpreted "exotic" visitors from South Asia. These texts contributed to the production of ready-to-use ideas on non-Europeans that informed the collective imagery of Polish citizens in the Russian partition.

Carl Hagenbeck's Enterprise and the Exhibition of the Sinhalese

The business machine of Carl Hagenbeck Jr.'s enterprise started operating in 1874 when a group of six Sami people arrived in Hamburg to demonstrate the daily life of Laplanders for a German audience. Hagenbeck immediately received support from Heinrich Leutemann, a friend and illustrator, who authored an account of a Sami show published in *Die Gartenlaube* (*Gazebo*; Leutemann 1875), a middlebrow illustrated magazine devoted to culture, science, and art. Leutemann stressed the Sami shows' "authenticity" and presented Hagenbeck as an authority on ethnic shows.

It has been estimated that Carl Hagenbeck organized around seventy shows between 1874 and 1932 (Thode-Arora 2008, 167). What differentiated Hagenbeckian shows from previous exhibitions of human oddities, even those conceived in ethnic terms, was that they were deprived of an air of sideshow presentation of freaks. Hagenbeck paid particular attention to ethnographic "authenticity" and produced elaborately directed shows—anthropological and zoological exhibitions—that had the immense power of captivating the public. The performers themselves were instructed in how to behave—reenacting the acts of "natural" life or performing according to a program. The displays were set up on elaborate, ethnically appropriate outdoor stages furnished with huts, shrines, and workshops that were meant to evoke the "exotic" and present the life of non-Europeans (Ames 2008, 54–55).

How this postulate of authenticity was fulfilled is explained by many press reviews of the shows. *Bluszcz* (*Ivy*), a Warsaw-based weekly targeting a female audience, offered its readers an account of the 1884 exhibition of the Sinhalese in the Viennese Prater (June 20 [July 2], 1884). As the reporter remarked, "Hagenbeck brought the island of Ceylon . . . and installed it in Prater." The exhibition began with an exposition of indigenous "arts" and

crafts and naturalia: “Plaited baskets, clay vessels covered with colorful glazes and ornaments, specimens of the skins of snakes and gigantic lizards, several species of coffee beans.” Later on, in the rotunda, the visitor encountered bamboo huts covered with mats made of coconut-palm leaves. Near the huts were people engaged in everyday work. The reviewer saw the caravan as an engaging spectacle constituting a possibility of studies for anthropologists. What Hagenbeck actually offered was a “living habitat” representing a particular geographical area or ethnic group displaced for the sake of entertainment (Ames 2008, 63).

The character, structure, and programs of ethnic shows changed over time given the shifting possibilities of recruitment abroad, the increasing professionalization of non-Europeans who earned a living by displaying themselves in Europe, and the public’s expectations. Early shows usually focused on displaying families, or rather small but gender-differentiated groups of people. As time passed, “families” evolved into huge troupes of dozens of actors usually termed “caravans” (Ames 2008, 80, 85). The repertoire developed as well, and alongside displays of native work began to include folk customs and circus-like performances.

The exhibitions of the Ceylonese stemmed from the elephant trade (Ames 2008, 30–31) and Hagenbeck’s success in selling animals in the United States. The decision to invest in Ceylon and its indigenous inhabitants was dictated by several concerns, one of which was of a political nature. Ceylon became an attractive target due to turbulence in the colonial politics in Africa where Hagenbeck was well rooted and where a network of his employees was well organized (see Warsame in this volume). In Ceylon, Hagenbeck was represented by three agents: his nephew Johannes Castens, his half-brother John Hagenbeck, and a traveler, Eduard Gehring (Ames 2008, 31).

The first group of Sinhalese arrived in Europe in 1883. Managed by Johannes Castens, the group was shown in Paris in the Jardin d’Acclimatation (zoological garden) and then in the Berlin zoo (Ames 2008, 84). It consisted of twenty-one individuals—thirteen men, five women, and three children—both ordinary Ceylonese and professional performers. In 1884 John Hagenbeck brought to Europe another Ceylon caravan of over forty people. The troupe traveled around Germany visiting Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, and Dresden (Hagenbeck 1909, 99). They also headed for Vienna, where they entertained the public of Prater (*Bluszcz*, June 20 [July 2], 1884). In the fol-

lowing years, 1885 and 1886, Hagenbeck presented what was advertised as “Carl Hagenbeck’s 1885 Ceylon Expedition.” The group, recruited by John Hagenbeck, comprised sixty-seven indigenous inhabitants of Ceylon accompanied by twenty-five elephants. It visited Germany and Switzerland and set out for Vienna and London. The tour culminated in Paris, where the Sinhalese were displayed in the Jardin d’Acclimatation in 1886. It was recorded that over a million guests came to admire *les Cinghalais* and browse around the living districts (Ames 2008, 67). This touring troupe was probably one of the first itinerant shows of Asians to constitute an advanced logistical and financial enterprise. Several dozen actors, dozens of animals, and an extensive village and ethnic props contributed to a spectacular show, which clearly extended beyond the borders of the “ethnographic.” As it was recalled by John Hagenbeck, among the Sinhalese participating in the 1885–86 European tour were elephant drivers, snake charmers, dancers, contortionists, magicians, and other figures he found typical of Indian folk life (quoted in Ames 2008, 43).

Starting from the mid-1880s, the relations between ethnic show and circus performance became closer and more complicated, and borders between the two blurred. In 1887, Carl Hagenbeck entered the circus business, mounting “Carl Hagenbeck’s International Circus and Sinhalese Caravan.” This new formula proved unsuccessful due to severe accidents during the shows in Munich in 1888. The Ceylonese troupe split from the circus and reorganized as an ethnic show again. Some of them performed in France and Belgium with Eduard Gehring as their impresario (Ames 2008, 257, note 42). Others must have stayed with John Hagenbeck. These individuals probably constituted the group that arrived in Warsaw in 1888.

John Hagenbeck and his son John George specialized in exhibiting people from India and Ceylon, drawing mainly on the exploitation of native work and animals as well as “circus-like” presentations, if on a smaller scale. As I have already indicated, the entrepreneurs continued to recruit people from South Asia for at least the next four decades.

The Sinhalese at the Eastern Borderlands of Europe, 1888 to 1891

The first group of Sinhalese to reach Warsaw and then head eastward was a caravan of both professional performers and “ordinary” Ceylonese recruited and managed by John Hagenbeck. Warsaw saw their arrival in the last

week of August 1888. The first performance took place on August 24 and the shows continued for over two weeks (until September 11).⁶ The troupe was invited by the Warsaw zoological garden and its owner, the respectable lawyer and publicist Jan Maurycy Kamiński. The board of the zoo covered all expenses related to the journey, lodging, and food for both people and animals.⁷ It seems that an agreement between the board of the zoo and the Hagenbeck company guaranteed that the Sinhalese would not accept invitations from other entertainment venues (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 20 [September 1], 1888). The modest premises of the zoo, located in the park of Bagatela, were adapted for the sake of a series of performances. The Sinhalese occupied a pavilion dedicated to their needs and a special set and temporary amphitheater to house an audience were constructed. The guests themselves were to build huts surrounded by the greenery taken from garden glass-houses (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 10 [August 22], 1888). A special booklet with information related to the “exotic” guests and the island of Ceylon was released by the board of the garden.⁸

It was by no means the first encounter between the zoo and the Hagenbeck company. The Warsaw zoological garden was one of many similar institutions around the world that Hagenbeck provided with wild animals. Before the Sinhalese arrived, there were at least five transports of exotic animals from Hamburg, in 1884, 1885, and 1886 (Woliński 1994, 276, 282). The invitation of the Ceylonese was dictated by financial concerns as the economic condition of the zoo was rather poor. Displays of “exotic” people were expected to bring considerable profits and repair the finances of the garden. The whole year 1888 abounded in visits and presentations of non-European guests. Apart from the Sinhalese, the Warsaw zoo hosted the Dahomey,⁹ the Hottentots, and undefined “Indians” (Woliński 1994, 285).

6 Information given by Warsaw-based dailies allows the researcher to determine precisely how long each of the groups stayed in the town. The 1888 caravan arrived on August 23 and left for Łódź on September 11 (*Kurier Warszawski* [*Warsaw Courier*], August 10 [August 22] and 24 [September 5], 1888).

7 *Gazeta Polska* (*Polish Gazette*), August 24 (September 5), 1888; *Kurier Warszawski*, August 24 (September 5), 1888. Travel expenses amounted to 1,142 silver rubles and the daily food allowance for the whole group was forty silver rubles.

8 Library and archive queries conducted in search of this booklet proved unsuccessful.

9 Zbigniew Woliński mentions the Dahomey among the ethnic groups who visited Warsaw in 1888 (Woliński 1994, 285). However, Dominika Czarnecka claims that the Dahomey visited Warsaw for the first time in 1889; see Czarnecka 2020.

The 1888 caravan traveling around Eastern Europe was considerably smaller than its 1886 predecessor. According to press notes the caravan consisted of twenty-seven performers—twenty-two men and five women (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 10 [August 22], 1888). They were accompanied by five elephants—which arrived separately—zebu, and snakes. Articles in the press covering their nearly three-week-long stay in Warsaw give some details concerning members of the caravan. Among the actors were two dwarves who constituted a particular curiosity (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 25 [September 6], 1888). They were probably the same people who participated in the 1886 Paris and Berlin exhibitions and acted as main characters in a Sinhalese comedy (Fulbert-Dumonteil 1886, 10–11). Financial success on both sides of the enterprise probably attracted them to Europe again. Their presence, however, is another mark of the carnival-like nature of the “later” Hagenbeckian shows. Paying particular attention to “authenticity” and participating in French anthropology’s search for an “ethnic type” (Topinard 1883, 576), Hagenbeck was reluctant to show “abnormalities” (Thode-Arora 2008, 168). Dwarves, whose names Veruma and Cornelis Appo were announced by one of the dailies published in Łódź (where the troupe set out to perform), constituted a freak sideshow whose aim was to attract curious spectators and to generate more money through greater attendance.

The Ceylonese visitors were by no means anonymous to the Warsaw audience. The daily press informed the public about their stay in the town, so readers could find out about the Ceylonese visit to the botanic garden and the royal park of Łazienki (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 25 [September 6], 1888) and about their elephants walking on the streets between the Bagatela park and the nearby Pole Mokotowskie (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 26 [September 7], 1888). Journalists usually mentioned crowds accompanying them and direct contact that occurred, such as exchanges of greetings and kisses given by the Ceylonese to the people. This shows that encounters between the visitors and their audience were not limited to the actual exhibition or the show. It seems that the Sinhalese moved quite freely around the town and their behavior was not strictly controlled by their impresario. The practice of intermingling with the audience or wandering freely around the town was by no means restricted to the Ceylonese. It was a common pattern of behavior among many itinerant ethnic troupes displaying themselves in front of a European public (e.g., the Ashanti in Warsaw in January 1888).



Figure 11.1. Reproduction of *A Sinhalese Woman* by Pantaleon Szyndler. *Wędrowiec*, May 13 (May 26), 1900.

Similar comportment was observed during the exhibition of the Dahomey in Passage-Panopticon in Berlin in 1894 (Reymont 1894). It was part of a promotional strategy targeted at prospective visitors—a constant presence of the visitors in public allowed subsequent presentations given in the zoo to be perceived as part of an ongoing show. It is also possible, however, that the presence of these groups was part of

the performance and that the groups were to some extent acquainted with the public and oriented toward financial profits.¹⁰

Three pieces of information related to the shows are of particular interest. During their stay in Warsaw the Sinhalese were reported to have been visited by the painter Pantaleon Szyndler. During this visit Szyndler was to paint the portraits of a woman called Pinkama and a man, described as “typical,” called Seleman Maradano.¹¹ In 1889, a painting representing a man, entitled *Syngalez* (*A Sinhalese Man*), was exhibited at Aleksander Krywul’s salon (Płażewska 1966, 409).¹² Its counterpart, a portrait of a Sinhalese woman (fig. 11.1; present whereabouts unknown) was reproduced in the popular magazine *Wędrowiec* (*Wanderer*, May 13 [May 26], 1900). It has already been noticed by art historians that a portrait of a Sinhalese woman constituted an exceptional piece in the orientalist oeuvre of a painter (Wójcik 2015). Szyndler, inspired by nineteenth-century photography and images of “exotic types,” produced doz-

10 Recall that the first group of the Sinhalese to visit Europe, the 1883 troupe performing in the Jardin d’Acclimatation in Paris, was reluctant to leave their premises in the Bois de Boulogne and to visit the city (de Rialle 1883, 234).

11 The fact that Pantaleon Szyndler executed two paintings representing the Sinhalese was mentioned in the work of Daranowska-Lukaszewska and Wójcik (2015, 317–19) and Demski (2018a, 307).

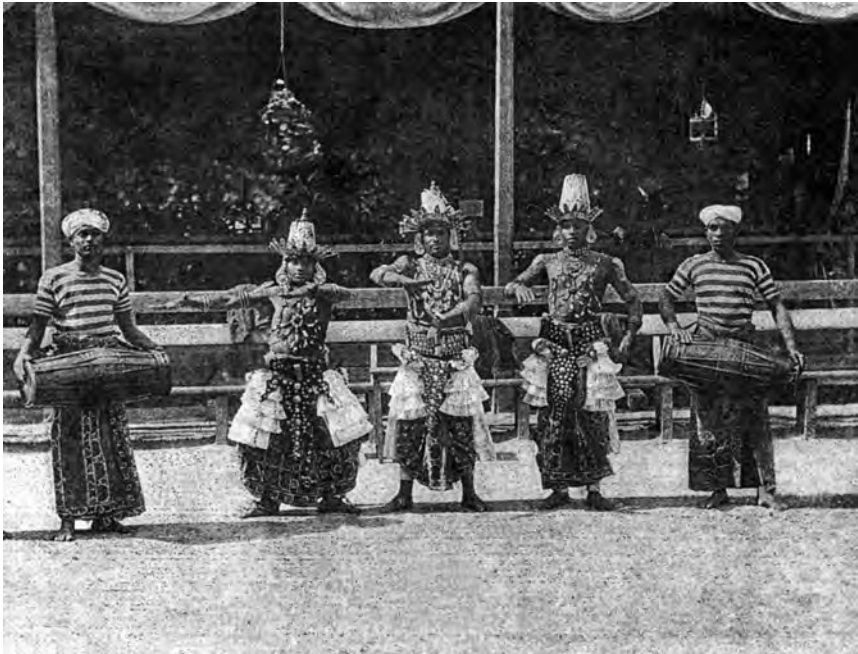
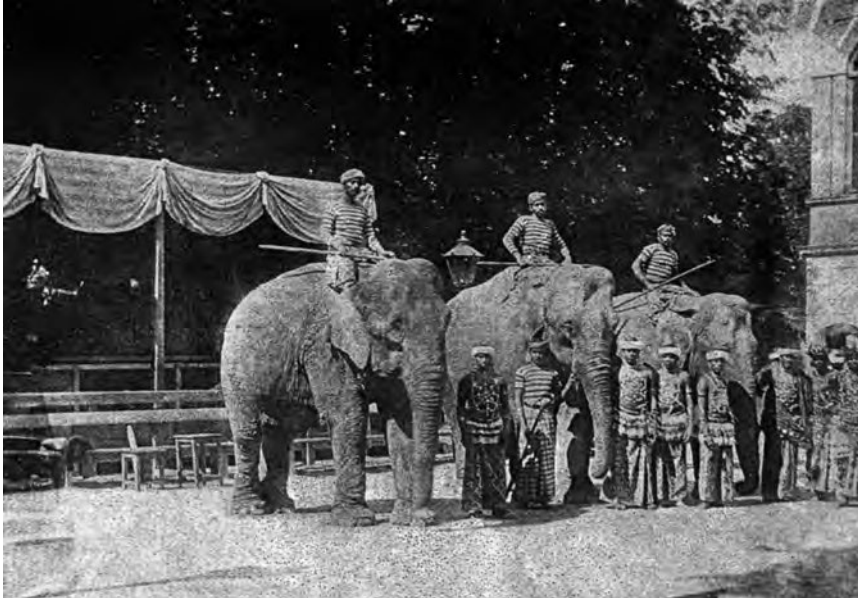
12 This painting was one of many to be won at an annual lottery organized by Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych (the Society for the Promotion of Fine Arts) in Warsaw. It went to a certain Kazimierz Wolski (*Kurier Warszawski*, December 19 [December 31], 1888).

ens of academic (classicist) images of oriental beauties with smooth, alabaster skin and shapely bodies, fulfilling the expectations of the salon audience and the requirements of academic tradition. The portrait of a Sinhalese definitely stands apart. The dark skin color of the woman and the depiction of her figure were inconsistent with academic ideas of beauty and would have resulted from a direct encounter between a painter and a Ceylonese performer.

In the context of the shows, one reporter recalled another Polish painter and watercolorist—Julian Fałat. In 1885 Fałat, invited by friend and painter Józef Simmler, embarked on a six-month-long journey around the world (Kołos 2018, 18–21; Malinowski 2000). Fałat's itinerary included Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Japan, and Ceylon. Both on the sea and in the places he visited Fałat made dozens of sketches and watercolors. One of the images he captured on a ship was a portrait of a Sinhalese man (still extant in the National Museum in Warsaw),¹³ which was displayed during Fałat's solo exhibition at Aleksander Krywult's salon in January 1888. An episode described by one reporter involving a Sinhalese man exhibited in the Warsaw zoo searching for a man he had befriended on a ship—"a white man who dyed the canvas" (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 12 [August 24], 1888)—must be counted among the anecdotes. This direct association between the Ceylonese caravan and a piece brought from an eastern journey demonstrates, however, that exoticism was of great appeal in both visual culture and the collective imagination of the citizens of Warsaw.

The Sinhalese were also visited by a local photographer (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 15 [August 27], 1888). It was common practice for photographers and photographic ateliers in Europe to visit itinerant exotic groups or freak performers and take photographs of them. The Warsaw-based journal *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (*Illustrated Weekly*) published two photographs showing two groups of performers (figs. 11.2 and 11.3) signed by a photographic atelier "Rembrandt" (August 27 [September 8], 1888). It is difficult to ascertain whether these photographs are a result of a Warsaw photographer's visit to the Ceylonese reported by a local daily (*Kurier Warszawski*). However, in terms of iconography, the images might be directly associated with the imagery produced in relation to the 1886 shows in Paris (compare: "Dr. Z." 1886, 233).

13 Online reproduction available at: http://cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl/dmuseion/docmetadata?id=38888&show_nav=true&full_screen=true#full_screen. Accessed September 30, 2019.



Figures 11.2 and 11.3. The Sinhalese performing in the Warsaw zoo in 1888. Reproduction of photographs signed by the Rembrandt Photographic Atelier. *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, August 27 (September 8), 1888.

The Sinhalese and their animals came to Warsaw by train from Wrocław (Ger. Breslau; *Kurier Warszawski*, August 24 [September 5], 1888) and then moved along by rail. After nearly three weeks of shows, the troupe left Warsaw for Łódź, an industrial town along the route of the Warsaw–Vienna Railway, situated slightly over 100km (60 miles) southwest of Warsaw. The Sinhalese spent a week in Łódź, from September 12 to September 19 (*Dziennik Łódzki* [*Łódź Daily*], August 30 [September 11], 1888; September 8 [September 20], 1888). They gave a series of performances, three times a day, at a restaurant owned by a certain Mr. Klukow located in the public garden “Paradyz” (*Dziennik Łódzki*, August 26 [September 7], 1888). It was Klukow who invited the Ceylonese (called in the press “a society”) to Łódź, financed their journey from and back to Warsaw, and provided accommodations (*Dziennik Łódzki*, September 4 [September 16], 1888). Their itinerary later led them from Łódź back to Warsaw, where they performed again, and then on to Riga from whence they were to return to Ceylon (*Kurier Codzienny* [*Daily Courier*], September 6 [September 18], 1888). As stated in one of the Warsaw-based newspapers, “The Sinhalese go back to Ceylon and their elephants go to Hamburg” (*Gazeta Handlowa* [*Commercial Gazette*], August 25 [September 6], 1888). At that time, nearly two decades before the founding of the zoo in Stellingen outside Hamburg in 1907, the animals stayed in Hagenbeck’s animal park in Neuer Pferdemarkt. It was common practice for the company to keep animals in Europe and send people back home in search of new recruits (Leutemann, quoted in Ames 2008, 84).

Encouraged by a successful tour in 1888, John Hagenbeck decided to visit Eastern Europe again (*Kurier Warszawski*, January 1 [January 13], 1889). And again a group of Sinhalese arrived in Warsaw, this time via the Warsaw–Bydgoszcz Railway. They started performing in the Warsaw zoo at the beginning of August and stayed in the town for more than a fortnight, August 2–18, 1889 (*Kurier Warszawski*, June 30 [July 12], 1889; July 21 [August 2], 1889). The group consisted of twenty men, four women, and four children (*Kurier Warszawski*, June 30 [July 12], 1889; *Słowo* [*Word*], July 1 [July 13], 1889), and only some of them, according to the newspapers, had visited Warsaw the previous year (*Kurier Warszawski*, July 20 [August 1], 1889). Among the visitors known from the 1888 shows, the papers mentioned a certain Manika, Kira, Tikirapanika, and three others (*Kurier Warszawski*, July 23 [August 4], 1889). Another personality famous from

the previous year's exhibition was a dwarf woman, who citizens and journalists must have remembered. Her male counterpart was claimed to have been bored of the European tours and to have stayed in Ceylon (*Gazeta Polska*, July 26 [August 7], 1889). Members of the group were claimed to have been able to speak French, well enough to engage in a short exchange of words (*Kurier Warszawski*, July 22 [August 3], 1889). The papers announced that each day of the Sinhalese group's stay in the town was a success. Their presentations concluded with a spectacular event, which was the wedding of a young Sinhalese couple (*Biesiada Literacka [Literary Feast]*, August 11 [August 23], 1889). This part of the show, which was particularly attractive to the public, met with both interest and criticism and the ambivalent opinions of press reviewers (*Gazeta Polska*, August 5 [August 17], 1889).

Based on press announcements one may also trace the route of the caravan. They left Warsaw for Riga to head for Vilnius, Saint Petersburg (Zefeld 1890, 45), and Moscow (*Gazeta Polska*, July 15 [July 27], 1889; *Kurier Warszawski*, August 8 [August 20] and August 14 [August 26], 1889; *Słowo*, July 15 [July 27], 1889; concerning ethnic shows in Saint Petersburg and Moscow see Leskinen in this volume).

The third visit of the Sinhalese to Warsaw took place nearly two years later—in 1891. This time, however, Hagenbeck's main target was not the Kingdom of Poland under Russian rule but the region of Galicia under the auspices of the Habsburg monarchy. Before the Sinhalese entered the territory of the former Polish and Lithuanian Commonwealth, the troupe toured Austria, where they spent April, and probably entertained the public of Vienna (*Kurier Warszawski*, March 30 [April 11], 1891). The Warsaw dailies announced Sinhalese visits to both Warsaw and Kraków (*Kurier Warszawski*, March 29 [April 10], March 30 [April 11], and July 16 [July 28], 1891). According to the Kraków dailies, the Sinhalese entertained the public of the town only for a few days, starting on May 1, in Park Krakowski. The group consisted of forty people accompanied by elephants and zebu (*Czas [Time]*, April 30, 1891). Within a week, some issues of *Czas* included ads recommending shows featuring "the primitive inhabitants of Ceylon" (*Czas*, May 6, 1891). At the same time a daily issued in Lviv, *Gazeta Narodowa [National Gazette]*, started announcing the exhibition of the caravan of Sinhalese and Tamils. The first performance took place on May 12, 1891, and the last one occurred on May 24.

Research into the Warsaw press did not prove any particular interest in the 1891 caravan. It is known that its itinerary led to Vilnius. The troupe indeed performed several shows in Vilnius in the botanical garden under the aegis of an “anthropological and zoological exhibition.” The announcements say that the number of performers was the same in Kraków and in Lviv. In both towns, the press used the same formula—Sinhalese and Tamils—to differentiate the ethnic backgrounds of visitors (*Vilenskii Vestnik* [*Vilnius Courier*], August 10, 1891). The group was rumored to have moved to Odessa later on (*Gazeta Narodowa*, May 16, 1891); in mid-June it was to be presented in Kiev (*Ślowo*, June 4 [June 16], 1891); and, as we may only presume, the group was to head for Saint Petersburg or Moscow. *Kurier Warszawski*, a daily paper that kept its readers updated concerning any events in the town, is almost silent on the 1891 visit of Hagenbeck's enterprise. It is known that the group stayed not in the zoo, which had ceased to operate by the time of their arrival, but in the private garden in Aleje Ujazdowskie (which could have been the garden of Dolina Szwejcarska, a popular entertainment venue known to have hosted exhibitions of freaks and ethnic groups; *Gazeta Handlowa*, July 16 [July 28], 1891). The reason for this relative lack of interest in the caravan is impossible to explain. It is probable, however, that the public had become bored with the displays of the Ceylonese, which by that time had neither the air of the exotic nor of a novelty. It was already in 1888, after the first group of Sinhalese left Warsaw, that a reporter for the *Kurier Warszawski* listed “exotic” groups that had already visited or would visit the town: the Sioux “Indians,” Ashanti, Sinhalese, and some other, undefined people from Africa (August 29 [September 10], 1888). The program of urban entertainments addressed to Warsaw public seems indeed to have diversified.

“Neither Really Wild, Nor Too Civilized”: Images of the Sinhalese in the Press

The Sinhalese visited Warsaw with their performances at least three times within a very short time spanning the end of 1880s and the very beginning of the 1890s. In 1892, a Ceylonese caravan was reported to pass through Warsaw in winter on its way back from Saint Petersburg (*Kurier Codzienny*, November 24 [December 6], 1892) and it seems very possible that there could have been more such visits, without shows, on the way to or back from Russia. This short period was a stable one in terms of politics, economy, and

social order. Every time the Sinhalese arrived, they visited partitioned lands under Russian government and a community that had not undergone any significant change. Judging by comments in the press, it seems that neither the political situation nor economic factors affected the way the visitors were perceived. However, journalistic accounts offered their readers a little information and some ready-to-use ideas concerning Ceylon and the Ceylonese. So, how was the Other depicted in the Polish-language press? A close reading of press notes shows that the image of the Sinhalese was constructed, first and foremost, around the dichotomy of “barbarism” and “civilization.” Physical features, clothes, and religion, which long into the nineteenth century served as almost universal signs of otherness (Niewiara 2000), proved insignificant in the case of the conceptualization of the itinerant group of Ceylonese embedded in the entertainment industry.

The journalists and the public were well aware of the reasons for Sinhalese visits to Warsaw. Information on the troupes was usually published in a column in which other news was announced. Performances, arrival and departure dates, and details concerning the troupe were interlaced with information on theater events, entertainment in the public gardens, concerts, and art exhibitions. The Sinhalese constituted part of the entertainment offerings, and the air of institutionalized distraction definitely dominated any of unknown or ethnic otherness. The commercial aspect of the visits was also evident. Dailies regularly offered information on the logistics of the show, travel routes, and expenses covered by the hosting institutions. Also, details of agreements between John Hagenbeck and his actors were provided. It seems that there was not too much unknown and extraordinary in the later groups’ behavior. The lure of the exotic must also have lost some of its intensity and power. As might be discerned from press notes, especially those commenting on the second visit in 1889, reviewers felt somehow familiar with their Ceylonese guests. Journalists mention conversations with members of the groups. Moreover, Hagenbeck’s Ceylonese were not anonymous visitors: some of them were known and identified by name—whether real or invented (*Kurier Warszawski*, July 23 [August 4], 1889).

In both press notes and advertisements, the Ceylonese were described as “primitive people.” The press, however, was far from perceiving the Ceylonese as “barbarians” and their image was constantly construed as that of civilized or, rather, somewhat civilized. This was expressed directly by numerous com-

mentators; for example: “The Sinhalese betray their wilderness only in their dances full of passionate frenzy; in general they are very polite” (*Gazeta Polska*, July 26 [August 7], 1889; see also Czarnecka in this volume). Primitivism, in this case, was free of its usually derogatory meaning. It referred not to the state of civilization but to the antiquity of the ethnic group. Sinhalese were depicted as the indigenous inhabitants of Ceylon, whose history dated back to at least 523 BCE. To confirm their ancient roots, the journalists referred to the writings of Pliny, who mentioned four Ceylonese envoys’ arrival to Rome. The fact that such an embassy had occurred was interpreted as a sign of “a certain state of civilization proved by knowledge of shipbuilding” (*Kurier Codzienny*, August 19 [August 31], 1888). The antiquity of the nation was a factor that legitimized the non-Europeans in the eyes of inhabitants of the Old Continent long into the nineteenth century. The fact that non-European societies possessed their history and ancient traditions located them on the side of the “civilized.” Ancient chronicles and written tradition testified to the growth and progress of a society or nation and sometimes (as exemplified by China) constituted a challenge to European historians and theologians (Van Kley 1971). For centuries it was the case of China, India, and Persia, which were often considered as “old civilizations” whose merits did not diverge from that of Europe (Clarke 1998, 37–70). Journalists underlined the “civilized” manners of the Sinhalese. It was stressed that they could write and read in their own language and were even able to speak some French and German (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 13 [August 25], 1888). Their linguistic proficiency was another trait that deprived them of an air of the “primitive/barbarian.” It was said that the Ceylonese possessed their own literature, poetry, and religious scriptures (*Kurier Codzienny*, August 19 [August 31], 1888). The culture of writing and that of poetry, which still held its strong position in the modern system of the arts, was definitely a trait of the “civilized,” not of “barbarians.”

The image of the Sinhalese as civilized was also constructed in opposition to the Vedda, a minority indigenous group who settled in the southeastern mountain regions of Sri Lanka. Veddas were “the remnants of the primitive tribe living in the forests. The Vedda do not till the soil, do not know money, do not constitute any organized society, do not communicate with neighboring tribes, and live on hunting.” The Sinhalese, by contrast, “dwelled [in] the south, west, and the interior of the island. They constituted a majority.

It had been centuries since they got to know how to work with iron and weave textiles. To a certain degree they developed a kind of a self-constituent civilization” (*Kurier Codzienny*, August 19 [August 31], 1888). As has been observed by Hilke Thode-Arora (2008, 167–68), the Hagenbecks never managed to recruit the Vedda people. They were too strange in the eyes of the Old Continent and their contact with Europeans was infrequent, so they were not considered the best candidates for exhibition. The people themselves, however, were not completely unfamiliar to the European public. The French anthropologist Girard de Rialle (1883) devoted some space to them in a lengthy description of the island penned in relation to the 1883 exhibition of the Sinhalese in Paris. He presented them as savage inhabitants of the mountains, who differed considerably—by language, “black” skin, and shape of cranium—from the guests of the Jardin d’Acclimatation. The tendency to compare the two tribes was common in the European press and targeted toward constructing the Sinhalese as the noble representatives of the island who, by dealing with Europeans, embodied, at least to some extent, a civilizing mission of the Old Continent.

The physical constitution of the Sinhalese, as described by the Polish press, did not testify to their “wildness” either. As can be noted from the travel writing of the time and the first natural histories produced in Europe, skin color was one of the universal traits constituting difference. It was also one of the seminal factors, at least since the publication of David Hume’s *Of National Characters* (1748), that allowed an individual to determine moral qualities and to situate people within the dichotomies of civilized/barbarian, own/other, and polite/coarse manners, and within many other culturally constructed “locations” based on universal binaries (Popkin 1973, 245–62). The skin color of the Sinhalese was ambiguous. They were neither black nor Negro (original terms used in contemporary language) nor white. The majority of Polish journalists described them as the “cinnamon children of Ceylon,” or simply “brown,” which rendered well their status of “neither really barbarians, nor too civilized” (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 11 [August 23], 1888; similar statements are to be found in *Biesiada Literacka*, August 19 [August 31], 1888; September 9 [September 21], 1888; *Kalendarz Ilustrowany na rok 1891 [Illustrated Calendar for the Year 1891]*, 1890, 43).

The features of the Sinhalese were not widely commented on; their clothes did not attract much attention from journalists and did not really

serve as a determinant of strangeness. "In general, the faces of the Sinhalese strikingly resemble one another, and it is easy to take all the men for women," commented a reviewer for *Kurier Warszawski* (July 23 [August 4], 1889). In the previous issue it was noted that the Sinhalese arrived barefoot and their clothes did not differ from those they had worn the previous year (July 22 [August 3], 1889).¹⁴

Press notes touching upon the overall look of the Ceylonese do not betray any meticulous observations by reviewers. However, the journalists' friendly and positive attitude toward South Asian visitors found its reflection in the way they perceived the appearance of "exotic" guests:

[The Sinhalese] are distinguished by the unusual neatness, flexibility, and muscularity of the body, which they rub with coconut oil; even though they are not of pure Aryan origin and they are marked with traits of other races with which they must have interbred in distant times, it would be difficult to refuse their faces a certain kind of regularity; and, from a European point of view, among women there occur even very plausible faces. (*Dziennik Łódzki*, September 4 [September 16], 1888)

What some journalists did not fail to stress were the commercial transactions the Sinhalese were involved in. It was clearly stated that the show was an instrument for earning money. It was not unusual in the press to announce detailed sums of money earned by the Sinhalese during the shows (*Dziennik Łódzki*, September 7 [September 19], 1888). In satirical poems their earnings were even referred to as "Mammon," which was to stress the Sinhalese's particular greed for money (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 31 [September 12], 1888). The conservative press aimed particularly to overemphasize the Ceylonese appetite for money. An account penned by a reporter of *Biesiada Literacka* (September 9 [September 21], 1888) read:

14 This relative lack of interest in appearance and attire of the Ceylonese calls for comment. As has been indicated by Hilke Thode-Arora, the Sinhalese were one of the most popular groups among the European public due to their clothes and overall appearance (Thode-Arora in this volume). Their garments were considered picturesque, constituting a medium of exoticism, and determined an ethnic otherness. The scarcity of comments on the clothes in the Polish press escapes straightforward explanation. Was it due to the attitude of journalists who sought entertainment rather than lessons in ethnography? On the other hand, it might be also the result of the unintentional, selective nature of press notes.

Warsaw spent several thousand rubles for the brown amusements. The profits of Zwierzyniec [the zoo], however, were not considerable, as the board had to pay the entrepreneur. The public did not learn anything, having been offered only a low distraction. Instead of “types” it was shown moochers, begging and simpering. In the art of begging the Sinhalese outdid even the beggars of Częstochowa¹⁵—they were that intrusive in offering their visiting cards and wheedling money in turn.

However, even these conservative deliberations were lacking overtly moral overtones. The critique was directed not toward the performing troupes themselves but toward the practice of showgoing. Journalists’ sensibilities were particularly concerned with children, whose participation in amusements organized by the zoo, including performances given by non-Europeans, they strongly opposed.

Another critique discernible from the press was highly gender-oriented and directly related to the sexualized image of the Sinhalese. Again, however, it was not directed toward the Sinhalese, but toward the female audience of the spectacles:

Beautiful young ladies prattled to the wild youngsters with a sisterly trust. Polite ladies acquainted themselves with a brown man, and while talking to him with syllables and gazes they almost leaned on the back and the arms of the beau . . . Mothers, observing the attractiveness of their daughters, only smiled mildly and were just about to kiss a gallant when he sent them a kiss with his hand or said “beautiful” or “good morning.” (*Biesiada Literacka*, September 9 [September 21], 1888)

Other commentators similarly mocked the women who attended the shows. A reviewer for *Kłosa* (*Ears*), another conservative weekly, ridiculed young ladies’ hunt for husbands and profitable marriages. In a well-known convention dating back to the very roots of pamphlets on women, the author pointed out women’s determination and their eagerness to accept someone

15 The author refers here to the beggars gathering around the Jasna Góra Monastery in Częstochowa (today in Poland), a shrine to the Virgin Mary, the most significant pilgrimage site in the context of both the former and the contemporary territory of Poland.

of another skin color as an *epuzer* (a candidate for husband). This polonized version of a French term, *un époux* (a consort), not only contained in its meaning a conventional attitude toward marriage as a social contract but also betrayed the mercenary intentions of a man. Not only did women resist the opposition to “a brown man” but they would also be eager to accept a dwarf, as evinced by the alleged interest that one member of a troupe aroused among woman (*Kłosy*, August 18 [August 30], 1888; compare also August 17 [August 29], 1888).

The critique drew on a deeply rooted stereotype of the Other as sexually attractive. In European writings, this sexual appeal was commonly attributed to people of dark skin, first and foremost to the inhabitants of Africa. In the Polish context the idea of black men and women as figures of uncontrolled sexual drive was promulgated by popular encyclopedic publications (*Negrowie* 1901, 439). Within various European circles this stereotype was informed by different fears and prejudices (see e.g. Martichou 2015; Weston 1994; Szleszyński 2010). South Asians were also believed to be endowed with unlimited sexuality and, especially in the case of women, with alluring attractiveness (*Mobilat* 2006, 226, 228–31). The only nationality that escaped such a classification in European discourse was probably the Chinese, who were widely considered to be effeminate (Yang 2011, 32–74).

The image of the Sinhalese as a sexually attractive agent at the Warsaw “marriage market” was directly embraced by and visualized in the satirical press. Humorous illustrations dominate the iconography of the “cinnamon children of Ceylon.” During the Sinhalese stay in the city, every satirical magazine featured genre scenes with “exotic” guests coupled with short, tongue-in-cheek dialogues and comments (figs. 11.4–6). The majority of these illustrations, made after drawings by Stefan Mucharski, a prolific illustrator, who monopolized the market in satirical illustration, present the Sinhalese with “white” women. The tension between the “exotic” and European, dark and pale skin colors, and the skimpy clothes of men and conventional dresses of women tightly covering their bodies enhanced critical comments formulated in the press. The Sinhalese were depicted as objects of erotic attention, sexually attractive, and eager to respond, by no means selflessly, to these interests.



Figure 11.6. “A Farewell to the Sinhalese.” *Kolce*, September 3 (September 15), 1888. The exaggerated gestures of the women contrast with calm and confident behavior and noble posture of a Sinhalese performer. The women encircle him, holding laurel wreaths and bunches of flowers as gifts and tokens for the “exotic” actor. His attire, decorative headgear, and semi-naked body clad in jewelry make him a dubious object of desire, however. The blade of satire was directed at women whose femininity was conceptualized as licentious and sexually driven. Gestures of embracing, touching, and kissing (a scene on the left) a Sinhalese were designed as illustrative of socially unacceptable conduct.

Exhibitions of “Exotic” People and the Ideas of the Non-European World

As I have pointed out already, the educational aspect of ethnic shows was often brought up by organizers, who used it as legitimization for the practice of displaying living people. Education referred directly to geography and ethnography and, to a lesser extent, to physical anthropology (which required a more research- and academic-oriented audience), which were then emerging as autonomous disciplines. The scientific drive in ethnic shows was not, however, addressed only to academics. It was targeted, first and foremost, toward “ordinary” adults and children.

It seems that an educational aspect of the shows must have been put forward also by the board of the Warsaw zoological garden. Separate performances were even organized for schools and pupils of charitable societies

both in Warsaw and Łódź (*Dziennik Łódzki*, September 7 [September 19], 1888). On several occasions exhibitions were even described or advertised as “informative lessons in ethnography” (e.g., *Dziennik Łódzki*, 26 August [September 7], 1888). But conservative critics claimed that exhibitions failed to fulfill this task. The reviewer for *Biesiada Literacka* complained that instead of “types” the audience was shown “begging and simpering moochers”:

If this business of showing around various tribes is to be called speculation—we should not oppose as everyone is allowed to speculate. However, let none try to convince us that the youth will be familiarized with different races all around the world this way. Not only will the youths learn nothing, but they will also gain false imaginings about them [the races] and will forget all the sympathy they gained while reading missionary accounts. (September 9 [September 21], 1888)

Ethnographic “authenticity” was also questioned. Journalists shared the same doubts as French anthropologists several years before. Questions were commonly asked about European influence on the Sinhalese and their knowledge of European languages and manners (*Biesiada Literacka*, August 11 [August 23], 1889).

Drawing on the sources analyzed so far, it seems that anthropologists and ethnographers were rather indifferent to the exhibitions (at least of the Sinhalese) in Warsaw. The climax of ethnic shows in the late 1880s coincided with the consolidation of an ethnographic milieu, which was centered around the journal *Wista* and an ethnographic museum then located on the premises of the Warsaw zoo. A group photograph of the Sinhalese and letters received by them were donated to the museum collection (*Kurier Warszawski*, August 27 [September 8], 1888).¹⁶ Interestingly, this collection was based on gifts from collectors and travelers and consisted mainly of non-European items (Bujak 1975, 55–56). The daily press did not comment on ethnographers’ presence at the shows of the Ceylonese; neither did it mention any private viewings organized for the sake of this circle. Similarly, my

¹⁶ These objects are now lost. The museum and its collection, iconographic documents, and archives were completely destroyed in 1939 during the first days of World War II (Bujak 1975, 55).

research into the ethnographic press did not prove that Warsaw ethnographers responded to the exhibitions. Obviously, one cannot be sure that they did not visit ethnic shows. It does not seem, however, that the presence of non-European (or, at least, Sinhalese) visitors was treated as a chance for conducting research (as it was in Paris, Berlin, Wrocław, or Poznań), nor that it contributed to the development of this new area of study.

The political and cultural situation of Poles being deprived of their own state determined to a great extent the research fields in ethnography. Scholars focused on collecting data related to folk culture (Jan Czekanowski quoted in Jasiewicz 2018, 45), especially of peasants living in the neighborhood of Kraków and the mountaineers who had settled down in the region of the Tatra Mountains and the eastern Carpathians. These interests were manifested in the contents of *Wisła*. The first issue opened with an instruction for how to collect ethnographic data authored by Roman Zawiliński. What seems significant and fundamental is his statement that “The aim of Polish ethnography is to research the Polish nation in its entirety . . . wherever Polish language is in use” (Zawiliński 1887, 3). Further, Zawiliński states that while peculiar physical features analyzed by anthropologists provide knowledge on races and tribes (concerning especially so-called “wild people”), language (speech) proves the unity of civilized nations.

The non-European cultures to which Polish ethnographers (especially those residing in the Russian partition) paid attention were mainly the cultures of Central Asia and the ethnic groups that dwelled in the ethnically diversified territories of the Russian Empire (Jasiewicz 2010, 42; 2018, 47). Africa and Asia also saw the arrival of numerous Polish travelers of various professions, including the expedition to Cameroon directed by Stefan Szolc-Rogoziński in 1882 (Zachorowska and Kamocki 1984) and Aleksander Jabłonowski's travels in the Muslim East (Wrzesińska 2017). However, as has already been observed in case of explorations in Africa, numerous writings documenting travels were usually of a “non-professional” nature and ethnographic observations constituted one of many fields covered in these accounts (Ząbek 2007, 28). It also seems worth noting that most ethnographers and anthropologists of Polish origin, who contributed immensely to global knowledge of the non-European world, conducted their research on site. These include Jan Czekanowski in Africa (until 1913 he was affiliated in Zurich, Berlin, and Saint Petersburg), Benedykt Dybowski in



Figure 11.7. A genre scene showing Sinhalese riding elephants and carts harnessed to zebus. *Zorza*, September 18 (October 10), 1889.

Siberia (as an exile), and Jan Kubary (as a refugee) in Micronesia (mentioned in Jasiewicz 2018, 48). In 1888 and 1889, when the Sinhalese performed in Warsaw, Leopold Janikowski, a renowned traveler and explorer in Africa, a companion to Szolc-Rogoziński, and a generous donor to the Warsaw ethnographic museum stayed in politically and military perturbed Africa (Armon 1962–64).

It is difficult to judge definitely whether exhibitions of the Sinhalese deserved to be termed “illustrative lessons in ethnography.” The daily press commenting on shows in the Warsaw zoo did not provide much information that could be called “ethnographic” and that would be collected during exhibitions. It was only in 1889, when a series of shows concluded with a marriage ceremony probably arranged for the sake of the exhibition, that some journals included descriptions of the event. What attracted the attention of reviewers was the picturesque convention of showering newlyweds with rose petals and a speech given by a certain caravan’s leader. Nevertheless, the press treated this event as a “living ethnographic image” and at the same time expressed doubts about the ceremony’s authenticity and claimed it was, in part, a performance. Published images did not represent a more informative source. Neither did they provide any insight into the local interpreta-

Figure 11.8. Advertisement. *Czas*, May 5, 181.

tion of “exotic” guests. A genre scene showing Sinhalese riding elephants and carts harnessed to zebus (fig. 11.7) published in *Zorza (Aurora)* (September 18 [October 10], 1889) was directly reproduced from a French journal, *La Nature* (“Dr. Z.,” 1886, 232). Similarly, press advertisements (figs. 11.8 and 11.9) and—we may presume—large posters pasted on the walls in the towns drew on a conventional image of an elephant lifting tree trunks invented by the lithographer Adolph Friedländer for promotion of the Ceylonese caravan in 1885–86 (the original poster was reproduced in Ames 2008, pl. 4).

Lessons in ethnography discernible from the Sinhalese shows are difficult to reconstruct. Nevertheless, these were shows and visits of non-European guests that stimulated Polish press to “peek into” the faraway corners of the globe. These were, first and foremost, popular magazines like



Figure 11.9. Advertisement. *Vilenskii Vestnik*, August 10, 1891.

Wędrowiec, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, *Biesiada Literacka*, and *Bluszcz* (just to mention a few) that shaped the ethnographic imagery of visitors, at least those who were regular consumers of the press. Leafing through the subsequent yearbooks was comparable to a journey around the world, in both a textual and a visual sense, which must have provided readers with a set of internalized images of the faraway. A weekly, *Wędrowiec*, published in Warsaw, is particularly illustrative in this context. With its progressive program, criticizing positivist ideas and exploring new tendencies in visual arts and literature, it was led by unbiased editors open to new horizons and non-European worlds. It published articles on literature, philosophy, and visual arts, and serialized novels and travel diaries. Subsequent editors were, however, faithful to the first profile of the journal, which focused on geography, ethnography, and natural sciences. Most of the articles were reprinted and translated into Polish from French (especially after *Le Tour du Monde: Nouveau journal des voyages*; Kamisińska 2010, 102) and German newspapers and magazines. Similarly, the foreign press was the main source of illustrations depicting exotic places. In 1888, a year particularly abundant in “exotic” troupes visiting Warsaw, *Wędrowiec* published articles on the inhabitants of Fiji, the expedition to the Kingdom of Dahomey, anthropophagous peoples of the Rossel Island (Louisiade Archipelago), and Commodore Perry’s “civilizing” mission to Japan. With numerous woodcut images—it was estimated that in 1863 the journal published 492 woodcuts¹⁷ (Kamisińska 2010, 110)—the journal fully deserved the name “illustration” (meaning description) of the nineteenth century that it was given by its contemporaries (Okoń 2013). A close reading of articles touching on geography, ethnography, and anthropology must have left readers with a particular idea of the world. First and foremost, it was built around the dualism of Europe and the rest of the universe, with a figure of a European endowed with the civilizing mission of economic and scientific exploration of “exotic” lands and the dissemination of the superior, European culture (Okoń 2013, 144–45). To what extent, and in what way, this colonial and imperial message was embraced by Polish readers, who themselves were under “colonization,” still requires investigation.

17 It must be admitted, however, that the number of illustrations successively decreased. For details, see Kamisińska 2010, 110–11.

Displays of the Sinhalese in the Warsaw zoo inspired numerous press notes which, along with the mostly practical information on the shows, included some details that referred to manners and the way of life of the “exotic” guests. Let us look at two longer accounts published in 1888 in the Warsaw-based *Kurier Codzienny* (August 19 [August 31], 1888) and in the *Dziennik Łódzki* (September 4 [September 16], 1888), in connection with the first stay of the Sinhalese in Warsaw. It seems that both accounts were based on the same, as yet unidentified source, which could have been a press article or a brochure released by the Warsaw zoo. Both authors provided their readers with details concerning the geographical location of the island and its land features, with mountains stretching across the middle of a heart-shaped surface. They praised the subtropical flora and termed Ceylon the most beautiful island, “the land of cinnamon,” and “the pearl of the Indian Ocean.”

The island’s wealth—found in pepper, cinnamon, cotton, and bread trees, for example—was attributed to natural conditions and not to the work of the people: the plants “grow without care, in wilderness, just as God sowed them in this soil, giving abundant crops three times a year” (*Kurier Codzienny*, August 19 [August 31], 1888). Similarly, the resources of metals such as copper and iron, as well as precious stones—another source of wealth—were stressed to have been of natural origin as well. Reports that the harvesting of pearls was monopolized by the British constituted the only hint of the islanders’ subordination to a colonial power.

Authors, especially a reviewer for *Dziennik Łódzki*, paid attention to the ethnic diversification on the island. Four main tribes inhabiting Ceylon were briefly described. They were presented in order of their presumed level of civilization from least civilized to most civilized: the Vedda people, living in the mountains and considered “half-barbarians”; the Malayali, indigenous inhabitants of the southwestern Malabar coast, who arrived in Ceylon as conquerors; the Muslim inhabitants of India, living off trade and usury, whose role in Ceylonese society was compared to that of Jews in Eastern Europe; and the Sinhalese, representing “a certain level of civilization” and “a certain level of intellectual and moral development,” “cultivating land, processing iron and gold” (September 4 [September 16], 1888).

The civilization of Ceylon was described as an ancient one. The reviewer mentioned an ancient capital of an island, a sacred city of Anarajapura established in 246 BCE, the center of Ceylonese Buddhism, praised by Ptolemy,

which gave the town additional legitimacy. Curiously, Buddhism was not perceived as a pagan religion testifying to the barbarian state of people. Contrary to the missionary tradition of the previous centuries, which treated Buddhism as idolatrous and deceptive worship of “Fo” (Mungello 1989, 68–70, 160–62; on Polish writings: Kopania 2012, 98–101), the written tradition of religion was stressed.

It seems that the image of Ceylon promulgated by the press accorded with the depiction of the Sinhalese. Both land as cultural entity and people were suspended between barbarian and truly civilized. However, it might be claimed that the overall, stereotyped representation of the Ceylonese tended toward perceiving them as civilized.

The first two series of shows in 1888–89 met with an enthusiastic response from both press and visitors. However, it seems clear that exhibitions of ethnic Others were not an unusual feature in the Warsaw entertainment market. The Sinhalese were among numerous groups—such as Dahomey, Hottentots, Ashanti, and North American “Indians”—who paraded in front of the citizens of Warsaw and Łódź.

Even though the exhibitions were sometimes referred to as “illustrative lessons in ethnography,” their usefulness as “learning instruments” was often questioned. As suggested by press announcements and reviews, journalists tended to see these shows more as entertainment (even as “circus-like,” with acrobats and demonstrations employing animals) than as ethnography-oriented displays. It is possible that in Łódź, in 1888, the traditional Perra Herra procession was included in the show’s program.¹⁸ This procession, however, picturesque and exotic on the one hand and rooted in religious traditions on the other, did not garner the attention of the press. The reviewer appreciated, first and foremost, the electric lightning and compared the whole parade to “the expedition for fights with an unknown enemy” (*Dziennik Łódzki*, September 4 [September 16], 1888).

Anthropologists and ethnographers working in Warsaw did not seem to show any particular interest in the Sinhalese performers. However, ethnographic information related to “exotic” visitors was delivered by both

18 The reviewer does not state it clearly, nor does he mention the ceremony’s name. He writes, however, about the evening parade of the whole caravan with elephants, which might suggest a show-oriented version of the Perra Herra ceremony. On the Perra Herra ceremony, see Fuller 1882, 329–31.

the daily press and illustrated journals. Visits paid by inhabitants of South Asia inspired articles devoted to Ceylon and its inhabitants. The fact that the Sinhalese performances constituted part of the showbusiness industry, whose logistics and rules were no secret to the audience, contributed to the domestication of performers who were by no means "curiosities." The performers, expecting financial profits, eagerly intermingled with the public, exchanging gazes, touch, and gifts.

The image of the Sinhalese was constructed around a civilized/uncivilized binary and the majority of information disseminated by the Warsaw press emphasized the civilized nature of the visitors. The antiquity of their ethnic group, its possession of a written language and poetry, and their agricultural knowledge supported this "civilized" narrative. It was also the reason why journalists were not decided as to the skin color of the performers and described it as brown and, most often, "cinnamon." This image fitted with dominant European ideas on the Sinhalese, who were treated as "less 'wild' than the Araucanians, the Fuegians, or the Redskins . . . but inferior to the Kalmyks" (Isabelle Gala, quoted in Servan-Schreiber 2008, 199). Corresponding to the overall tendency to see "ethnic Others" as sexually attractive, the Sinhalese were eagerly eroticized, particularly by satirical weeklies.

One of the questions to ask concerns the regional specificity of the images of the Sinhalese. Did the political and cultural context of Polish lands subordinated to Russian rule determine the nature of images created and promulgated in the press? Who was the audience for the Sinhalese and who were the Sinhalese to their viewers? At least two separate research projects will be needed to answer these questions: first, an extensive comparative analysis of images of the Sinhalese in the European press, and second, a thorough reading of the memoirs, diaries, and other writings documenting the mentality and the everyday experience of Poles living in the nineteenth-century Russian partition. Although addressing these questions is beyond the scope of this chapter, I would like to offer some general remarks.

The Sinhalese and other non-Europeans on display visited a society that did not share the colonial experiences of Western empires and that, since the end of the eighteenth century, had been deprived of its own statehood and political identity. The Kingdom of Poland with Warsaw and Łódź constituted a part of imperial Russia which, on its own, controlled colonial politics

concerning Central Asia. Polish society itself was undergoing a particular form of colonization—with Russian authorities imposing on the Polish people Russia's administration, educational system, and language. These impositions, however, were strongly resisted by Poles, whose collective identity was based on a strong sense of common and autonomous religion, language, and mentality that allowed them to reject the hegemon's culture (Trześniowski 2010, 172–73). The Polish inhabitants of the Kingdom of Poland strongly identified as Europeans, with a high level of civilization and universal values. However, as part of the Russian Empire Poles felt backward in comparison to the West (Jerzy Jedlicki quoted in Niewiara 2000, 29–31). This did not however, prevent them from perceiving Russia as Asia (which was perceived to be uncivilized) and from othering Russians as uncivilized, primitive, and not really threatening to Polish identity (Trześniowski 2010; on stereotypes of Russians see Niewiara 2000, 130–47).

So what was the role here for the Sinhalese? Research into memoirs and diaries written by Poles from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries shows that the Ceylonese did not occupy any significant place in the collective imagination of Poles (there is no reference to Ceylon or the Sinhalese in Niewiara 2000). Drawing on previous inquiry does not seem to shed light on what ideas concerning Ceylon constructed by the press leaked into the mentality of the showgoers and newspaper readers, nor on what role these ideas played in the process of cultural/national identification.

Journalists' opinions on the Sinhalese expressed in the Polish press seem parallel to the ideas promulgated by French journals and booklets published by the Jardin d'Acclimatation (Fulbert-Dumonteil 1886). This might be due to the enormous popularity of French journals among the Polish elite and the fact that a booklet published by the Warsaw zoo to accompany the 1888 show could have been modeled on some French publications.¹⁹ Descriptions of the Sinhalese published in French journals were more thorough: the authors provided readers with more details concerning the dress and physical attributes of the people and their customs and concerning the island itself. Judging by notes published in the Polish press, and quoted throughout, and by articles in *La Nature*, *Revue d'anthropologie*, *Le Monde illustré*,

19 It was a practice among impresarios to use materials published for the sake of the first shows of a particular troupe and to distribute them (in various forms: shortened, improved, in translation) during subsequent events. This was the case of Julia Pastrana (Kopania 2019).

and *Journal des voyages et des aventures* (respectively: de Rialle, 1883 and “Dr. Z.”, 1886; Topinard 1886; Burdo 1886; October 24, 1886), one may conclude that conceptualization of the Sinhalese as Others tended not toward hostility but toward alterity based on difference that did not provoke immediate “defensive” responses.

It seems, however, that there is one other issue worth further study: the question of British colonialism in Ceylon and colonialism in general. Both the French and the Polish press were aware of Ceylon's political situation as an island subordinated to the British. The question is to what extent both nations encompassed this colonial message. The Polish press titles analyzed for the sake of this study barely remarked upon the British presence in Ceylon (*Dziennik Łódzki*, September 4 [September 16], 1888), while French authors attributed to this presence a kind of a civilizing mission. In the booklet published in connection with the 1883 exhibition in Paris, Louis Jacolliot observed that it was the British who put an end to despotic rule in the island, and brought commercial prosperity and a certain system of social order (Jacolliot 1883, 20, 22). The question of whether this difference in discussions on colonialism resulted from the different cultural and political backgrounds of commentators—France, involved in its own colonial affairs, and partitioned Poland, whose society never accepted its condition of being “colonized”—requires further in-depth research.

Pamphleteers derided the Warsaw public for constituting a greater curiosity to the Sinhalese than the Sinhalese represented to their Warsaw audience. The Ceylonese impressions of Warsaw remain unknown. Research conducted so far has not provided any personal testimonies of showgoers documenting their encounters with “exotic” guests, either. However difficult it is to state how the images and conceptualizations of the Sinhalese examined here resonated in the common imagination and everyday ideas regarding non-European “cinnamon children of Ceylon,” one may assume that reporters or translators of foreign articles answered to the interests and expectations of their readers. Therefore, some of the ideas, prejudices, and misconceptions that appeared in the press could have been embraced on a large scale. This chapter offers a glimpse at just one episode in the Sinhalese adventures in East-Central Europe. Focusing on comments published in the Polish-language press in the Russian partition, I have attempted to show how ideas of the non-European world and images of its inhabitants resonated in a

society that was not involved in imperial conquest. Preconceived ideas of the ethnic and faraway Other, rooted in the collective imagination, gained new life during ethnic shows, such as the exhibitions of the Sinhalese, and contributed to the conceptualization of “exotic” visitors.

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CHAPTER
TWELVE

**The Call of the Wild:
A Sociological Sketch of Buffalo Bill's Wild West
in Banat and Transylvania**

Timea Barabas

Disgusting and delightful at the same time,
genius and stupidity, organic unity, the highest
sophistication next to the most primitive bar-
barism. America!

*(Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt
[Transylvanian-German Daily Paper],
July 14, 1906)*

People came from neighboring settlements and from afar to witness the curious show that was about to take place. The streets of Timișoara were humming with anticipation; lively conversations animated coffee shops and restaurants. As the afternoon arrived, the mass of people began a slow retreat toward the small military exercise field on the outskirts of the city (*Controla [Control]*, July 8, 1906). Most people chose to confront the heat of the midsummer sun and cover the distance on foot. Yet one could also see a colorful display of vehicles transporting people from all walks of life: private and rental cars, omnibuses, carts, and bicycles.

In the morning of the same day, three trains arrived at the railway station, transporting 800 people and 500 horses, ready to put on a show.¹ Their

¹ Some details shared by reporters: “The train comprises three sections: the first section consists of a locomotive, 345.659 meters in length, and eighteen numbered sleeping carts for carrying props and stalls and having a total length of 295.95 meters and a weight of 382 tons; the second section contains sixteen wagons with a total length of 263.509 meters and a weight of 357 tons; the third has fifteen wagons with a total length 247.05 meters and a weight of 301 tons. In all, forty-nine carriages make up the three trains” (*Controla*, July 8, 1906).

arrival from Versecz/Vršac² was a “spectacle” that attracted many curious viewers. Locals expressed their admiration for the efficiency with which the space had been prepared. The main tent, under which the show would take place, had a capacity of 12,000, and since the seating area was covered, the presentation could go on regardless of the weather.

Surrounding the main tent were numerous other tents, some of which were open to the public. Perhaps the largest and most popular was the male dressing tent, which displayed a colorful array of costumes for the performers. There was also a lot of commotion around the mobile tent for reporters. A male Native American perched on a platform, attracting attention with his shouts and wielding a sword and shield, was enticing passersby to purchase a ticket for the event if they did not already have one.

Until the program began, visitors could quench their thirst with beer sold by the organizers, try out novelty candy made on the spot, or buy souvenir postcards. A small collection of curiosities—including a tattooed man, cockatoos trained to dance, a snake charmer, and a 25-year-old doll-faced princess who was only one meter tall (*Nagyvárad [Oradea]*, July 21, 1906)—was presented in one of the tents for the price of a separate ticket. Furthermore, for another fifty pence, one could buy a thick picture book with the program of the show. Most of the text from the program book was in Hungarian but it was filled with ads in German. Meanwhile, in the arena, the seated public was entertained by a small but disciplined orchestra playing the latest English songs. At a quarter to three, the show started.³

The Vein Between the Orient and the Occident

Such a scene was typical for Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show during its 1906 European tour.⁴ Following the performance in Versecz/Vršac, the company

2 Presently, a Serbian town situated in the South Banat District. Regarding Banat, in the present chapter, I address only the territory that currently belongs to Romania, neglecting the part that is situated in Serbia. I decided that this offers a more cohesive approach and a stronger focus on the regions that share the main characteristics of having been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and now Romania.

3 The opening scene is a reconstruction of events based on newspaper articles of the time that illustrate a typical scene prior to the show from the viewpoint of the press (*Délmagyarországi Közlöny [South Hungarian Bulletin]*, July 10, 1906; *Controla*, July 8, 1906; *Temesvári Hírlap [Timișoara Gazette]*, July 10, 1906).

4 The territory of modern-day Romania has a long history with variations of circus entertainment. The oldest references mention comedians, acrobats, and horse trainers. The artists mostly came from the West (they were often French, Polish, Italian, English, or Austrian), but a significant number were of Turk-

ventured farther on into what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. But I will narrow down the focus to the following cities that belong to the region of Banat (in Romanian and Serbian, Banat; in Hungarian, Bánát) and Transylvania (in Romanian, Transylvania; in Hungarian, Erdély; in German, Siebenbürgen⁵), which are now part of Romania: Timișoara/Temesvár/Temeswar (July 9), Arad (July 10–11), Alba-Iulia/Gyulafehérvár/Karlsburg (July 12), Sibiu/Nagyszeben/Hermanstadt (July 13), Brașov/Brasso/Kronstadt (July 14–15), Sighișoara/Segesvár/Schäßsburg (July 16), Târgu-Mureș/Marosvásárhely/Neumarkt am Mieresch (July 17), Cluj/Kolozsvár/Klausenburg (July 18–19), Oradea/Nagyvárad/Großwardein (July 20), Satu Mare/Szatmár/Sathmar (July 21), and Sighetu Marmăției/Máramarosziget/Marmaroschiget (July 22).⁶

Both Banat and Transylvania have a long and tumultuous history, which I will briefly describe. In the early modern perception, these regions bore special significance as a frontier between East and West. This was mainly because of the geographical features of the land—namely, the Danube River and the Carpathian mountain range. What is more, Banat was notorious for its swampy grounds and frequent floods. The region was under Ottoman suzerainty from 1552 to 1716 until the siege of Timișoara, led by Eugene de Savoy, which resulted in the conquest of the city and its subsequent integration into the Habsburg Empire. The region was an important strategic area for the two great powers (Micle, Balaci, and Timoc 2017; Diaconescu 2017). Another noteworthy date is 1718 when Banat was annexed to Austria by the Treaty of Passarowitz.

Transylvania remained autonomous under Ottoman suzerainty for almost 170 years, starting in 1526, as a result of the ongoing conflict between the emperor and sultan—a period during which the area was known as the

ish origin, due to the Ottoman influence over the area. They presented exotic tricks such as fire eating or breathing, which gained the admiration of the crowds. There is a mention of a Chinese group of acrobats traveling with a German circus who stopped at Iași, Romania, in 1806. In 1841 a circus with Japanese acrobats passed through the same town. In 1846 Bosco held an Egyptian magic show in Bucharest, which attracted a lot of public attention. In the summer of 1886, Bucharest was a stop in the itinerary of the traveling circus troupe “Zanzibar Family” and, at the beginning of the twentieth century, for “The Great Russian Circus.” The most “exotic” performers were thus Chinese, Japanese, Arabs, and Russians (for more information see Butnaru 1967; Iosefini 1968).

5 Siebenbürgen, the German name for Transylvania, means “seven castles.” This stands for the number of ethnic German (Transylvanian Saxon) cities located in the region.

6 In Buffalo Bill’s Wild West 1906 schedule the city names were in Hungarian and German.

Principality of Transylvania. At the end of the seventeenth century, the region was integrated into the Austrian Empire, and from the end of the nineteenth century until 1918 it belonged to the Hungarian side of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1918 Banat and Transylvania were united with other regions, fulfilling the ideal of a “Great Romania” (Papacostea 2018).

One of the main characteristics of the two regions was that they were spaces of great ethnic and confessional diversity. The ethnic structure was influenced by the socio-political context of the time and by the changes that took place regarding religion. Viewing the regions with our attention on language, religion, and origin rather than considering it a nation of estates, the space shared a mosaic of ethnicities, including Romanians, Hungarians, and Germans (Brie 2009). Zeroing in on the period of interest, between 1850 and 1910 there was a significant change in the ethno-confessional makeup of the population. Based on these statistics,⁷ we can observe an increase in the number of Hungarians and a decrease in other ethnicities.

As for the confessional level, important trends in the social dynamics of the population were caused by a series of factors. According to Ioan Bolovan and Sorina Paula Bolovan (2010), the three main factors were: (a) the growth of the Hungarian population being partly due to an above-average rate of natural increase, (b) the Hungarians participating to a lesser extent in emigration, and (c) the process of assimilation. It is this volatile ethno-confessional context that will serve as the backdrop for the analysis of the reception of the Wild West Show.

7 The following data are from Bolovan and Bolovan (2010) for Transylvania based on the census that was conducted by the Empire seven times between 1845 and 1910:

- a. The period that encapsulates 1906; 1900 compared to 1910: Romanians 55% to 53.7%; Hungarians 29.5% to 31.6%; Germans 11.9% to 10.7%; Serbians and Croats 1.1% to 1%; Slovaks 0.5% to 0.6%; Ruthenians 0.4% to 0.5%; others 1.5% to 1.9%.
- b. The start (1850) and the end (1910) of the census: Romanians 59.5% to 53.7%; Hungarians 26% to 31.3%; Germans 10.7% to 9.3%; Serbians and Croats 0% to 1%; Romani 3.8% to 0%; Slovaks 0% to 0.6%; Armenians 0.4% to 0%; Ruthenians 0% to 0.5%; others 0.2% to 1.9%.

It is important to mention that there were changes in the method of data collection regarding ethnicity, which could have affected the outcome. At the beginning of the period, Austrian officials determined the *neam* (nationality) based on the preference of respondents; after 1867, Hungarian officials categorized ethnic belonging based on the mother tongue. This could be one of the possible explanations for the ethnicities enumerated above, which show up only at the beginning of the census.

Buffalo Bill and His Wild West Show

Initiated in 1883 by William Frederick Cody (Buffalo Bill),⁸ the Wild West Show soon turned into a worldwide phenomenon, with tours across America and Europe (Cody 1978). After the success of the first European tour in 1887–92, a second one followed in 1902–6⁹ which also covered the territory of Austria-Hungary that is now part of Romania (Griffin 2010). In fact, the creator of the program never thought of it as a circus but rather as an “educational show” about the romanticized history of the American West (Cody 1978).

While some of the newspaper articles did present the show as a circus (*Foaia Poporului* [*Paper of the People*], July 22, 1906; *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 11, 1906; *Gross-Kokler Bote* [*Great Târnava Messenger*], July 1, 1906), other sources refer to it as a highly instructive ethnic show. Such statements were mostly present in the publicity pieces published before the presentation, which were often drafted under the supervision of John M. Burke (also known as Arizona John).¹⁰

As for the public reception, according to reviews, it was not so much the circus acts that caught the attention but the opportunity to learn more about the New World. In one article, the show was described as an “ethnographic map—a model of images and knights” or a “true slice of the American life” (*Kronstädter Zeitung* [*Kronstadt Newspaper*], July 16, 1906). According to another:

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- 8 William Frederick Cody (1846–1917) was born in LeClaire, Iowa, and became a symbol of the Western frontier. In his lifetime he took on a wide array of jobs: he worked for the railways, was hired by the Pony Express, and even worked in a gold mine. Furthermore, he had an impressive military career; as a scout for the United States Army, he participated in several campaigns against Native Americans. But probably the activity in which he distinguished himself most was hunting for buffalos. In this area he proved his skills time and again, earning him the nickname Buffalo Bill. Later, his personal experiences were dramatized and presented as scenes of his Wild West Show (Cody 1978; Griffin 2010).
- 9 The 1906 season began in France and ended in Belgium. The above-mentioned cities from the territory of modern-day Romania were stops 62 to 72 (“Map of 1906 Season of the Second European Tour. Buffalo Bill’s Wild West. Tour of France, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Germany and Belgium.” Accessed February 15, 2019. <http://library.centerofthewest.org/cdm/ref/collection/BBOA/id/1719>).
- 10 “You shouldn’t trust that this is a circus as any other circus. The representations that will be given are very instructive, races from the entire world will parade in front of the public, each race showing what it has that is heroic, extraordinary in its life” (*Telegraful Român* [*Romanian Telegraph*], July 12, 1906). In another article, it is said about the Wild West Show that “it aims to reproduce a comprehensive picture of life on the American frontier” (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 11, 1906).

Talking of the representation given at Braşov, we must state that we did not find so impressive the artistic manifestations, which are nowadays offered by modern and renowned circuses, but the mass representations of the different American breeds, which offered us a slice from the life of the people from the American continent. (*Gazeta Transilvaniei* [*Transylvanian Gazette*], July 18, 1906)

Among Buffalo Bill's numerous skills, we can also safely count marketing: by promoting the show as educational, he differentiated it from other circus performances, elevating its status. And the Wild West Show did deliver. There were acts similar to what could be viewed at the circus, mainly the display of physical skills; but there were also aspects that made it stand out, such as the dramatic representation of a fragmentary history of the Western frontier (as experienced by Buffalo Bill).

The experience was not limited to the stage. Spectators could stroll around the backstage area to watch the performers off set, without the choreography, stage lights, and sound effects. This was the closest they could get to observing these "exotic" people in their "natural" habitat—where and how they lived, objects of everyday life, and their daily routine. Newspaper reporters were also keen to take the readers backstage (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906; *Kronstädter Zeitung*, July 9, 1906).

It was made clear in media statements that the entertainment was high class and played in some of the greatest cities and even to royalty (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 11, 1906; *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, July 11, 1906). The program supposedly remained unchanged for the general public—having something in common with royalty was an element that flattered the audience. According to one source, "The fact that representatives of the royal families all across Europe have viewed this show demonstrated once and for all that this is not only educational and funny but worthy of a select audience" (*Gross-Kokler Bote*, July 15, 1906).

The main source of inspiration for the show was Cody's personal experience. He dramatized events from his life (although not exclusively), including select scenes from the Battle of the Little Bighorn (1876), adventures of the Pony Express, and the confrontation between Buffalo Bill and Yellow Hand, which always ended with Cody holding above his head the feathered headwear and a tuft of his opponent's hair (Ionescu 1999).

In both Banat and Transylvania, the show consisted of twenty-two acts presenting, among other things, cowboys riding and taming horses, throwing a lasso, shooting exercises, “customs of the Indians from times of peace and war,” scenes from the life of Cossacks, Japanese, Arabs, and so on (*Foaia Poporului* [*Paper of the People*], July 22, 1906). Therefore, Buffalo Bill painted the Wild West according to a personal narrative, reenacting history from the viewpoint of the victor. It is interesting to note that he was not the only one who legitimized his narrative voice; some scholars did as well, including the Romanian scholars Adrian-Silvan Ionescu and Aurelian Stroe (2000, 151): “To be fair, he was the most appropriate person to recount this history because he was one of the active participants in its making.”

A couple of days before the show, Burke arrived to make the necessary preparations.¹¹ Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show was always met with high expectations (cf. Baraniecka-Olszewska 2020), as a result of the marketing campaign run beforehand: posters (3 meters high and 10 meters long) were displayed in populous areas of the city, and ads were published in local newspapers (*Gross-Kokler Bote*, July 1, 1906). The ads were usually formatted as a long strip and found on the last pages of newspapers.¹²

In this case, Banat and Transylvania presented an ethnically diverse group of people, and such ads were printed in Romanian, Hungarian, and German newspapers.¹³ These usually followed a strict format and displayed little variation. To begin with, they all presented the following information regarding the shows: date and location; ticket prices (usually between two

11 He is frequently mentioned in the local newspaper articles of the time. Some of his main attributions seem to have been related to marketing and organizing, but also he had a close interaction with the press (*Telegraful Român*, July 10, 1906; *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, July 11, 1906; *Gross-Kokler Bote*, July 15, 1906).

12 For more on the art of advertising and the crucial role John M. Burke played in this regard, see Delaney 2019.

13 Ionescu and Stroe (2000) talk about the variations and occasional misrepresentations in translation, which occurred in these newspaper articles. To begin with, they declared themselves pleased with the translation of the “Congress of Rough Riders of the World” as *Călăreții cei mai îndrăzneți din lume* (the bravest riders in the world; *Telegraful Român*, July 3, 1906) or *întâlnirea celor mai îndrăzneți călăreți din toată lumea* (the congress of the bravest riders from the entire world; *Revașul* [*Epistle*], July 14, 1906). However, things fall short with the Battle of the Little Bighorn, which was either presented as *Ultima apărare a Custerului* (Custer’s last defense; *Telegraful Român*, July 3, 1906), *Ultima rezistență a Custerului* (Custer’s Last Stand; *Gazeta Bucovinei* [*Bucovina Gazette*], July 9, 1906) or in some cases as *Bătălia de la “Little Bighorn”* (*Gazeta Transilvaniei*, July 4, 1906). The authors blame these instances on the lack of historical knowledge of the journalists. Also, they note that with a couple of exceptions (e.g., *Telegraful Român*, July 3, 1906), “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” was not translated.

Timișoara. Numai pe o zi!

Luni în 9 Iulie n.
pe micul teren de exerciții militare (între Timișoara și Mehala)

2 Reprezentații

Cea de după mieznoapte nu se deosebește de cea de seară.

Buffalo Wild  **Bill's West**

Congress of ROUGH RIDERS of the World
Cei mai curajoși călăreți din lume
Sub dirigența personală a colonelului
CODY V. F. (Buffalo Bill)

Buffalo Bill măsterul lăzii la țară.

face admirabile exerciții de arme
călare pe cai, cari aleargă cu
repeziune.

100 indieni din America nordică
O mare scenă teatrală în mai
multe tablouri.

Lupta dela Little
sau
Ultima apărare a lui Custer.

2 reprezentațiuni mari
După mieznoapte la 2 oare și
seara la 8 oare.

Deschiderea casei la 7¹/₂ și la
2-4 (112) 7¹/₂ oare.

Prețul locurilor :
Locul prim 2 cor. — Loc nume-
rizat 4 cor. — Loc rezervat
5 cor. — Loge 8 cor.

Copii sub 10 ani plătesc pe jumătate.

Bilete se pot cumpăra înainte
pentru locurile cu preț de 5 și 8
cor. în ziua reprezentațiunilor dela
9 oare a. m. la Jacob Csendes,
Timișoara strada Hunyadi Nr. 5.

Reprezentațiuni în Verșeț la 8 Iulie,
în Arad la 10 și 11 Iulie.

Figure 12.1. Advertisement in Romanian published at *Controla*, June 30, 1906. The text roughly translates as follows: “Timișoara. Only for one day! Monday July 9. 2 performances. Same show in the afternoon as in the evening. Buffalo Bill’s Wild West. Congress of ROUGH RIDERS of the World. The bravest riders from the world. Under the personal tutelage of Colonel CODY V. F. (Buffalo Bill). Buffalo Bill the master of riding makes admirable exercises with guns on horseback, as the horses gallop fast. 100 Indians from North America. A great theatrical scene with several acts. The Battle of the Little Bighorn or Custer’s Last Stand. 2 great performances. At 2 in the afternoon and at 8 in the evening. The ticket house opens at 1.30 and 7.30. Seat prices: first seat 2 cor.—numbered seat 4 cor.—reserved seat 5 cor.—lodge 8 cor. Children under 10 pay half price. Tickets can be pre-purchased for the seats with 5 and 8 cor. on the day of the performances from 9 a.m. at Jacob Csendes, Timișoara Hunyadi Street, no. 5. Performances at Verșeț on July 8, at Arad on July 10 and 11.”

and nine crowns depending on the category, with children under ten receiving a 50 per cent discount); where and when tickets could be purchased; the number of shows (followed by assurances that there were no variations between performances); a short presentation of the program; and mention of the previous and following cities on the tour. Furthermore, there was usually a sketch accompanying the text. While the headline invariably displayed the portrait of Buffalo Bill, sometimes there was also a sketch of a Native American, Buffalo Bill riding a horse, or other representations of an ethnic group from the show (figs. 12.1 and 12.2).

Buffalo Bill’s journey through Banat and Transylvania has been previously addressed by scholarly literature, the results of which I have integrated into my analysis to various degrees. To begin with, Adrian-Silvan Ionescu (1999; Ionescu and Stroe 2000) created a detailed

Figure 12.2. Close-up of an advertisement in Hungarian, published at *Temesvári Hírlap*, July 7, 1906. The text roughly translates as: “BUFFALO BILL’S WILD WEST. A Congress of Rough Riders of the World (a világ legmerészebb lovassai) CODY W. F. ezredes, „Buffalo Bill” személyes vezetése és előadásán alatt. Semmi üzleti fogás, igazán az otolsó körutazás. Soha vissza nem jönnék! Minden balszáze lehetetlen! Nézzék meg ezen állásukat. Három különvonat. 800 ember. — 500 ló. Eredeti kiállítás melynek utazása lehetetlen. Egyetlen a világban. — Kiál egyetlen és univerzális. — **Ö** egyretek **Ö** amelyen eddig még nem lehetett látni, még a világ egyetlen lovasság iskolája által van, ami a bátorságot és merészséget illet. — **Amerikai zúvok**, az Egyesült Államok civil katonasága. **Arakok**. — **Híflans**. — **Híflpratik**. — **Órosok**. **Közök**. **Hameróvitések**. **Haragú Hódosok**. **Amerikai cowboyok**. **„Buffalo Bill”** a lovas idvőszak mestere, országokos hívfőszakirakalával végző lovas. **As előadások mindig és mindenhol egész terjedelmükben, teljes alakban, minden részletéig sziklái tartalmak meg a legnagyobb érdeklődésben.** **Különlegesen villamos világítás által nagygyorsított kivágatva.**

reconstruction of the Buffalo Bill shows based on the press of the time. His systemized approach offers a valuable foundation for the events, upon which to build a fresh analysis. Furthermore, he addressed the representation of the Native “Indian”¹⁴ and the American in the imagination of the public. Building on his work, Elena Andreea Boia (2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2010) has written extensively about the nuances attributed to the Other—Native American and cowboy—during the nineteenth century in the region.

14 News articles at that time employed the term “Indians” to refer to the native inhabitants of North America. Fully aware of the negative connotations the word carries today, I have decided to use it in order to present the press materials of the day in a reliable manner. The term “Indian(s)” appears deliberately in quotation marks.

Among the Hungarian scholars who have written on the topic, Olivér Perczel and Zoltán Györe are of particular importance to the present study. Perczel (2013) wrote a monograph on Buffalo Bill and compiled a comprehensive account of the cities visited in the 1906 Hungarian stretch of the tour based on local Hungarian newspaper articles and archival documents.¹⁵ Later, in a study with Györe (2016), the two scholars chose to focus on only a few localities from the Banat region¹⁶ and added both German and Serbian media sources (although these were relatively few¹⁷).

Building on the insights of the aforementioned works, the primary aim of this study is to analyze, through the apparatus of the press, firstly, how the staged Other from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show was represented in the region of Banat and Transylvania; and secondly, how these representations might influence the local ethno-confessional groups in the process of (re)defining their own identity and positioning as groups. Within this scope, I will address the concept of "nesting theories," especially "nesting orientalism" (Bakić-Hayden 1995; Todorova 1997). Subscribing to Edward Said's (1978) perspective, I will treat the opposing constructs addressed here more as "projects" than as geographical locations.

Variations on Nesting Theories

There is an ever-growing body of work dedicated to variations on nesting theories, the foundation of which consists of Edward Said's work on orientalism (1978), with later influences by Larry Wolff (1994). The main benefit of orientalism as rhetoric is that it relies on the difference between (north-) west and (south-) east (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992; Bakić-Hayden 1995). The term was derived by Said from how "easterners" who lived in Europe were represented in popular discourse, but he also draws on colonialism. By "orientalism" he referred to the tendency of Europe to represent

15 Budapest, Miskolc, Kassa, Ungvár, Munkács, Nyíregyháza, Debrecen, Békéscsaba, Szentes, Szeged, Nagykikinda, Nagybecskerek, Pavcsova, Versec, Temesvár, Arad, Gyulafehérvár, Nagyszeben, Brassó, Segesvár, Marosvásárhely, Kolozsvár, Nagyvárad, Szatmárnémeti, Máramarossziget (Perczel 2013).

16 Nagykikinda, Nagybecskerek, Pancsova, Versec.

17 The authors suggest that Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show was scarcely covered in Serbian newspapers due to their predominantly political inclination. They tended to cover news that had a more direct impact on the Serbian community of the region (Perczel and Györe 2016).

itself as “rational” and “progressive” in contrast to the Orient, which was seen as “mystical” and “backward” (Said 1978). Wolff (1994) took things one step further by suggesting that these labels are not confined just to the early travel journals but also appear in the works of influential writers of the caliber of Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

The theory is of further value in that it creates a framework for addressing practical issues of power relations, bringing into the discussion the dichotomy of domination and submission on a multilevel playing field that includes politics and economy. As for the downside of this orientation, Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert Hayden (1992) identify as the major threat its reliance on a categorization of human reality as a whole. However, they suggest a way around this, firstly, by underlining that the dichotomy does not apply to the represented phenomenon, and secondly, by highlighting the elusiveness of the phenomenon thus addressed. Bakić-Hayden (1995) also brings into the discussion essentialism, in the sense that both cultures and ideologies stand accused of incorporating different essences into the representations used for describing the East–West dichotomy.

To address the East–West dichotomy, which became one of Said’s theoretical legacies, Bakić-Hayden and Hayden (1992; and Bakić-Hayden 1995) developed the term “nesting orientalism” for a graduated scale of “Orients.” Thus the dichotomy was replaced by a continuum along which subjects can move more fluidly between varying degrees of “oriental” and “occidental” based on different reference points. For example, Turks are commonly seen as “Eastern” by the Balkans, while the Turks would label themselves as “Western” when compared to Arabs, whom the Turks in turn label as “Eastern.” Relying on hierarchies, the theory addresses the issue of how groups define themselves in relation to one another. Furthermore, Bakić-Hayden and Hayden dealt with a variation of orientalism by moving the focus of analysis to the Balkan region, specifically to Yugoslavia.

Building on the concepts of her scholarly predecessors, Maria Todorova (1997) expanded the general theoretical framework, by introducing the concept of “nesting Balkanisms” to address the duality of the Balkan identity construction. She centers her work on the stereotypes associated with the Balkans by the overlapping of Balkanist and mostly socio-political discourses.

Orientalism and Balkanism do share certain similarities, since both are discursive formations and rely on strong metaphors and a series of differ-

entiating factors: the concrete geographic and historic particularities of the Balkans in contrast to the more symbolic nature of the Orient; the absence of colonialism in the Balkans; differences of ethnicity, religion, and language; and the “ontology of the Balkans” as opposed to the more metaphoric level associated with the Orient (Todorova 1997, 194).

This framework is significant for dynamic regions such as Banat and Transylvania that were home to an ethno-confessional mosaic under Ottoman, Habsburg, and Austro-Hungarian rule. The three main groups addressed in this study are Romanians (Orthodox/Roman Catholic), Hungarians (Reformed/Roman Catholic), and Germans (Evangelist). Such delimitations have been and continue to be used as a means of defining space “in terms of symbolic geography, inclusion and exclusion of cultural elements native to its various regions” (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992, 5).

Methodology and Source Materials

For the current analysis, I rely mainly on the press discourse about Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show in Banat and Transylvania, which I corroborate with scholarly literature. Data were collected, primarily, from articles and ads in the local newspapers of the cities Buffalo Bill visited in July 1906. I use the document analysis method to identify representations of the Other, as outlined in the images of the North American/cowboy and the Native American/“Indian.” Based on this, I will outline the different gradations associated with these representations by the public.

The ads followed a strict template that varied little across countries. The articles can be broken down into two groups: press advertisement campaigns (usually paid articles that offered a positive review of the show), which could be published both before the show (Burke frequently visited press houses and talked to the journalists about the Wild West Show) and after; and more “objective” or even critical descriptions written by reporters. The main difficulty with this categorization lies in correctly identifying the source materials. There is no information available on the possible monetary compensation for the selected articles and, what is more, the name of the journalist does not appear. Usually, the pieces were signed simply “REP.” (short for reporter). To a certain extent, we can rely on deduction; however, the categorization is not meant to be and should not be taken as definite.

The fact that the present analysis is rooted in the press of the time is both the weak point of this study and one of its greatest strengths. There are several reasons why this path was chosen, but the most pragmatic one concerned the lack of other source materials. The upside to this is that due to the particularities of the analyzed region, the newspapers are in different languages and address different ethno-confessional groups. Thus, the original materials are in Romanian, Hungarian, and German (the extracts presented here are my own translation). Scholars conducting media-based research, such as Gay Mason (1992), underline the importance of this medium and its multiple roles as a messenger but also as a conveyer and constructor of a particular ideology and social concepts. However, the press can take on other roles, as well. For example, Nicolae Teșculă mentions one of the very newspapers that was included as source material for the present study—*Gross-Kokler Bote*. He wrote, “It was meant to be a paper that represent[ed] the position of the county, but it became a newspaper that faithfully reflect[ed] the society from Sighișoara and ways of spending free time” (Teșculă 2005, 434). The press is an apparatus of the state or the people through which reality is filtered, a version of which is made available for the masses. It is this particular aspect that I am most interested in. How and why did the press of Banat and Transylvania of the early twentieth century portray staged otherness in the Wild West Show the way it did and in no other way?

Instances of Constructing the Other

In the deconstruction of the Wild West project, I have identified the dominant representations of the performed otherness as North Americans/cowboys and Native Americans/“Indians.” There is a third category of ethnic groups from other lands that took part in the show, such as Arabs, Cossacks, Cubans, Japanese, Mexicans (*Foaia Poporului*, July 8, 1906; *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, July 11, 1906). I have found only a few references to them in the press.¹⁸ One reason for this could be that the public was already

18 Rather uncharacteristically, a short article was dedicated exclusively to the Japanese, in which the focus fell on the progress the people made in the domains of mechanics, commerce, and military: “The Japanese group presented in the ‘Wild West’ shows reveal in the simplest of ways the giant strains this country has made to get from the stage of semi-barbarism, at which it previously was, to that of the clear military strength of the West” (*Gazeta Bucovinei*, July 9, 1906).

familiar with these ethnic groups, as they performed in circuses and variétés (*Gross-Kokler Bote*, July 1, 1906; see also Iosefini 1968; Butnaru 1967). Because of this, and also because this group represents such great diversity, I have decided to focus solely on the two main categories. I will explore each of these categories, as presented in the press, in the context of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in Banat and Transylvania, and I will then discuss the relations between these representations of staged otherness and the ethno-confessional mosaic of the region. But first, a short discussion of how the "Promised Land" was present in the imaginary of the people before the arrival of Buffalo Bill.

The American frontier was not completely unfamiliar to the people of Banat and Transylvania. Other scholars (Stanciu and Cernovodeanu 1985; Boia 2007, 2010) have already conducted an in-depth analysis of the materials available at the time and the impact these had on the cultural imaginary. I will present a summary of their research. The earliest mentions date back to the writings of men of letters from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,¹⁹ who briefly described natives from Central and South America. However, some of the sources concerning these peoples were not accessible to the masses until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when information about Native Americans from the North started becoming part of the popular knowledge through, among other avenues, school textbooks, encyclopedias, and translated works.²⁰ At about the same time, people began having stronger connections in the New World, either to locals who emigrated or to travelers (Boia 2010). In his study, George James Patterson (1986) mentions the first group of Romanian immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century from Banat, Transylvania, and other regions, who set out for the other side of the Atlantic. The precise starting point of Romanian emigration is still debated by scholars but is usually placed at the end of the nineteenth century (specifically, 1895) or the beginning of the twentieth. There was also

19 Maximilianus Transilvanus, Nicolae Olahul, Iacob Paleologul din Chios, and Jan Ámos Komenský (Boia 2007).

20 Some of the most important works as presented by Boia (2007) were *Ars heraldica* (1695) by Ferenc Pápai Páriz, which presented mainly information about body art, decoration, and body modification practices (including intrusive practices such as cutting off fingers to mourn the loss of a loved one, perforation of the lower lip, tattooing); and *Elemente de geografía pentru scolele populare române greco-orientale* (1869) by Zaharia Boiu, which follows the narrative of natives being oppressed by the colonizers.

a trend toward a greater percentage of Romanian emigration originating from territories belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Gârdan 2012). An early twentieth-century Hungarian newspaper from the Banat region mentions that:

It is not poverty, but the hope of getting rich quick and easy that drives people away from here. In three years 352 people moved out only from Pancsova [a city in Banat region] and from Torontál and Temes county 30,257. A staggering number. (*Határőr* [*Frontier-Guard*], July 29, 1906)

Most of them went to the United States and Germany.

Two main categories emerge in this context: the Natives (referred to as “Indians”) and the émigré Europeans (English, French, German, Italian—among which the English dominated in the imaginary), referred to as North Americans. The latter became highlighted in the public imaginary as “one from the North, the trader, industrialist, inventor, Yankee, the individual who spoke his mind” (Boia 2009b, 161). The Natives were gradually outlined as “the survivor, isolated in the ancient forests of North America, a strong personality who refuses at any cost to abandon his old customs and beliefs” (Boia 2007, 102). One thing is clear, the people from Banat and Transylvania did not have a neutral attitude toward America. The imaginary was fueled from various sources (literary but also firsthand accounts from traveling acquaintances), and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show was perceived as an opportunity to piece together all the previously available scattered information but, above all, to see the people of those distant lands in real life. The Natives, especially, constituted a subject of intrigue, which drew in the crowds. A newspaper article even mentions the valuable opportunity children had to meet some of the famous Native Americans they had been reading about:

The little ones, for whom it will be a great pleasure . . . to be introduced to—and to find themselves face to face with— . . . chiefs, whose ancestors, known to kids from books about redskins, offered them so many hours of happiness. (*Gross-Kokler Bote*, July 1, 1906)

Cowboys

There is not much mention of the “cowboys,” physical characteristics (which is not surprising, since they were not so different from the locals). It was more common for the press to dwell on their skill set. What caught the attention was mostly “the dexterity of the so-called American ‘cowboy’ in riding, domesticating wild horses, [and] the throwing of the so-called ‘lasso’” (*Gazeta Transilvaniei*, July 18, 1906). It was the character traits that were presented in ample detail. We can observe in press accounts how the cowboys are placed within a dichotomous framework and become the harbingers of progress in the wilderness: “It is about the life of the first pioneers in the American Far West and the changes they brought upon those abandoned regions” (*Gazeta Bucovinei*, July 2, 1906). “They were indeed worthy of admiration, as they offered us the most interesting scenes from the fights of Europeans with the wilderness of the West” (*Telegraful Român*, July 17, 1906).

One of the main metaphors associated with American cowboys is that they were “people of action” who enacted change even in the harshest of places. But it is important to note that in the above examples, at least, the contrast is not explicitly between two groups (cowboys and Native Americans) but, rather, a subject (cowboys) and an object (land) associated with the other group (Native Americans).²¹ This label is in line with the prior representation of North Americans in the public imaginary of Transylvania. Boia (2009a, 2009b, 2010) extensively researched this aspect and followed its evolution across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She concluded that by directing attention to certain character features, people sought an explanation for the success of North Americans.

They tried to answer the question: How must you be like as a people, that your country, a federative republic with a history of 100 years, at most, could have an economic, scientific, technological, etc., momentum without precedent, to practically compete with the most advanced states of the Old World? (Boia 2009b, 161)

21 When it comes to the land, the approach of the Native Americans clashed with that of the settlers, in that they did not appropriate it and saw it as an inseparable part of nature (Matei 1969).

A rather interesting feature of the representation of the cowboys, especially when compared to the homogeneous take on Native Americans, is that rather than being considered as a group, individuals are named and highlighted. It is in these individuals that the “essence” of the whole is condensed. Without a doubt, Buffalo Bill was a central figure in this sense.²² He was described as “the most interesting personality from his gigantic troupe” (*Gross-Kokler Bote*, July 1, 1906).

Even today, when with his already white hair and beard he showed up in front of the Indians, cowboys, and Japanese, this extraordinary rider, the creator of all the wonderful numbers of the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show, kept his spectators at the edge of their seats. (*Gross-Kokler Bote*, July 1, 1906)

He was met with a great amount of admiration from the public. His “bravery,” “daring,” “cold-bloodedness,” and “patience” were believed to have secured his streak of victories in life (*Revaşul*, July 14, 1906). The press almost seemed to have been caught in a competition when glorifying him. However, if we look at the articles more carefully, there are a couple of observations to be made. To begin with, the articles reviewing the show unanimously spoke of William Frederick Cody in great terms, dwelling mostly on his skill set and attributes, which I have mentioned. However, there were also publicity articles that appeared in the press before the event and with the considerable contribution of an official press agent (John M. Burke). These pieces are more focused on strengthening and perpetuating the myth of Buffalo Bill.

Major Burke, who was at our office yesterday and who remained the inseparable companion of Buffalo Bill for 40 years, told us a couple of things about his career. The Archives of the American Government and the history of the West from the region of the Missisipi [*sic*] river are full of Buffalo Bill’s merits. Famous commanders and officers of the state asked for his advice in the civil war between South America and North

22. But he was not the only one. Among the other frequently named artists was Johnny Baker, who impressed reporters as a rider and marksman: “Worthy of mention is also the representation of Colonel Cody and of the American Johnny Baker, who distinguished themselves as excellent marksmen, shooting with phenomenal precision glass globes thrown into the air” (*Gazeta Transilvaniei*, July 18, 1906).

[between the northern and southern United States], and in the fights against Indians, his services were priceless . . . The fight against Indians that lasted for 300 years ended due to Cody's contribution. (*Gazeta Transilvaniei*, July 12, 1906)

The title of colonel was frequently evoked for publicity purposes. It offered even more importance to the persona (Ionescu and Stroe 2000), although this was merely an honorific title received before the first European tour of 1887 for being on the staff of the governor of Nebraska (Snyder Yost 1980). Another illustrative example of great marketing skill is how Cody's biography was advertised in newspapers, with grandiose descriptions similar to those above. What is more, another source was added to fuel the imaginary of the Wild West project:

Buffalo Bill, the renowned American lieutenant [*sic*] William Cody, is the subject of today's account; both the youth and elderly will read with great interest the biography of this last great scout, as it is told by his sister in the book, which is available in German translation from Engelhorn Publishing in Stuttgart. This book, elegantly presented and playfully illustrated, costs only 3 crowns and 60 hellers and it is available for sale at the Séraphin Library at the original price. (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 12, 1906)

However, while some presented Buffalo Bill in an almost mythical light, others took a different approach, by focusing on more pragmatic aspects, like his entrepreneurial spirit. This is emphasized in press accounts from across the main ethnic groups (Romanians, Hungarians, Germans) (*Kronstädter Zeitung*, July 16, 1906; *Revaşul*, July 14, 1906). Reporters never tired of offering impressive numbers and statistics associated with the logistics of this giant traveling association, and Buffalo Bill's ability to create and successfully manage it was worthy of admiration. It was not only how quickly and efficiently all members were coordinated in setting up the tents and making the necessary preparations but also their punctuality—a particularly important observation, as pragmatism and entrepreneurship were core features of the representation of the group's essence. As previously observed by Boia (2009b), Buffalo Bill stood as living proof that bravery and pragma-

tism can make anything possible and his characteristics were extrapolated to an entire nation. Based on this representation, it can be concluded that the white Americans were described in a positive light by the press. They have been labeled with positive attributes regarding both their skill set (e.g., riding, shooting) and their traits (bravery, entrepreneurship, action orientation, pragmatism, organization), which elicited admiration and respect in the eye of the spectator and the reader.

Right in front of us we have Buffalo Bill, a true colonizer. We can admire his boundless bravery, boldness, cold-bloodedness, patience, steadfastness, and dexterity in all points of the production, which anyway he has already proved in the bloody battles against the Indians in the United States, from which he always emerged victorious. (*Revaşul*, July 14, 1906)

Besides all this, what can be more convincing than a personal account told by an “insider”? In an article that appeared in the Hungarian newspaper *Nagyvárad*, the reporter ran into a local actor from the Comedy Theater in the role of the presenter from the tent of curiosities at the Wild West Show. An interesting conversation ensued, in which the local described his motivation for moving to and staying in America as a mainly financial one, underlining that it is possible to make a good living there through honest work. This “insight” perpetuated the myth of the “Promised Land” and it must have had a stronger pull on the public, as the words were spoken by one of “their own” and contained some concrete information:

I went to America and left behind my acting dreams. It is not a shame to work hard and here at home nobody pays me 80 forints per week, how much I make now. Besides this, my future is made with Buffalo’s circus. In America there is a different life, you only need to work for it. (*Nagyvárad*, July 21, 1906)

Native Americans

Around this strange patch of the “new world” were strolling by the people of the “old world.” They were looking here and there, saying Ah and Oh. (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906)

Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show presented the opportunity for validating and consolidating imaginary projections of these "exotic" people that the public was familiar with only indirectly, as mediated mainly by the available literature at the time. People seemed eager to test the authenticity of these staged Others, which they did by visual comparison: "The Indians are still playing an important role, and for us, they were the most interesting; they are undoubtedly authentic if we compare them with the physiognomies of the illustrations of geography books" (*Kronstädter Zeitung*, July 16, 1906).

At this point, we can detect a vicious circle of self-fulfilling representations. The Native Americans from the show were displayed in such a way as to be easily recognized by the public and to validate their expectations. Furthermore, their role in the production was scripted by and in accordance with the perspective of Cody, a member of the other group. At the same time, the public, eager to confirm their "authenticity," might have read the visual cues in a self-validating manner. So, unsurprisingly, the eyes of the spectator first rested on the physical appearance of the Native Americans, who appeared covered with "colorful and dirty rags, almost identical for women and men" (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906), or "wearing warrior adornments and marks" (*Gross-Kokler Bote*, July 1, 1906). What is particularly interesting in the extract quoted below is that the "Indians" are not seen as particularly beautiful, in contrast with another group, different from the cowboys, the Circassians. This is an illustrative example of the dynamics of gradation in "nesting orientalism." Although the Circassians are inclined toward the negative labels associated with the "oriental," in this case they are the ones ascribed positive characteristics of beauty and elegance when compared to Native Americans, who were defined as not so easy on the eye but strong. Thus the complementary pairing of the metaphors and representations is meant to highlight these two points on the spectrum.

On small but fast horses were riding the Indians with brown, wide, and wrinkled faces. When they were laughing, their wide mouths stretched out to their ears and made visible two rows of white teeth. They were authentic Indians, like the ones met by Leatherstocking. None of them was beautiful, their arms were streaked by the weather, but [they had] strong bodies.

A very good impression was left by the slender bodies of the Circassians, who exuded elegance. They have a beautiful appearance, with strong features, and dark and pointy beards. (*Kronstädter Zeitung*, July 14, 1906)

While Native Americans apparently did not make such a positive impact with their appearance, that was not the case when it came to their skill set. There appears to be a consensus of admiration across the press expressed especially for their riding abilities, a characteristic for which they were renowned worldwide. Here we have another example of a comparison between two representations of staged Others. While the Native Americans and the European Americans were oscillating at opposite ends of the spectrum, when it came to their physical abilities the two converge. Both were deemed to be excellent riders and valued for this. “In front of our eyes a full display of the Indians’ unbeatable artistry in riding naked and without a saddle, seeming as if they were glued to the backs of lightning-fast horses” (*Telegraful Român*, July 17, 1906). “The American Indian is also a Rough Rider; in his own way of getting on and off the unsaddled horse he wins admiration from connoisseurs” (*Gazeta Bucovinei*, July 2, 1906).

Furthermore, when it came to their personality, Native American performers appeared to oscillate between extremes—“sometimes disappointed, at other times excessively thrilled” (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906). In parallel to this unpredictable and chaotic character, another character type was outlined—the silent, contemplative kind. True to the preexisting image of the Native Americans, they were seen as both free and wild, displaying great physical abilities but also spiritual. It is also interesting to note that both portraits were often present in the same article (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906). In this, the eye of the “Indian chief” is rather used in its metaphorical sense, as a window to the wild and free spirit of the people.

You were watching with admiration the divine eye of the Indian chief; he was looking back at you with a majestic distance and did not express an ounce of care. Not even when it was time for him to clean the dirty crusts from his face to apply fresh colors. (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906)

Moving on to their social structure, a German newspaper article perceived it as completely lacking any form of order (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906). This trait is of particular importance as it presents a twofold opposition: to the imaginary projection of the North American as an entrepreneur of civilization (as seen in the above section) and also to the self-definition of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a place of order. The indirect comparison served to further elevate one of the most admired traits of the European American group, that of pragmatism, entrepreneurship, and punctuality. So the subjects (the group by and for whom the narrative was written) position themselves on an axis by comparing themselves to the “clockwork” European Americans and the “chaotic” Native Americans somewhere in between, but tending more toward order.

The interior of the men’s tents seemed like a swarm in the storage closet filled with the junk of a traveling merchant. A continuous movement of people around thousands of things, either ordinary or exotic, little splendor and some shine, a lot of rags, no system, no order. (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906)

While some representations of “Indians” converge in the direction of “primitiveness,” they were also portrayed as spiritual, contemplative, and with a complex character, toward which both reporters and spectators express mixed feelings—mainly awe, sympathy, and curiosity²³ (they were frequently declared the favorites of the show²⁴), only with scattered hints of contempt. One such example is the reporter behind one of the most critical articles about the Wild West Show from a German newspaper, who described the Native “Indians” in a very critical and sarcastic tone (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906); but then again, he did so with other staged ethnic groups as well.²⁵ Above all, he was harshest on the production itself.

23 “An Indian was walking in the square, followed around by a braver child, to the delight of the foreigner” (*Kronstädter Zeitung*, July 14, 1906); “Indian chiefs, whose ancestors were known to children from books about Indians, offered them so many hours of joy” (*Gross-Kokler Bote*, July 1, 1906).

24 “The Indians still play an important role, and to us, they were the most interesting” (*Kronstädter Zeitung*, July 16, 1906).

25 Regarding Cossacks: “You were admiring the figure of a Cossack; he was picking his nose, in the most serene moment, and afterward ate the fruit of his labor . . . Ah O!” (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906).

Blurred Lines

The categorization of the Other can go both ways. As Bakić-Hayden (1995) observes regarding Yugoslavs, those living in areas that formerly belonged to the Habsburg monarchy saw themselves as superior to those living in areas previously ruled by the Ottoman Empire. But further divisions could also be observed within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as lands east of Hungary were perceived to be more “backward.” It is also worth mentioning the position adopted by the Wild West Show’s European tour manager, Charles Eldridge Griffin (2010). He saw Hungary (including areas that are now part of Romania) as a “backward agricultural land”—referencing the lower attendance rate at the show from cities other than Budapest (although according to local newspapers there was high attendance), claiming that people preferred to be out on the field at the time of the show. Furthermore, he drew attention to the high degree of illiteracy and how stores relied on illustrations for this reason. But most importantly, he touched on another essential aspect—ethnic diversity. Surprised at how many languages were spoken, Griffin commented, “We think we have a race problem in America, but it is more complicated and acute in Eastern Europe, and it is not a matter of color, either” (2010, 114).

If you do not seek artistry at Buffalo Bill, then you can freely admire the successes and the dimensions of his work. A Hungarian enterprise would not be capable of such a thing. For a Hungarian, this might seem like nothing much. But it is not so. This is a work only the Americans or British would be capable of. (*Nagyvárad*, July 21, 1906)

The aforementioned “project” of Banat and Transylvania was outlined with blurred lines and represented an ethnically diverse group of people. This was a period when national identity was gradually forming and emerging, during which process people relied on comparisons to other cultures and nations. Before examining nuances in representations of the staged Other and ethno-confessional group relations, it is crucial to mention that the majority of the articles that constituted the database for this study were entertainment-centered. These pieces presented the impressive logistics behind the Wild West Show and portrayed the event in such a way as to

attract more publicity and spectators. Here we can find only a few glimpses of the Other being seen as “civilized” or “savage” (*Nagyvárad*, July 21, 1906) and other such paired metaphors.²⁶ But it is in the few critical articles that we find more detailed accounts of the two groups that elevate the representation beyond this dichotomic approach. Furthermore, these pieces proved to hold some valuable reflections that offer timid insight into how a particular ethno-confessional group might relate to these “exotic” Others.

True to an orientalist schema, while both the cowboys and Native Americans were part of the same Wild West, they were categorized differently. As expected in this framework, the cowboys, coming from European countries, were seen as representatives of the “civilized world” on a civilizing mission in the wilderness of the Western frontier. Furthermore, they also served as a mirror for the “savageness” of Native Americans in this project. Thus, the representation of the two groups is strongly interdependent; it is on their dynamic that the project of the New World is based. In some articles, the two groups were condensed into a polarized metaphor pair: “The exotic curtain from the back of the arena moved and amid war cries, wild Indians and all sorts of wildlings emerged howling, but also the brave riders [appeared]” (*Nagyvárad*, July 21, 1906). Highlighting the “primitiveness” of this performed Other served as a means of reaffirming one’s own cultural superiority. But this was not exclusively the case. Interestingly, the representation continues beyond an orientalist dichotomy, venturing into gradations and perhaps, even more importantly, incorporating mixed characteristics for the “disadvantaged” group.

In her research about the attitude of people from Transylvania toward Native Americans from the nineteenth century until World War I, Boia (2007) outlined a number of tendencies that may be visible in the present, narrower context as well. Firstly, she noticed a fascination manifested by the locals toward the Native Americans’ strong personality, wisdom, and calm. Secondly, the more negative feelings were targeted at their perceived cruelty both toward Europeans and between tribes. But all digressions were reined in under the umbrella of compassion manifested toward a race perceived as on the verge of extinction.

²⁶ “[Buffalo Bill’s Show] offered us the most interesting scenes from the fights of Europeans with the wilderness of the West” (*Telegraful Român*, July 17, 1906).

I would like to contribute to these observations by bringing into focus a fresh series of aspects that were highlighted in the press reception of the Wild West Show. The first of these refers to the physical aspect of this “exotic” race, which was seen as a reflection of the Native Americans’ “wild” nature. This “wildness” was also addressed in its own right in the press discourse; however, this might have been to a significant degree owing to the dramatic nature of the show. The Native Americans’ lack of social organization is accentuated when compared to the image of European Americans as efficient entrepreneurs. Finally, I argue that the predominant attitude in the press discourse around Buffalo Bill’s “Indians” is not compassion but rather curiosity and intrigue.

Boia’s (2007) argument in favor of all-encompassing compassion is based on references in various media sources of the “imminent” disappearance of the race owing to factors such as conflicts with Europeans, epidemics, and intertribal conflict. But this was not present in the press narrative of the time related to the Wild West Show. Rather, it was an attitude of almost unbridled curiosity that pushed both reporters and the public to follow and observe the Native Americans even backstage and made them an object of fascination. This might be because the press covered the Native Americans as part of an entertainment show and did not offer a wider perspective beyond the stage lights.

Some were indeed acting in such a way as if they wanted to crack each other’s heads, but they became a laughing stock: heads were not cracked. The fact that they desire to be so authentic—and could not be—exposed them. When illusion made a step forward, such a vulgar effect was produced, that it brought on laughter . . . The rare achievement of these artists lacking culture has the taste of exotic champagne; this champagne is consumed, but on the ground of an old Germanic culture, it rather has a taste of wish-wash. (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906)

In this excerpt, we see a clear positioning of the German ethno-confessional group in indirect relation to the Other through the medium of the staged otherness itself. Here the Other is not named, and although it can be deduced from the context that the author is referring to the Native Americans, the piece might also be alluding to the performers or the

European Americans who were orchestrating the show. The reporter starts by acknowledging the exotic nature of the show and highlighting its value by comparing it to “exotic champagne.” This simile is accurate only if the object of analysis is considered in a void, but in the context of “an old Germanic culture” the performance loses its value and becomes only a “wish-wash.” This illustration incorporates in an exemplary way the gradations of “nesting orientalism” described by Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995). The Other is built up, only to pale in comparison with the group of reference; this serves as quite an efficient technique to magnify the effect. The exercise can be read as a retaliation of Eastern Europe against being branded as “backward” by the “progressive” West (Bakić-Hayden 1995) by taking the comparison to another level, that of culture and heritage. So, in this new paradigm, it is Eastern Europe, specifically the ethno-confessional group of Germans, which is self-proclaimed as culturally superior to the people of the West.²⁷

Turning to the Hungarian newspapers, there are a couple of noteworthy reflections that warrant attention. According to accounts from the press of the time (*Nagyvárad*, July 21, 1906), on the largest tent of the improvised settlement, the Hungarian flag flew alongside the American one. The article also states that the orchestra sang the Rákóczi March,²⁸ to the delight of the public. It does not explicitly mention which ethnic group the public belonged to. These details, which serve as highly significant symbols of Hungarian identity, are not mentioned in any of the German or Romanian newspapers that I have had access to.²⁹ On a similar note, regarding the reaction of the spectators, another Hungarian reporter relates overhearing the following conversation during a representation of the Rough Riders.

This hints at a series of differences among the ethno-confessional groups, revolving mainly around a sense of delimitation and national identity. It has

27 On the popular reception of Wild West shows in Germany between 1885 and 1910, see Ames 2008.

28 Also known as the Hungarian March (Hungarian *Rákóczi induló*), the Rákóczi March dates from the beginning of the nineteenth century and served as an unofficial state anthem for Hungary prior to the hymn (Hungarian *Himnusz*) written by Ferenc Kölcsey, which remains the official national anthem of Hungary today. An earlier version known as the Rákóczi Song (Hungarian *Rákóczi Nóta*) contained lyrics directed against the Habsburgs and the oppression of the Hungarians under their reign, calling the people to rise under the command of Francis Rákóczi II (a Hungarian nobleman who led the Hungarian uprising against the Habsburgs in 1703–11). See Nagy 2017; Várkonyi 2015.

29 Dągnosław Demski identifies a couple of other such discrepancies in the narrative of Polish and German newspapers published in Poznań regarding ethnic shows displayed in the zoological garden at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century (Demski 2020).

perhaps become clear by now that there are no similar accounts in Romanian newspapers. But this in itself may suggest a particular narrative. Referring to the liberation and unification of the Romanian people, the historian Nicolae Iorga (1906) noted that at the beginning of the twentieth century national aspirations were far from widespread. In the case of the other major ethno-confessional groups, faint suggestions regarding their national identity were occasionally made in the media, while the complete absence of this subject from the Romanian narrative might just be due to the fact that national identity had not yet been consolidated. But other factors cannot be excluded, such as the legislative actions set in motion during that period and a privilege-based stratification of society based on confessional considerations. While Orthodoxy was ostensibly tolerated, political power was reserved for those belonging to the confessions associated with the Hungarian and German ethnic groups (Roman Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, Unitarian), which in itself was a rather peculiar situation considering that in Central Europe the norm tended to be one state religion (Bărbulescu et al. 2014).

If we turn to data from the Austro-Hungarian census,³⁰ there are interesting connections between religious belief and the social dynamics of the population. The confessions most commonly associated with the Hungarian ethnicity were Reformed and Roman Catholic, of which the first suffered a slight decline, but the second experienced a significant increase in the aforementioned period. The religions associated with Romanian ethnicity, Orthodoxy and Greco-Catholicism declined or went through a modest increase, while Protestantism linked to Germans became less common. Scholars like Ioan Bolovan and Sorina Paula Bolovan (2010) have concluded that a considerable number of people belonging to the Orthodox or Greco-Catholic faiths converted.

Finally, although it would be interesting to follow a line of internal orientalism in which the stratification is inverted, focusing on intragroup rather than intergroup division and comparison, the present study does not touch on this aspect. Such a dichotomy continues to exist between the various regions of present-day Romania but is also characteristic of other

30 The religious makeup between 1850–1910: Orthodox (Romanians) 30.9% to 34.3%; Greco-Catholic (Romanians) 31.5% to 23.7%; Reformates (Hungarians) 14.4% to 13.2%; Roman-Catholic (Hungarians) 10.6% to 18.9%; Evangelist (Germans) 9.6% to 5%; Unitarian (Hungarians) 2.2% to 1.3%; Mosaic (Jews) 0.8% to 3.5%; other religions 0% to 0.1% (Bolovan and Bolovan 2010).

spaces, as noted by Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert Hayden (1992) concerning Yugoslavia. Observations from their case study can easily be transposed to the Banat and Transylvania regions. The segregation is based on a political, religious, and cultural line of argumentation. So, the territories that are favored are those that had a stronger Habsburg influence and are predominantly Catholic (Slovenia and Croatia from former Yugoslavia and Transylvania from our case study), to the detriment of those with a stronger Ottoman influence coupled with Muslim and Orthodoxy as the prevailing religions (the rest of Yugoslavia and Banat from our case study). As tempting as it is to extend this line of analysis, it would stray from the focus of the present study. Instead, future researchers will have to follow this pursuit.

The Final Curtain

Relying on a theoretical framework rooted in orientalism and, even more so, in “nesting orientalism,” I have analyzed how the staged Other in the context of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show’s European tour of 1906 was represented in the press of the time in Banat and Transylvania. Subsequently, I also considered how the local ethno-confessional mosaic might relate to these representations via the press apparatus.

To begin with, the tendency to essentialize by isolating features of a group is evident in both cases of North Americans and Native Americans—features that seem not only unchanging (Bakić-Hayden 1995) but also intrinsic to the group, especially in contrast to other groups (Appadurai 1988). Nevertheless, the Wild West project harmoniously enclosed different gradations, going beyond the dichotomy of the “old” and the “new,” of the “primitive” and the “civilized.” The representational pair became intertwined in the imaginary.

On occasion, this further served as a reference point for the (re)positioning of local ethno-confessional groups in the press discourse of the time. So, the people of Banat and Transylvania, branded as “backward,” generally repositioned themselves as more “civilized” than the “primitive Indians” but not quite as “progressive” as North Americans, to which a singular response ensues regarding the German ethno-confessional group, which further exceeds the latter groups as being more “cultured.” When it comes to delimitation and identification with regard to national identity, it is the Romanian

group that becomes somewhat of an outlier, as such a topic is absent from the press discourse. But this silence speaks to the still dormant sense of national identity that would, however, soon awaken and lead to the unification of territories to form Romania in 1918.

All in all, I do not treat performed otherness as a cornerstone in this process but as a backdrop against which some socio-psychological mechanics can be better observed. But what is truly elegantly highlighted in this context is the fluidity of gradations in the construction of representations and their interplay with one another.

Territorial changes and the language barrier will always constitute difficulties in the context of this study. Moreover, it is a challenge to pull together all the threads of such an ethnically and culturally multilayered topic as the intersection of the Wild West project with Banat and Transylvania. Furthermore, the censorship of the press is a ghostly companion that is difficult to grasp. Nevertheless, it is a road worthy of retracing from different angles as it made quite an imprint on the spirit of those times³¹ and continues to be a haunting presence with reverberations felt today.

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³¹ Queen Mary of Romania fondly reminisced over the hero of her childhood, Buffalo Bill (National Archives, Bucharest: Royal Family, Queen Mary, Personal, III-9/1926, 96–97).

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ONLINE CONTENT

- Map of 1906 Season of the Second European Tour. Buffalo Bill's Wild West Tour of France, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Belgium. Accessed February 15, 2019. <http://library.centerofthewest.org/cdm/ref/collection/BBOA/id/1719>.

CHAPTER
THIRTEEN

“Staged Otherness” in Saint Petersburg

István Sántha

My aim in writing this chapter is to give an outline of how “staged otherness” was performed in Saint Petersburg in the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries.¹ I focus on three different types of performances: freak shows, ethnic shows, and shamans’ public performances. I found that these forms of staging carried similar emotional, political, and economic connotations in Russia. In the Russian context it is useful to study the staging types together. With this approach it could be described as a social phenomenon that would be meaningful for Russia in general.

When using the term “staged otherness,” I refer to living humans exhibited in public. I have researched the scenarios of selected public performances, forms of contact between the performers and the audience, and visual representations of an imagined Other.

Besides freak shows and shamans’ public performances, I use the term “ethnic shows”² to refer to “exotic” staged Others. I interpret this term not only for ethnic shows in the classic form but also for such forms as fairs with ethnic elements, circuses with ethnic programs, and local popular-folk seasonal forms called *balagans* (see Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020; Czarnecka and Demski 2020; Leskinen in this volume) for showing “exotic” Others.

I present my material in the following order: (a) freak shows, (b) ethnic shows, (c) public shamanic performances. I do not want to create the impression that these phenomena developed in a chronological way. In reality all

1 Research was funded by National Science Center Grant no. UMO-2015/19/B/HS3/02143, within the project entitled “Staged Otherness: Human Oddities in Central Europe, 1850–1939.”

2 At first I worked with the term “human zoo” during the fieldwork phase of my project, so I use it in this article in this context. Later, however, because I found that this category is questionable among some scholars working on the topic (see e.g., Thode-Arora 2020; Sánchez-Gómez 2013; Czarnecka and Demski 2020) I decided to use the more neutral term “ethnic show.” The Saint Petersburg tradition of ethnic shows is related to the German entertainment industry that brought such shows to the city.

forms coexisted and often overlapped. Nevertheless, this structure reflects the order in which I encountered different forms of “staged otherness” during my research.

I began my project by looking for answers to several questions: Were there any ethnic or freak shows in Saint Petersburg and during the focus period? What can we find instead of them? How did the situation change after the October Revolution? How are ethnic and freak shows understood today by local experts?³ What can we learn from local experts regarding the political context of the topic? In my approach this is an important point, because my previous experiences as an anthropologist working with oral history show that knowledge of recent (social, political) connotations is very useful (or probably necessary) when the aim is to interpret historical materials—for example, to understand the accents or emphasis which are sometimes hidden or hardly interpretable in written sources.

I visited Saint Petersburg three times—in late January and early February 2018, in June 2018, and in June 2019. I went to the *Kunstkamera*, the Museum of the History of Religion, the National Library of Russia, the Russian Ethnographic Museum, Leningrad Zoological Park, the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Central State Archive for Literature and Arts of Saint Petersburg, and the Archive of the Hermitage and Museum at Ciniselli Circus (on Native Americans’ performances at Ciniselli circus in Warsaw, see Czarnecka in this volume). I also met and talked with local experts (archaeologists, biologists, anthropologists, ethnographers, historians, art historians).

The City of Saint Petersburg

My wife is from Saint Petersburg, so naturally she was my first source of information on the subject. When I asked her if she had heard about freak shows or other forms of “staged otherness” that existed in Saint Petersburg, she could not remember anything at all. The only thing that came to her mind, she said, which seemed to be very important, was a permanent exhibition of deformed bodies exhibited in the *Kunstkamera*, which Russian cit-

3 I would like to thank Jelena Popova and Jelena Denisenko from Leningrad Zoopark, and Anna Radzyun from the *Kunstkamera*.

izens felt themselves almost obligated to attend. This exhibition (and the museum) was first created in 1714 by Peter the Great (1672–1725), and it was and is one of the city’s main tourist attractions.

The city of Saint Petersburg, the capital of Russia from 1713 to 1727 and 1732 to 1918, was a state project from the beginning. Peter the Great, while visiting Western Europe in 1697–98, decided to make a modern Russian Empire and started developing a new capital and a new science for Russia. From the city’s earliest years, Saint Petersburg was a multiethnic place where representatives of various backgrounds (European and Asian) met (Tangad 2019). The creation of a new city was celebrated by the tsar, and numerous kings, princes, and diplomats sent gifts to commemorate this outstanding event (e.g. in 1714). Archives at the Leningrad Zoopark and the Hermitage contain records of the gifts, among which we can frequently find exotic animals, such as elephants, zebras, and leopards (Denisenko 2003, 14–36). These animals and their keepers⁴ were picturesque representatives of their kingdoms and countries, similar to ambassadors wearing colorful ethnic dress and accessories. The animals first were kept in the tsar’s garden. Part of *Letniy sad* (the Summer Garden) was operated as a type of “mini zoo,” at which several exotic and domestic animals were exhibited for the visiting aristocratic public.⁵ This multiethnic character was a significant feature of the city. Saint Petersburg was different from the rest of Russia, and this is meaningful also from the point of view of my approach to “staged otherness.” For the locals it was normal to see people with different ethnic backgrounds, and in this multicultural picture, “staged otherness” was not a monolithic project but a fusion with modernist and racial ideas.

After the opening of the Zoological Garden (*Zoologicheskyy sad*)⁶ in Saint Petersburg in 1865, the tsar’s animals were given to this place, getting special care and being fed separately and differentiated as the tsar’s property until

4 The accounts of the shows given by the animals’ keepers were the first reports about the behavior of the audience; for example, they mention throwing stones at exotic animals (Denisenko 2003, 12). It seems the keepers had a different attitude toward the animals and so they were shocked by the behavior of the audience. See also Demski 2020.

5 Thanks to Natalya Kareeva, one of the chief curators of the Summer Garden, for this information, June 19, 2019, Saint Petersburg.

6 *Zoologicheskyy sad* (Zoological Garden) was the official name of the institution. However, it was unofficially called the *Zoosad* (Zoogarden). *Zoologicheskyy sad* became officially Leningrad Zoopark in 1952 (Denisenko 2003, 230).

the October Revolution in 1917. Russian aristocrats were among the first sponsors of the zoological garden—for example, they bought exotic animals for this institution (Radziun and Chistov 2012; Radziun and Hartanovich 2016; Hartanovich and Radziun 2017).

Freak Shows in Saint Petersburg

I started my research at the *Kunstkamera*, where I met three experts: an anthropologist, an archaeologist, and a biologist curator of the exhibition. On the one hand, when I described my project they were happy, because they had an existing exhibition more or less in its original form from the beginning of the eighteenth century and with supporting materials in Russian and English on the topic. On the other hand, it was uncomfortable for the experts, because everybody, both visitors and guest researchers, came to the *Kunstkamera* almost exclusively to see and to investigate the freak-show cabinet and not to visit other departments of the institution. The freak-show cabinet was and still is the most frequently visited part of the museum.⁷ To exhibit and investigate people's bodies, both dead and alive, was the essence of the original aim of the *Kunstkamera* (Radziun and Chistov 2012, 3). This first museum of the Russian Empire and the freak exhibition are visited by most Russian citizens at least once, even today, because this exhibition is a living artifact of the distant history of the Russian state and its modern rebirth is associated with Peter the Great and his antics and strange interests (fig. 13.1).

It is an intriguing question what role was given to freaks in Russia. When the curator and other experts began to talk about the exhibition they told me an old story about the modernization of Russia. *Urody* can be translated as freaks, or monsters.⁸ The state had been preoccupied with an examination of monsters and research in this area since the beginning of the eighteenth century. Scientists who investigated freaks had a powerful position in Russia as they belonged to the upper class and intellectual elite. One of the main tasks of the newly (in 1724) established Imperial Academy of Sciences (now the Russian Academy of Sciences) was to collect (dead and alive) mon-

7 The freak exhibition in the *Kunstkamera* was frequently mentioned in the memoirs of foreign visitors to Saint Petersburg (Radziun and Chistov 2012, 4, 8, 75).

8 The Russian *urod* has a pejorative connotation. It includes not only a physical but also a mental insufficiency.



Figure 13.1. The freak cabinet in the *Kunstkamera*. Photo by István Sántha, 2018.

sters (Gruzdev 1914; Hartanovich and Radziun 2017, 40), which was continued until the end of 1920s (Radziun and Chistov 2012, 22). In 1718, Peter the Great even issued a decree that stated that every Russian citizen should report cases of not only dead but also alive monsters (Radziun and Chistov 2012, 10, 69; Hartanovich and Radziun 2017, 38; Gruzdev 1914, 3). Following in the footsteps of Francis Bacon (1561–1626), Peter the Great and the scholars of the Imperial Academy of Sciences—Kaspar Friedrich Wolff (1733–94) and others—were interested in monsters as a key to understanding and describing life and the laws of nature (Radziun and Chistov 2012, 7; Hartanovich and Radziun 2017, 37). In the scholars’ interpretation, everything was created by God; so monsters were also made by God and not by the devil (Radziun and Chistov 2012, 4, 39).⁹ Monsters were fighting to correct deformations and perhaps lacked adequate strength and time to succeed. By discovering the secrets of monsters, life could be described and understood, similarly to normal human bodies (Gruzdev 1914, 3).

9 The division into *jurod(ovie)* and *urody* comes from Russian folk culture and not from science. There are freaks (*jurod(ovie)*) made by God and there are other freaks (*urody*) made by the devil. For scientists all freaks come from God and they are all called *urody*.

In relation to the question of freaks, the initial interest of scholars was in each individual case to determine whether the freak person was ill, whether freakishness was the result of an illness, and whether it had been inherited from ancestors (Hartanovich and Radziun 2017, 41–42; Gruzdev 1914). In this way scholars tried to understand the root of freakishness, the influence of the natural, social conditions of the relatives of freak children. Making monsters was not an initial aim of God, which was to show something by example (Wolff, quoted in Hartanovich and Radziun 2017, 47). Monsters were not useless to scholars; studying them could add additional data. They were not just cases of unsuccessfulness but could be used to understand how the world works. Some scholars, among them Peter Zagorsky (1764–1846), were particularly interested in monsters (*urody*)—more than typical cases—and devoted their energy to discovering surprising and fascinating things from the study of monsters (Radziun and Chistov 2012, 66). As a result, science perceived monsters to be natural (physical) and not miraculous (metaphysical) (Hartanovich and Radziun 2017, 39), which could be interpreted as Russian scholars' (as opposed to the church's) approach to the freaks.

As already mentioned, Peter the Great was fascinated during his travels in the Netherlands and France by collections of organisms—animals and human bodies—made in the golden age of natural history. He bought one of the most famous collections (Frederik Ruysch's collection)¹⁰ and not only invited scholars to live and work in Russia but also invited unusual humans (for example a “giant from France,” Nicolas Bourjois, who got a job in Saint Petersburg as the tsar's footman). These collections also include extraordinary figures (the skeletons and organs of this “French giant” and of others), which are stored and exhibited in the “cabinet of monsters” in the *Kunstkamera*.¹¹ In the scheme of Peter the Great's modernization

10 It took some time to decide where to situate these collections, how to find proper cabinets, rooms, and a building for storage and exhibition. There was continuous renovation in every place that was originally built not specifically for this purpose; they were too small. Only the construction of the *Kunstkamera* finally solved this problem (personal communication with Natalya Kareeva, June 2019, Saint Petersburg).

11 In the *Kunstkamera* there are collections of ethnic specimens—of skulls, for example; but these collections are very strictly hidden from the public, even from scholars. Open discussion of these body parts (sometimes those of the enemies of the Russian colonial state, belonging to historic and ethnic personalities, such as to the Avarian Hadzhi Murat or to the Kazakh Keiki Batyr) could trigger a negotiation process between Russia and the post-Soviet states to return these body parts. Such public discussions are highly political actions and are very uncomfortable for the representatives of the museum.

project in Russia, the museum and this particular exhibition took on the role of cultivating cultured and educated Russian people—not only members of the aristocracy and medical students but later, especially after the October Revolution, working people (Radziun and Chistov 2012; Hartanovich and Radziun 2017). Education was not among the direct aims (Radziun and Chistov 2012, 17); rather, it was one of the results of the modernizing project.

Peter the Great collected not only dead bodies but also living monsters who lived in the *Kunstkamera*. Besides the "French giant," we know of a dwarf (Foma Ignatyeff) and a hermaphrodite (Yakov Vasilyeff).¹² Foma had two pincer-like fingers and toes. Peter the Great, when visiting the *Kunstkamera*, always shook Foma's hand. Yakov worked as a smith. These living freaks received a salary. They met visitors during exhibition hours and begged for small change (Radziun and Chistov 2012, 69–70). After their deaths, their bodies were opened, examined, and preserved for exhibition.

Once, in 1710, a dwarf's wedding was organized in the Summer Palace, where aristocrats were seated to ensure a good view of the dwarf's motion inside the circle. The dresses for dwarfs were borrowed by the *Kunstkamera* (personal communication with Anna Radziun in February 2018). The curator of the "monsters exhibition" in the *Kunstkamera* stated that monsters were not captured in drawings, supposedly because it was against the will of the Russian Orthodox church to immortalize them. Unexpectedly, I found some visual materials in the National Library of Russia (fig. 13.2).

One of the most famous female freaks of all time was Julia Pastrana (see Kopania 2019). A bearded lady called Julia (Tsenora Pastrana, no relation to Julia), whose husband was a bureaucrat, was born in Saint Petersburg. We have the handwritten text by medical-anthropological-ethnological experts comparing Julia and Tsenora and discussing who was authentic and who was fake (Gruzdev 1914). These accounts contain racist statements, self-irony, and self-criticism. There are references to experts from Germany (Leipzig and Munich), the United States, and England to introduce the Russian reader into the international context.

12. The fact that the case of a hermaphrodite was omitted from the English version of the description of the freak cabinet in *Kunstkamera*, and was only mentioned in the Russian version of it, shows that the sexual abnormality is a sensitive political question nowadays in Russia (Hartanovich and Radziun 2017, 40).

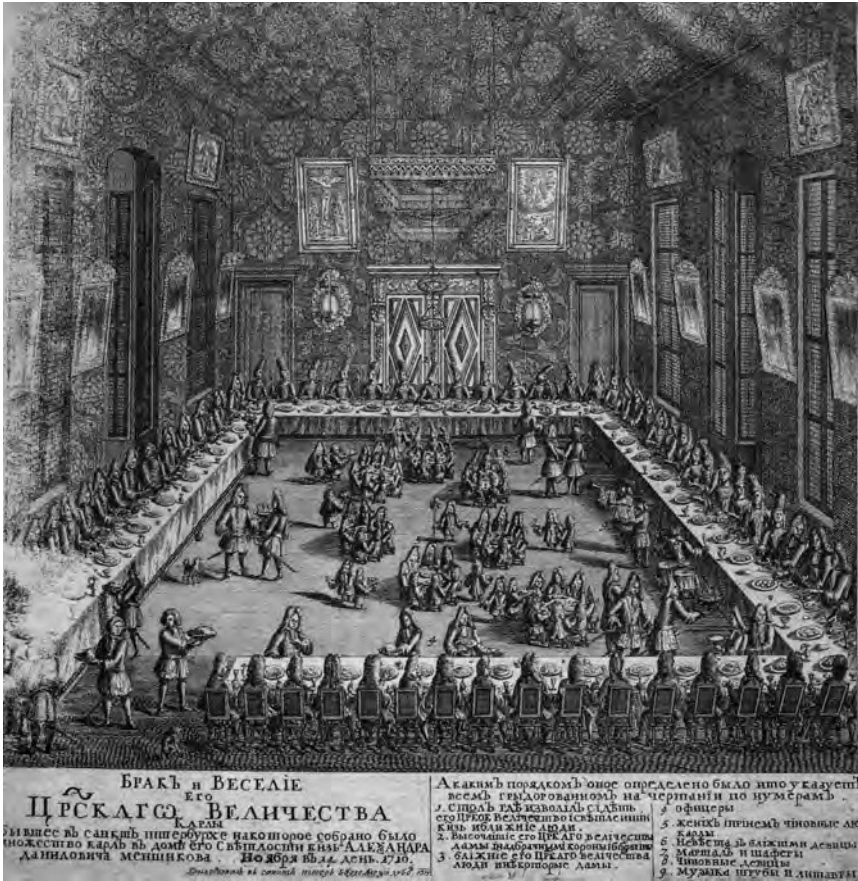


Figure 13.2. “Wedding of the dwarf Jakim Vol’kov, clown of Peter the Great, in the wooden palace of Alexander Menshikov, November 14, 1710.” Illustration by A. Zubkov, 1711. National Library, Saint Petersburg.

Freak shows, exhibited freaks, and performances with freaks were a regular feature of the sociocultural life in Saint Petersburg. As we have seen, the cabinet of monsters in the *Kunstkamera* played an especially important role (in giving city dwellers a sense of pride in being ordinary, and a feeling of loyalty toward the state). While the modes of showing freaks to the public were constantly changing, the cabinet of monsters in the *Kunstkamera* worked continuously (Radziun and Chistov 2012). The study of freaks was an important part of Russian modernization. Although after the death of Peter the Great this knowledge moved into the background and no freaks were invited

to live in the *Kunstkamera*, the study of freaks remained an important task for science. The collection of freaks grew steadily (according to published data on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and the years 1924–28; see Hartanovich and Radziun 2017, 44–47), and the results of studies on freaks were published in scientific monographs and journals from 1773 to 1973 (see Hartanovich and Radziun 2017, 47–49).

From the mid-nineteenth century, Saint Petersburg formed part of the international freak-show network, and famous freaks such as Julia Pastrana conducted their tours there. Freak shows, similar to Pastrana's, mostly were presented at bourgeois salons. However, freak elements were entertaining the wider public arena as well, as they appeared in the popular *balagan* culture (from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century). Besides the Zoo Garden, attending the Ciniselli circus (founded in 1877) was a common means of entertainment for various social classes. Freaks were hired as staff, and entertained visitors at the Zoo Garden by bringing sense of spectacular amusement. Freak shows created a recognizable genre of entertainment that was later appropriated by other strategies of exploiting staged otherness, for example, as part of anti-religious propaganda, when Siberian shamans were invited to perform their rituals before the public.

Since Peter the Great the process of modernization was characterized by the struggle between science and religion, which reached its highest intensity after the October Revolution. The study of freaks was the basis for the modernization of science. Scientists also played a significant role in framing freak shows, as scholars had the task of assessing the authenticity of freaks (and revealing scams when faked freaks were involved), or of distinguishing between freak and ethnic features (for example, to testify that exhibited Bushmen were not dwarfs). This expertise was often delivered as part of business cooperation with freak-show producers.

Finally, we should note that studies of freaks were mostly conducted under the control of the state. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, freakishness became part of a shared common knowledge about the world. Aristocratic, bourgeois, and popular culture's values and approaches to the freaks slowly merged, as was shown by a popular book on freaks, published in Russian in 1914 in Saint Petersburg, in which a wide audience could learn about the topic through reviews of international cases and scientific theories (Gruzdev 1914).

Ethnic Shows in Saint Petersburg

When I first tried to explain my “human zoo project” to staff of the archives, museums, and libraries, there were a lot of misunderstandings, because very often they did not know anything about “human zoos” or they used other related terms such as *etnicheskaja derevnja* (ethnic village) and *etnicheskaja jarmarka* (ethnic exhibition). I was sure that there was something I could find on the topic, because in Warsaw I had received information about Kalmyk (1883), Tatar, and Kyrgyz¹³ (1898) groups having been exhibited in Europe—e.g., in Berlin (Soboleva n.d., 1996), Poznań (Demski 2018a, 2018b, 2020), and Wrocław (Czarnecka 2018)—at the end of the nineteenth century. I tried to trace the above-mentioned groups in Almaty and Saint Petersburg but without any success, except that I found information in Saint Petersburg that the chief governor had collected Kazakh objects to exhibit at the world’s fair in Paris in 1900. Maybe the governor sent not only objects but also people with Kazakh origin to the world’s fair. However, these things seemed to have been forgotten in Russia.¹⁴ Finally, there is a new detail about Kalmyk, Tatar, and Kyrgyz (Kazakh) groups that appeared in Europe. The Berlin Committee for Supporting Ethnology (*Ethnologischen Hilfskomitee*) was supported by the banker Isidor Richter (from Bashkiria) from 1874 to 1876, who might have been the adviser and organizer of these tours (Soboleva n.d.).

During my stay in Saint Petersburg I discussed the topic with experts and I tried to formulate my ideas. This was not easy, not because of my lack of Russian-language competency but because it was unusual to speak of such topics in Russia. Additionally, the key term “human zoo” has (and, as I know now, had) no meaning in Russian. Once in the Russian Ethnographic Museum, when I asked permission to conduct research in their archives on “human zoos,” after explaining what I meant by this term, the deputy director informed me that its ethnographers had been “proper researchers” and no such shows would have ever happened there and that perhaps I should have inquired in the *Kunstkamera*. It appeared that there was an ethical objec-

13 i.e., Kazakh. Before the October Revolution the Kyrgyz ethnonym referred to today’s Kazakh people, while the Kara-Kyrgyz term referred to the Kyrgyz people.

14 Personal conversation with Natalya Kareeva, the great-granddaughter of Mihail Ionov (1846–1924), the chief governor of Semirech’je (Seven River District), June 2018, Saint Petersburg.



Figure 13.3. Zoological garden. Two sledges and Russian icebergs. Ostyaks, Zyryans. Moscow, 1899. National Library, Saint Petersburg, fn. 157470.

tion to the term “human zoo” among social scientists because they wanted to avoid the potential for racist interpretations.

My next attempt was to ask my colleagues: anthropologists, archaeologists, ethnologists, and others researchers in the *Kunstkamera*. Their first reactions were similar to my wife’s—that they had never heard of “human zoos” at all. My colleagues tried to help me but still I had no success.

They could only mention Samoyed people and their service transporting local people for fun by reindeer sledges on the frozen Neva from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century (see chapters by Leskinen and Savitsky in this volume). It is not clear to me whether these people were really Samoyeds or sometimes were Zyryans and Ostyaks, or even Tungus (Denisenko 2003, 42; see also Savitsky in this volume). Some sources (Denisenko 2003; the *Kunstkamera* experts) mentioned various ethnic groups, while other content referred to a wandering motif and described a romantic picture of Nordic people with sledges visiting the Russian capital (fig. 13.3).



Figure 13.4. Zoological garden infrastructure in Saint Petersburg. Archive of Leningrad Zoopark.

I realized that I needed a better term than “human zoo” that I could use for my research. One alternative was *etnicheskaja jarmarka*. *Jarmarka* means a kind of public event, somewhere between a market and an exhibition; but the word only came into use in the 1920s at the Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy in Moscow. The other possible term was *etnograficheskaja vystavka* (ethnographic exhibition), but I only recognized that at home while analyzing the literature acquired in Saint Petersburg. However, even today this term does not exist in Russia. There was another, more practical option used in the Zoopark and Luna Park—*etnograficheskaja derevnja*. However, this term is not used by social scientists.

As I have already mentioned, in this chapter I decided to use the term “ethnic show” to refer to all these types of shows and exhibitions. In the posters advertising ethnic shows, one cannot find any generic terms (only the place and the title of the shows were mentioned); however, in a booklet published in 1890 summarizing the last twenty-five years of activities in the zoological garden, the term *etnicheskaja vystavka* was the phrase used for ethnic shows in Saint Petersburg (fig. 13.4).

When I went to the library of the Zoopark it was clear that my suspicion had been right. Several ethnic shows were organized in the zoological

garden between 1879 and 1889 (cf. Leskinen in this volume). Even if ethnic shows had never been the central focus at the zoological garden, they were part of the history of the institution. Nobody was a specialist on this topic, but there was a “specialist who knew everything about the Zoopark in detail.” Jelena Denisenko, a biologist, author of a book about the history of the Leningrad zoological garden, could also identify where one could find more details about the topic. In Russia, ethnic shows were not a part of social science but of natural science.

In the zoological garden, ethnic shows were among the most popular entertainment events (Denisenko 2003, 42). On weekends as many as 40,000 people would come to see African or Asian “exotic” peoples and their animals and objects, to listen to their songs, and to watch religious rituals (unfortunately, there is no information about public shamanic performances within ethnic shows in the nineteenth century) or military actions. The visitors, in front of the gate of the zoological garden, first were welcomed by a “Chinese giant,” or *Velikan* as he was called in Russian (Denisenko 2003, 65). Among the visitors were famous writers and poets (Denisenko 2003, 42; Novikova 2013) such as Fedor Dostoevsky, Anton Chekhov, and Boris Pasternak, who mentioned the zoological garden in their memoirs (Leskinen 2018). The owners of the zoological garden increased the price of tickets on some weekdays, because their aim was to segregate the social classes (Bekkin and Tagirdzhanova 2016; cf. Baraniecka-Olszewska 2020; Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2020; Czarnecka 2020). On the expensive weekdays, representatives of a relatively higher class came to the zoological garden (e.g., Germans and other foreigners), while on the weekend members of the lower class visited. So various layers of Others were consciously formed through the pricing of tickets for different social classes.

We cannot overestimate the role of the foreign background of the zoological garden’s owners. The first owner was Sofia Ter-Regen (Gebhardt), a Dutch woman who was married to Julius Gebhardt, a German, who then died. The woman’s second husband (married in 1873), Ernest Rost, was a young man who worked as a waiter at the zoological garden restaurant and also had a German background (Denisenko 2003, 50–59). Probably his German origin was the reason that he had a connection with Carl Hagenbeck (see Thode-Arora in this volume). Rost bought animals from Hagenbeck at first, and later he hired ethnic groups. The zoological garden was patronaged by members of the local German community. Not only the owners’

but also the workers' ethnic background had a significant role in the way the zoological garden operated. Tatars lived in the neighborhood of the institution (Bekkin and Tagirdzhanova 2016). They worked as waiters or cleaners there (Denisenko 2003). Interestingly, in contrast to Western countries (even to Poland; see Demski 2020), Tatars were not shown as "exotic" Others in Russia. They were a part of the local ethnic landscape.

After the death of his wife, Rost experienced many difficulties. Firstly, the city council did not reiterate its initial twenty-year contract, according to which the zoological garden had been exempt from paying for the land it rented. Rost also did not get a license to sell beer in the restaurant. So the zoological garden had to make more profit while Rost's income became more restricted. Rost finally left Saint Petersburg for Germany in 1897. The new directors of the zoological garden maintained a relationship with Hagenbecks even after the October Revolution, until 1930, buying animals from and selling animals to them (Scherbakova n.d.; Soboleva n.d., 1996, 2007).

As far as I was able to determine, at least seven "exotic" groups performed in the zoological garden in Saint Petersburg from 1879 to the 1910s: Zulus (Bantu) in 1879; Nubians in 1880; Zulu Kaffirs in 1881; Bushmen (*karliki*) in 1886; Sinhalese in 1889 (Zefeld 1890); Somalis/Ethiopians (Bekkin and Tagirdzhanova 2016; on the Somalis performing with multiple identities, see Warsame in this volume). It is worth adding that ethnic shows in Saint Petersburg were also held outside the zoological garden (see Leskinen in this volume).

One of the tasks of scientific experts of ethnic shows was to investigate the question of authenticity (cf. Kontler 2020). The investigation of authenticity could be interpreted as an attempt to check the possibility of cheating. An ethnic show could be deemed "authentic" if the participants were not collected from different regions but lived together in their authentic homeland. The investigation of authenticity could also be interpreted as a dilemma of experts (anthropologists and ethnologists) in making a distinction between freaks and ethnic groups.¹⁵ For example, the organizers of ethnic shows featuring the Bushmen (*karliki*) in 1886 argued that Kalahari people were small not because they were individual dwarfs collected in a group

15 On the dilemma of authenticity in Arkady Elkind's anthropological expertise at Dahomey Amazon shows in Moscow, look at Mogilner's text, quoted in Kozincev 2009; see also Leskinen in this volume.

but because members of their ethnic group were typically smaller than other people (Zefeld 1890). It seems that sometimes it was important for experts to make a distinction between freak shows and ethnic shows.¹⁶

In the Zoopark I had heard about Luna Park (opened in 1912), another venue for ethnic shows. When the zoological garden’s activities began to move toward a theatrical character after 1885 and when the free ground rent was no longer available for the owner of the Zoopark, Luna Park continued the performance-based shows. It was harder to find a mention of Luna Park in archives because no host institution exists today. The owner of Luna Park, Jalyshev Habibulla Hasamovich (1847–1917), was of Tatar origin (Bekkin and Tagirdzhanova 2016, 383–84; see also Antonov 2014). I visited the National Library and met a librarian, who showed me a book written by her son, the expert on the social history of the Tatar community in Saint Petersburg. This book (Bekkin and Tagirdzhanova 2016) contains brief descriptions of ethnic shows in Luna Park and mentions social controversies related to the shows. For example, a local journalist joked that Somali people’s skin was so dark it was as if a white man’s body were covered with *gutalin* (blacking/shoe polish). In another case it was mentioned that Ethiopians were very popular because of their beautiful faces and bodies; however, it was not ethical for the local people to exhibit them in Saint Petersburg, because they, the Ethiopians, had already been baptized and they were Christians (Bekkin and Tagirdzhanova 2016). In different corners of Luna Park, workshops were conducted by carvers, bakers, gunsmiths, shoemakers, and so forth. Young black people played interesting games with dancing and spear-throwing. Somali people in loin-cloths were attractive for Petersburgers, who liked to have their picture taken together. Somali people led a “natural” lifestyle and they gave birth to children while in Saint Petersburg.¹⁷ A Somali child was given the name Lunapark at birth (Antonov 2014) (figs. 13.5 and 13.6).¹⁸

16 Nevertheless, this argument that hunter-gatherer peoples (among them the Bushmen of the Kalahari) are different (e.g., in their egalitarian way of organizing everyday life) from other non-hunter-gatherer peoples (e.g., animal breeders) is valid among researchers of hunter-gatherer societies even today (Barnard 2007).

17 One member of a Samoan show gave birth to a son she named Peter after show happened in Saint Petersburg (Thode-Arora 2020).

18 We can find a similar case in Gdańsk of the Suaheli caravan staging in 1893. The child born there was given the name Danzig, the German name of the city (Demski 2019). On the Lunapark in general, see http://panevin.ru/calendar/otkrit_uveselitelny_sad_arkadiya.html.



Figure 13.5. Somali village, Luna Park, Saint Petersburg. Postcard, 1904–12. National Library, Saint Petersburg, fn. E OT63/L452, Em23152.

I found from my research on the zoological garden, the *Kunstkamera*, and Luna Park that the Hagenbecks and their model of exhibiting “exotic” Others played an important role in Saint Petersburg. However, there were also others involved in the ethnic-show business in Russia. While the

Hagenbecks worked through the zoo business, others, such as Robert A. Cunningham, used other spaces. Cunningham operated in Helsinki, Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and Odessa. In Saint Petersburg he exhibited non-European people in Arkadija (cf. Leskinen in this volume) (figs. 13.7 and 13.8).

Arkadija was a well-known place in the periphery of the city. It existed between the 1880s and the 1920s and was the continuation of a pre-



Figure 13.6. Somali village, Luna Park, Saint Petersburg. Postcard, 1904–12. National Library, Saint Petersburg, fn. E OT63/L452, Em23156.

“Staged Otherness” in Saint Petersburg

Figure 13.7. Zoological garden, Saint Petersburg. National Library, Saint Petersburg, fn. 10569.

vious entertainment venue (the Izler Garden). In Arkadija, various entertainments were on offer, such as theater, ballet, operetta, comedy, drama, chanson, fireworks, air balloons, concerts of military orchestras, the circus, a dairy farm, and so forth (Antonov 2014). In Arkadija, besides the Tasmanian cannibal show in 1886 (Poignant 2004, 181–85), in 1884 “Indians” from North America performed tableaux of military actions, such as “to be enslaved” or “our hero-winners” (Antonov 2014; see also Czarnecka in this volume).



Figure 13.8. “Twenty-five beauties from another country of the world: Samoa Island,” Saint Petersburg, 1897. National Library, Saint Petersburg, fn. 10557. The same poster was also used in Germany for the 1895–97 show at the Frankfurt zoo.

During my research in Saint Petersburg I was also interested in the relationship between local ethnographic museums and the zoological garden (and between these museums and the Hagenbecks). Not only directors of the zoological garden but also the directors of local museums and scientific institutions, including the *Kunstkamera*, had a long and detailed correspondence in the early twentieth century (before and after the October Revolution) with the Hagenbecks (Soboleva n.d., 2007; see also Thode-Arora 2020). Both the Russian and German sides were involved in the trade in collections, including ethnic objects, between colonial peripheries and European museums and collectors (see Mogilner 2013). The owners of the zoological garden and other venues liked to show exotic animals in the background of ethnic exhibitions (Soboleva n.d., 2007). Furthermore, during the visits of ethnic groups, objects (swords, guns, drums, flutes, clothing, etc.) were sometimes borrowed from local museums (Poignant 2004, 183–84) or were given to these museums when the ethnic groups left. Thus there was not only a relationship between the local ethnographic museums and the zoological garden (the place where ethnic shows were staged), but also a direct link between these museums and the Hagenbecks. And we can also add to this finding that the ethnic shows had the important role of drawing public attention to the exotic animals and ethnic objects (Soboleva n.d., 2007).

Living Shamans in Public Performances

It is important to stress that there were no freak shows and ethnic shows in the USSR generally and in Leningrad (previously Saint Petersburg) particularly, at least as they used to happen before the Soviet era. The new regime sought to identify itself through values and social trends opposed to those of the previous tsarist regime. The only exception from this point of view was probably *Vystavka dostizhenij narodnogo hozjajstva* (the VDNH exhibition), where the peoples of the Soviet Union were staged for weeks or even a month demonstrating their own cultures.¹⁹

The idea of shamans as exhibited Others has been carried forward from my previous field research among the Buryat and Evenki peoples. There are relationships among freaks and shamans and ethnic shows. “Freak” refers to

¹⁹ See <https://vdnh.ru/about/history>.

someone with a body deformation. During my fieldwork, people with shaman ancestors showed their hands with six fingers or their legs with six toes, similar to Foma in the *Kunstkamera* who had two toes and two fingers, as a sign of potentially being a shaman. It is intriguing to picture a shaman simultaneously as an "exotic" and romantic person, as a representative of an ethnic group, and from a (remote) locality or as a performer of a (magic) skill participating in public lectures as a type of one-man ethnic show.

Freak and ethnic shows were sometimes paired. We can recognize a time-related pattern too, starting with an increasing number of freak shows between the beginning of the eighteenth and the end of the nineteenth century, followed by an increasing frequency of ethnic shows in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, and finally followed by shamans being staged publicly in the beginning of the twentieth century and also after the October Revolution.

The common link between public shamanic performances and ethnic and freak shows is the double-bind situation, in the sense of Gregory Bateson (1972; see also Safonova and Sántha 2013, 12–13).²⁰ These shows were simultaneously modern and traditional, exotic and romantic, and racist. The new perspective here is the role of state ideology. In Russia, the "freak project" was originally a modernizing state project initiated by the tsar. Later, freak shows and ethnic shows gradually became private business projects. At shamanic performances, publicity meant again the involvement of state institutions (universities and museums). During shamanic performances the aim was to resolve the double-bind situation through finding balance between racialization and modernization. While in universities it was common to present a live performance, in museums these were exceptional cases (e.g., at opening sessions of the exhibitions). After the October Revolution, in these institutions regarding "staged otherness," one can recognize a shift from expertise offered by professionals (anthropologists, ethnologists, biologists, etc.) toward state ideology (propaganda of political ideas such as communism) offered by bureaucrats (directors, teachers, party workers). Even though this shift was not fully and directly initiated and controlled by the state, we can observe a self-controlled process embodied by professionals, specialists, and experts (Hirsch 2005).

20 The classic example of the double bind can be found in the interaction between a parent and a child, described by Bateson (1972, 236). More generally, Bateson explains that "various sorts of 'double binds' are generated when A and B perceive the premises of the relationship in different terms" (1972, 323–24).

My aim is to elaborate on this issue by focusing on exhibited shamans. My first example of a shaman being exhibited in 1922 in Irkutsk is the western Buryat shaman Mikhail Stepanov, who participated in a public lecture organized by the ethnographer Bernard Petri (1884–1937), the son of Eduard Petri (1854–99, the first professor of anthropology and ethnography in Saint Petersburg [Mogilner 2013]). The lecture was given by Bernard Petri, who first worked in the *Kunstkamera* as the curator of the Australian department. Later he conducted research among the western Buryats and was interested in their practice of shamanism. He met Stepanov in the field. In 1922 Bernard Petri invited Stepanov to participate in the public lecture in Irkutsk University, where as a professor Petri had attempted to demonstrate shamans as the last representatives of a disappearing culture and shamanism as an alternative healing method similar to psychology. Petri received sharp criticism as a public figure because instead of fighting against a religious practice, according to his critics, he propagandized shamanism and promoted it. It was also a question for the audience whether a researcher of shamans should believe in shamanism. In his response Petri mentioned that shamans were the key persons to understand the miraculous. It was widely reported but also unconfirmed that during these lectures ill people were healed by the shaman (Petri 1922).

When I went to Saint Petersburg I asked the researchers in the *Kunstkamera*, the Russian Ethnographic Museum, and the Museum of the History of Religion about shamans exhibited as living persons. The story of the Altai shaman Mampij was quite similar to the shaman Mikhail Stepanov's case. In 1909 Mampij was invited to take part in a public lecture at the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography at the University of Tomsk by the great folklorist-traveler Grigory Potanin (1835–1920) and the ethnographer Alexander Adrianov (1854–1920). Mampij was shown as a representative of an endangered religion (shamanism). The scholars organized a small workshop, at which Adrianov gave an introduction about shamanic mythology and rituals, equipment, and social role (*Sibirskaja Zhizn'* [Siberian Life] 1909; Stepanoff 2009, 4; Zhiljakova 2016), and afterward Mampij conducted a ritual. The audience was asked not to clap during or after the ritual. Mampij, as an Altai shaman, was a well-known figure who had become hugely popular among the local people in Tomsk. He was invited to become familiar with the “magic of civilization” (modern technology)—that is, the circus, mov-



Figure 13.9. Opening of the Museum of the History of Religions: Vladimir Germanovich Bogoraz, Lidija Eduardovna Karunovskaja, and others, Leningrad, 1932. Kunstkamera, fn. MAEI 1371–8.

ies, concerts, typography, telephones, electricity, chemical experiments, and so forth. His activities and popularity among the people in Tomsk, including bureaucrats, made the people sympathetic toward him and other shamans. He was accepted, the audience felt responsible for him and for (Altai) shamanism as part of the local (Siberian) culture (and identity), and so they did not do anything against it (*Sibirskaja Zhizn'* 1909; Stepanoff 2009, 3; Zhiljakova 2016).²¹

Another shaman also lived in Altai, Merej Kondrati Tanashev (1886–1937). A photo was shown to me of Tanashev wearing shamanic dress and with tools, standing among the researchers during the opening of the Museum of the History of Religion in 1932 at the building of the former main Orthodox church in Saint Petersburg, the Kazan Cathedral.

So the phenomenon of exhibiting shamans during public lectures was common practice and not exclusive to the post-revolutionary period, as I had expected; it also occurred, even if infrequently, at the beginning of the twentieth century (fig. 13.9).

²¹ Even though these two examples are not directly related to Saint Petersburg, I think these cases provide important details and a chance to understand the phenomenon and to interpret it in a broader Russian context.

The story of the Museum of the History of Religion is quite similar to that of the Department of Ethnography at the Russian Museum (later Russian Ethnographic Museum), studied by Francine Hirsch. All the challenges and maneuvers are quite similar, except perhaps for the fact that the antireligious exhibition was used to establish a new institution—the Museum of the History of Religion. Here I should emphasize that the museums' task was to educate visitors, which means the masses after the October Revolution and the members of the aristocracy (and bourgeoisie) before it. During the exhibition (as also at the monsters' cabinet in the *Kunstkamera* and the antireligious exhibition in the Hermitage and the Kazan Cathedral), visitors could consider themselves lucky not to be examples of backwardness (or freaks) but “good” (Soviet) citizens.²² Shamans were “strange Others” from a distant land (at that time almost exclusively from the Siberian periphery). Showing shamanism was an antireligious education. The aim was, through the homogenization of culture, to make sense of “proper” Soviet citizens.

The initiative to classify religions can be found from the mid-1920s in works by Lev Sternberg (1861–1927). In 1928 the researchers of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in Leningrad began to organize an exhibition about religions, which they classified according to an evolutionary line. In 1930 this was organized in the Hermitage. It was a kind of avant-garde experimental exhibition with visual and sound effects (Shahnovich and Chumakova 2014, 25). This exhibition was the basis from which the Museum of the History of Religion was organized. The permanent institution was opened in 1932.²³

We must not forget that the creators of the Museum of the History of Religion, were both revolutionaries and anthropologists. Most of them had gained their fieldwork experience when they were sentenced to a ten- to twelve-year exile to the Russian Far East by the tsarist regime for revolutionary activity. They were autodidacts, not professional anthropologists; they gradually became anthropologists in the field, without having had previous specialized university training, and became experts concerning particular indigenous peoples. Sternberg was an expert on the Nivh/Gilyak people, while Valdemar (Vladimir Tan-) Bogoraz (1865–1936) was an expert on the

22 For a comparison with the American context, see Haraway 1992.

23 Along with the popularity of zoological gardens, with ethnic and freak shows and then the exhibition of shamans we can observe the development of anthropology.

Chukchee. Sternberg had many indigenous students, among them shamans. After Sternberg's death in 1927, Bogoraz continued to oversee the antireligious exhibition.

The organization of the antireligious exhibition in 1928–32 was problematic and a highly structured project. The leaders (among them Bogoraz) requested that the museum loaned the most valuable and expensive objects from other institutions (Shahnovich and Chumakova 2014, 100). These objects have never been returned to their home institutions and they became the basic collection at the opening of the new institution—the Museum of the History of Religion.

The exhibition was guided by students from ethnographic departments (Shahnovich and Chumakova 2014). This was a professional education and socialization for the students. At the same time the exhibition had an ideological function to help the audience feel themselves to be "proper loyal citizens"—that is, "good communists." This attitude is shown by the remarks of visitors in the comment book provided for the audience.

In the ideology of this exhibition, shamanism, like other religions, had its own place in the evolutionary linear scale of Marxist development. Shamanism was recognized as a belief of some Siberian peoples, shown in the context of other beliefs and religions that existed in the Soviet Union (Shahnovich and Chumakova 2014, 39). During the exhibition, to make sense of the social role of shamanism was problematic because the task of the exhibition was to show its "harmfulness," and not its exoticism, which expectation was not always fulfilled in practice (Shahnovich and Chumakova 2014, 34). A shamanic ritual, for example, was represented as a relic of the past. The original idea in establishing an antireligious institute was to make a typology of religions. The method of the exhibition was, in accordance with Marxist-Leninist evolutionary theory, a unilinear scale, wherein such terms as *magic*, *animism*, and *totemism* were followed by *shamanism*. These were among the key topics of the antireligious exhibition. The exhibition was a kind of test project for a future institute.

Shamans were not the main religious enemies of the communist regime, and shamanism was interpreted in a quite complex context by the organizers of the antireligious exhibition. The connection with freaks is intriguing here. Shamans had a social role, which needed to be hidden by the communists. They were individuals and they had a school for socialization and special-

ization. The words shamans and freaks (*urod, jurodivyj*) were readily interchangeable in the same ideological context, without losing their propagandistic meaning. “Here [in Russia/Soviet Union] is *jurodstvo* [the institution of *jurodovie* (freaks)]. *Jurodstvo* is more ancient than shamanism . . . *Jurodovie* were not only used by counter-revolutionary elements, but they were also themselves counter-revolutionary elements” (Shahnovich and Chumakova 2014, 127).

The shaman Merej Kondrati Tanashev was a famous, popular, and ambiguous figure of his time. He rapidly changed his religious affiliation: he was born a shamanist, was later baptized, then became a Buddhist, a black shaman, and finally a white burkhanist (*jarlik*). In the late 1920s, Tanashev met Andrey Danilin (1896–1942) and later Lidija Karunovskaja (1893–1975).²⁴ Both ethnographers were from Saint Petersburg and their archives are now in the Kunstkamera. Karunovskaja’s contains diaries; Danilin’s contains translations of field materials (folklore and religious texts) from Altai. Danilin had a detailed correspondence with Tanashev. Tanashev was not only an Altai shaman but also an Altai ethnographer who visited regions far away from Altai. During his travels, Tanashev collected folklore and religious texts for Danilin. Probably Danilin introduced him to Bogoraz.²⁵ There are at least two photographs in Danilin’s manuscript collection in the Kunstkamera about the shamanic ritual performed by Tanashev for Grigory Kozincev (1905–73) during the shooting of *Odna* (*Alone*, 1931) in Saint Petersburg.

Tanashev first visited Saint Petersburg immediately after the October Revolution (Chadaeva 2018). Then he played the role of shaman in *Odna*, the famous film by Leonid Trauberg (1902–90) and Kozincev. It was an experimental, avant-garde, pioneering Soviet movie, for which the music was written by Dmitry Shostakovich (1906–75). Most of the movie was shot in 1930 in Altai under harsh circumstances. Kozincev was not satisfied with the part about the shamanic performance, because the sequence shot in Altai did not have enough satisfactory visual effects. He decided to remake this part with sound, which was possibly recorded separately in Leningrad. Tanashev was invited to Leningrad by Kozincev to perform the role of a shaman in around

²⁴ Tanashev met Danilin in 1928 and Karunovskaja the following year.

²⁵ Danilin and Karunovskaja lived in the house of the Tanashev family during their expedition in 1929 (Chadaeva 2018).



Figure 13.10. Shamanic ritual performed by Kondrati (Merej) Tanashev during the shooting of *Odna (Alone)*, Leningrad, 1931. Central State Archive for Literature and Arts of Saint Petersburg.

1931. Thus, the subject of the first Soviet sound movie (in part) was shamanic ritual with the participation of Tanashev (fig. 13.10).

Kozincev remembered Tanashev in his diary as a person who had epilepsy. Tanashev used his illness as a tool to attract an audience. Kozincev also mentioned that Tanashev had a very serious problem with alcohol consumption. He was a great performer, who could play with sound, visual, and other effects. He had a good sense of rhythm. He had a shamanic drum with a small wooden anthropomorphic sculpture of the god Ülgen inside it. He had a shamanic dress with ribbons in the hem, which fanned the fire when he spun around. He needed to manage the rhythm of the ritual in order to avoid an epileptic seizure getting out of control. Foam came out of his mouth while he performed. Kozincev could not decide whether this was sincere behavior or imitation. Despite his initial skeptical view, after witnessing the shamanic performance, Kozincev decided to make it an integral part of his movie (Kozincev 1984, 224–25).

Kozincev predicted that after returning home to Altai from Leningrad, Tanashev would become an alcoholic and would give up the practice of shamanic rituals. In his diary Kozincev did not paint a romantic picture of the Altai people, the shamans, or Tanashev. He was rather skeptical about indigenous lifestyle and customs (Kozincev 1984, 225). However, he sometimes also changed his position, as when he mentioned the unexpected effect the shamanic ritual had on him. Even so, his position remained that of an outsider. In his diary there is no intention to see the world from a different angle, to interpret it in the frames of different, indigenous values of life. During the shooting of *Odna*, Kozincev was ambivalent. This position was similar to that of a man coming from the cultural capital of Russia to the Siberian periphery and was mixed with the (old) Russian colonial approach to local indigenous people (e.g., when he was not interested in gaining a deep understanding of why indigenous people drink so much alcohol in the process of giving up their nomadic lifestyle).

In his paper about kulaks and shamans, Charles Stepanoff (2009) analyzed the role of shamans in early Soviet movies. He recognized an interesting link between the enemies of the Soviet power, kulaks, and shamans. There is a native concept (and terms) for charismatic people (including *noyons/bais* [wealthy people] and *böös/kams* [shamans]) among several Siberian indigenous peoples—for example, among the western Buryats and presumably also among Altayans. This link was recognized also by the early communist anti-kulak and anti-shaman movements, when shamans were prosecuted for being kulak. This was also shown in *Odna*, when the roles of kulak and shaman were performed and interpreted in one political (anti-Soviet) context.

There were many memoirs written about Tanashev by anthropologists, such as Karunovskaja, Leonid Potapov, and Danilin (all now in the *Kunstkamera* archive), and Vera Djakonova (1998), however, only Tanashev's great-great-granddaughter²⁶ Ekemel' Chadaeva (2018) recorded the fact that he was executed during the Stalin repression in 1937 as an enemy of the state, similarly to other indigenous intellectuals and those who researched indigenous cultures, among them the anthropologist Bernard Petri.

26 The document concerning this was found by Dmitry Arzjutov, a Saint Petersburg-based anthropologist and Altay researcher during his work in the archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg (Chadaeva 2018).

Figure 13.11. Burkhanizm's adept hands over shamanistic objects to the Academy of Sciences expedition, Altai, late 1920s. *Kunstkamera*, fn. MAE No. 4126–100.

Besides shamans and anthropologists, filmmakers, too, could be in a strange, double-bind situation. Once the son of the great Kozincev, Alexander Kozincev, a physical anthropologist working at the *Kunstkamera*, mentioned half-jokingly to me that not Tanashev the shaman but his father, the movie director, was on stage and being shown to the public, although this was never acknowledged by Grigory Kozincev (fig. 13.11).



Conclusion

All three types of human shows (freak, ethnic, and shaman) in Saint Petersburg were connected to Russian or Soviet science during the relevant periods. Investigating freaks was the task of modern Russian science from its starting point—the beginning of the eighteenth century. Anthropology as a discipline can be used as a lens through which to study Russian modernization at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. At the end of the nineteenth century we can see a strong relationship between research institutions and ethnic shows. Experts on ethnic groups, including anthropologists, could be found among the advisers to these shows. Shamans staged publicly always worked together with anthropologists and ethnologists. One of the aims of these performances was to declare that shamanic knowledge and practice were similar to that of medical doctors and psychologists. This strong relationship between “staged otherness” and science can be traced as a main topic through this chapter.

From the beginning of the eighteenth century, science was an important element of the modernization project in Russia. In the nineteenth cen-

ture in Saint Petersburg a school of anthropology developed. It was a part of the modern, international European scientific network, because its professors were educated abroad in Germany (Eduard Petri) and in France (Fedor Volkov/Vovk) at the top universities (Mogilner 2013). The theories and methods used in Russia originated in the West. This feature could be interpreted as a sign of modernity.

The Saint Petersburg elite was influenced by European trends. For example, members of the elite used “race” as a scientific and public explanatory category in their language (Melnikova 2009, 447). Simultaneously anthropology as a modern science exercised an influence, through its language, on politics before the October Revolution (Mogilner 2013, 98).

After presenting materials about three forms of “staged otherness” in Saint Petersburg, I want to emphasize that this topic has never been a focus of systematic research before. There is no tradition of studying ethnic shows and freak shows in Russia. The lack of information is significant in Russian social sciences. Freak and ethnic shows are still problematic research topics in Russia because of the suspicion of racism. Social researchers try to avoid this as a research topic because they could be accused of racism, while for natural scientists this topic automatically suggests a modernizing project in Russia.

My expectation was that during my research in Saint Petersburg the local experts’ rhetoric would reflect the contemporary political agenda and stereotypes. It was hard to initiate discussion on the topic, not only because of the absence of the term “human zoo” or “human show” as an explanatory term in scientific discourse but also because there is an ethical consideration to the topic. Local experts felt uncomfortable during our discussions because the question of racism was unavoidable.

What was my position as a researcher of “staged otherness”? I am a social anthropologist and my approach is generally based on anthropological fieldwork. During fieldwork I can understand the nuances of a theme. Another source was contemporary discourse on the topic. These are the basic points and the main sources for my study. From these materials we can understand (or feel) something important. In this initial study I did not seek to conduct a deep analysis of the available materials but rather to give a general description of the atmosphere and the reputation of the theme embedded in the local society.

Three types of sources were used during the preparation of this chapter: visual materials, verbal discussions, and written documents (published and



Figure 13.12. Evenki ethnic show, Ulan-Ude, Burjat Republic. Photo by István Sántha, 2009.

unpublished). Discussions with other researchers helped me to understand the nuances that are not mentioned in the written sources. For me, as a social anthropologist, it was important to preserve the context of how the materials were collected during the fieldwork. Our conversations helped me to understand important details and relationships that I was later able to trace in historical materials, too. Simultaneously, the language used by contemporary scholars helps to make sense of particular emphases that cannot be found in written sources. We can learn from contemporary materials how to read historical materials (or, to put it another way, how the historical materials could be vocalized).

Ethnic shows are not a purely historic phenomenon. They were still an ongoing process twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ethnic shows could appear all over the territory of the former Soviet Union, as happened in the summer of 2009 in Ulan-Ude, the capital of the Buryat Republic, when during the Altargana festival a “mini zoo” was created in which representatives of the local Evenki people publicly demonstrated their traditions and (lost) culture for the majority Russian and Buryat population (fig. 13.12).²⁷

²⁷ There is a widely known Russian-Soviet myth about the so-called small peoples of the North, among them the Evenki people, which says they are doomed to die out in the near future. On the concept of a “dying race” as a technique for promoting an ethnic show, see Baraniecka-Olszewska 2020.

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EPILOGUE

The present book is the result of several years of research efforts undertaken by many people, as well as numerous meetings and discussions focused around ethnic (ethnographic) shows in Central and Eastern Europe in 1850–1939. It may be regarded as a standalone work, a description and proposed interpretation of the phenomenon in the region. At the same time, however, it is not a closed system. It has, from the very beginning, been designed as a source of data and, perhaps primarily, as an attempt at indicating the perspectives and interpretive directions that apply to the context of Central and Eastern Europe, and finally, as an inspiration for future research on non-European people's performances in that part of the continent.

The publication is the first comprehensive overview of ethnic shows in Central and Eastern Europe. It includes information and many visual materials that have never previously been published in academic works; it also constitutes an important step toward a deeper understanding of ethnic shows, a phenomenon that took over the collective imagination of all Europeans in the latter half of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century, but has hitherto been described and interpreted mainly by scholars from Western Europe and the United States. Instead of trying to “close” the subject of ethnic shows, the present publication aims at opening the way to further development of the study of this cultural phenomenon, with consideration of regional and local contexts.

The publication is not a closed system also in the sense that it may be read alongside the articles in special issues of academic periodicals published as part of the same research project (*Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2019; *East Central Europe*, vol. 47, nos. 2–3, 2020). These special issues contain texts by many authors not featured in the present publication and provide new information; they may be regarded not as a supplement to the

present work, but rather as a means to broaden the scope of possible contexts and interpretations.

Finally, the “open system” nature of the present book may be associated with the “feeling of something unfinished” Frantz Fanon described in his famous essay *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952) in the context of the heroic efforts to grasp and define the nature of reality. Admitting that an analysis of the facts may prove insufficient if it does not take into account the historical and social reality, and that even a single phenomenon may be viewed from numerous perspectives which stem from differences in the circumstances experienced by various social, ethnic, and national groups, one should also bear in mind that the metaphor of “something incomplete” may manifest itself in many ways.

Reading the chapters of the present book, one may perhaps gain the impression that the many answers provided by the authors generated an equal number of further questions that remain unanswered. New research questions arise in the background: questions that resist neglect and beg scholarly attention. Thus, instead of restating what has already been said in the present book, let us focus our attention on the possible directions of future study.

The motif of peripherality is mentioned in several chapters of this book, yet none of them explore it to the full. In the context of ethnic shows in Central and Eastern Europe, this concept appears both complex and deserving careful analysis. On the one hand, looking from the perspective of the colonial empires of the day, the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe was regarded as the geopolitical periphery of the continent (it is, incidentally, a valid question whether this legacy of the past has any repercussions today, and, if so, what they might be). On the other hand, when one delves deeper, it becomes clear that Central and Eastern Europe as a region also had its own peripheries—determined by the geographical, political, or social context, and invariably defined in relation to the center(s). It seems insufficient to analyze ethnic shows that took place in such areas using only criteria which developed in centers of power. It would therefore be worthwhile to focus future research on those aspects of the phenomenon in question that were characteristic for peripheral regions as such and examine it from this perspective.

The book contains several chapters based on an actor-centered approach. The quest for more information revealing the relations, aims, and actions

of the social actors involved (in one way or another) in ethnic shows is an important task, promising in the context of understanding the phenomenon from the perspective of specifically situated individuals. As far as Central and Eastern Europe is concerned, little is known about the local impresarios and the owners of the institutions that invited groups of non-European people to perform, or even about the spectators that came to see these shows. It would be interesting to know whether, for instance, the ethnic background or nationality of Central and Eastern European impresarios had any impact (and if so, of what kind) on their relations with or conduct toward non-European performers. The concept of indigenous agency deserves particular attention here, as it remains under-explored in the study of ethnic shows. At the current stage of research, searching for (non)extant archival material or museum sources no longer seems sufficient; it is increasingly necessary to try to hear “voices from the other side,” even indirectly, through the oral stories told by the descendants of the people who performed in Europe. Here the cooperation and involvement of local scholars, for which the present publication has attempted to lay the foundations, will be of profound importance, as will their interpretations of the phenomenon.

The “feeling of something unfinished” may also appear in connection with the issue of the local population’s (broadly understood) resistance to the images of “exotic” Others. In this context, it seems imperative to search for the underlying causes of this resistance and its consequences. The topic of resistance ought to be studied in perspective, which would, for example, consider instances of specific performances being boycotted by members of non-dominant nations (as a form of a political manifestation), the actions of specific individuals and collectives that were against the organization of shows with non-European people, or the attempts at circumventing the laws and limitations, undertaken by impresarios and institutions hosting the shows.

Another subject that merits further study is the involvement of Central and Eastern European scholars in ethnic shows staged in the region, and their actions related to non-European performers. It would be interesting to find out how far academic narratives produced in Central and Eastern Europe corresponded to those circulating in Western Europe at the time, and whether (and if so, to what degree) these narratives had any influence on and visibility in academic circles and in popular science. Similarly worth exploring are the conflicts, rivalries, and perhaps instances of cooperation between local schol-

ars and the developing entertainment industry. The fact that ethnic shows were not discussed in twentieth-century historiography in the region also constitutes an interesting topic, if of a slightly different nature, as does the issue of ideological entanglement and other problems modern-day academics face when conducting relevant studies in a given region of Europe. At the present stage of research, the latter issue has only been mentioned in relation to Russia, yet there is much to indicate that it would not be groundless to bring it up in the context of other parts of the region.

Although studies of the “exotic” troupes performing in Europe conducted by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars often stemmed from the need to verify the “authenticity” of Others, this was not the only reason to engage in such research. The deliberate falsification of non-European people’s identity (the notion of “exchangeable savages”; local actors pretending to be black people; etc.) is another notion that the present publication alludes to, but does not explore in detail. It would be interesting to see future works not only point to specific examples of such practices employed in the region, but also present them in a broader context, such as (in the case of “exchangeable savages”) the reactions of local authorities and communities or the official penalties imposed for such deceit in given areas. The topic of actors impersonating Others ought to be analyzed in the context of dramatization in ethnic shows, which became more important with each passing decade, and the gradual introduction of new media, such as the cinema. It could also be explored on the basis of surviving visual material.

The issue of visual material produced, modified, and distributed in Central and Eastern Europe, and its critical analysis, constitutes one of the greatest challenges scholars interested in ethnic shows will have to face in the future. Despite numerous obstacles and limitations, all authors featured in the present publication supplemented their texts with images; yet most of these materials were not subjected to visual analysis or interpretation. The introduction of extensive captions to some of the photographs can only mitigate the “feeling of something unfinished” to a small degree. Possible directions for future research in this context include the exploration of visual motifs invented in Western Europe and frequently reproduced in Central and Eastern Europe in the form of leaflets, posters, and postcards. Visual materials produced in the region merit careful analysis, as they might (but do not necessarily have to) contain elements specific and characteristic of

that part of the world. Texts accompanying these images (and the languages in which they were published) are also an interesting topic to study. As far as analyzing visual material is concerned, the category of “incompleteness” proves to be of some importance, as it could be applied to the “hidden interior” found in old photographs. Furthermore, it may be worthwhile to trace the history of visual materials associated with ethnic shows in the context of their institutional circulation (for instance, how they were moved between archives or archival collections, and how these moves were justified; or how their descriptions changed throughout the decades).

Lastly, aside from all potential directions for future study, one should not forget the ever-present need to work toward reconstructing the itineraries of “exotic” troupes touring Central and Eastern Europe (a task which is likely to take many years) and initiating academic investigation in those countries of the region where the subject of ethnic shows has not yet been tackled (e.g., Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus).

The list of issues presented here is by no means exhaustive; indeed, it also evokes the “feeling of something unfinished,” and is thus open to new possibilities.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

TIMEA BARABAS (*time_barabas@yahoo.com*)

is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Bucharest. Her thesis examines the body as a medium in a total institution, focusing on the practice of female prison tattooing in Romania. This is an extension of her ongoing academic interest in the human condition under oppressive regimes. Her master's dissertation in applied psychology was titled *The Psychological Profile of a Torturer: Eugen Țurcanu*, and analyzed the motivational drive of the main torturer in the infamous Pitești experiment conducted during Romania's communist regime. She explored the human condition and its numerous incarnations during times of oppression.

KAMILA BARANIECKA-OLSZEWSKA (*kamila.baraniecka@gmail.com*)

studied ethnology and Latin American studies. Since 2007 she has worked in the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. Her main field of interest is the anthropology of religion and performance studies with a particular emphasis on forms of religious expression. She received her PhD from Warsaw University in 2011 on the basis of a thesis devoted to Passion plays in contemporary Poland. Recently she finished a project on historical reenactments in Poland. She has written more than twenty articles dealing with contemporary religiosity and with perceptions and representations of history. She is the author of *The Crucified: Contemporary Passion Plays in Poland* (de Gruyter, 2017) and a book in Polish about historical reenactments of World War II: *Reko-rekonesans: praktyka autentyczności. Antropologiczne studium odtwórstwa drugiej wojny światowej w Polsce* [*Reenactment Reconnaissance: The Practice of Authenticity. An Anthropological Study of World War II Historical Reenactment in Poland*] (Wydawnictwo Derewiecki, 2018). ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9560-3167>

DOMINIKA CZARNECKA (*d.czarnecka@hotmail.com*)

is Assistant Professor at the Center for Ethnology and Contemporary Anthropology at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. She received an MA in law and anthropology and a PhD in humanist studies at the Nicolaus Copernicus University

in Toruń. Her research focuses on the anthropology of the body, emotions, and senses; anthropology of sport; visual anthropology; the mechanisms of conceptualizing otherness and difference; relational and digital ethnography; and the post-Cold War military heritage of Central and Eastern Europe. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6841-9567>

DAGNOŚLAW DEMSKI (d.demski2@gmail.com)

is Associate Professor and Head of the Center for Ethnology and Contemporary Anthropology at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. His interests include the broad areas of Central and Eastern European and South Asian studies. His research focuses on visual anthropology, ethnic studies, acting and performance, constructing otherness and difference through visualization, and the post-Cold War military heritage in Central and Eastern Europe. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3977-0294>

IZABELA KOPANIA (izabela.kopania@ispan.pl)

is an art historian and a lecturer at the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Her main fields of research are visual culture of the eighteenth century, cultural relations between China and European countries in the early modern period, historiography of Chinese art, and exhibitions of “freak” people in Central and Eastern Europe prior to 1939. ORCID ID: [0000-0003-2783-5377](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2783-5377)

MARKÉTA KŘÍŽOVÁ (marketa.krizova@ff.cuni.cz)

is Professor at the Center for Ibero-American Studies at the Charles University in Prague, where she obtained her MA in history and anthropology and PhD in Ibero-American studies. She held a doctoral fellowship at Universidad Autónoma de México. Her research focuses on intellectual history, European overseas expansion, colonial history of America, and cultural encounters and competitions.

MARIA LESKINEN (mardem1570@gmail.com)

has a habilitation in anthropology and is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. She researches the history of Russian ethnology in the nineteenth century, con-

ceptualizations of Russianness, Russian ethnic stereotypes, Russian national imagery, Finns in the Russian Empire, the image of Poles in Russian human sciences in the nineteenth century, and the visualization of Russian ethnicity in constructing Russian identity. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7638-507X>

ANDREJA MESARIČ (*Andreja.mesaric79@gmail.com*)

is a postdoctoral researcher at Charles University in Prague, where she is conducting research on Muslims in communist Yugoslavia as part of a multisite project on communist gender policies toward Muslim minorities in Eastern Europe. This work builds on her previous research about pious women's experiences of Islamic revival in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina, conducted as part of a PhD at the University of Ljubljana. Her other research interests include gender and migration, and decolonial approaches to Central and Eastern Europe.

ISTVÁN SÁNTHA (*istvansantha@gmail.com*)

is a Hungarian social anthropologist and a Research Fellow at the Research Center of the Humanities in Budapest. He has conducted extensive fieldwork among the western Buryats and the Baikal Evenki. Together with Tatiana Safonova, he has coauthored two books based on Evenki materials. His work also focuses on Hungary's role in World War II and on the history of Hungarian anthropology.

EVGENY SAVITSKY (*savitski.e@rggu.ru*)

is Associate Professor of Cultural Studies at the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU) and Senior Researcher at the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IVI RAN) in Moscow. In addition to ethnic exhibitions he has also studied colonial travel narratives and scientific research (the role of botanic gardens), artistic representations of colonial experience in imperial Russia of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and academic and nonacademic ways of speaking about the colonial/imperial past in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia.

HILKE THODE-ARORA (*hilke.thode-arora@mfk-weltoffen.de*)

is Curator and Head of the Pacific Department at the Five Continents Museum in Munich. Dr. Thode-Arora is a social and cultural anthropol-

ogist specializing in ethnic shows (*Völkerschauen*), on which she has published extensively. Her seminal book on the Hagenbeck ethnic shows, *Für fünfzig Pfennig um die Welt: Die Hagenbeckschen Völkerschauen* has been quoted widely and internationally. She has given papers on ethnic shows at many international conferences, and she has been an interviewee and academic advisor to several German and international film and radio documentaries on the Hagenbeck ethnic shows, made for Arte France/Germany, the History Channel, and TV and radio in Australia, Canada, and Japan.

BODHARI WARSAME (*bodhari.warsame@gmail.com*)

is an independent Somali researcher and translator based in Sweden. He is working on an extensive research study of the history of the Somali ethnographic show troupes in Europe and America, 1885–1930.

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The cultural phenomenon of exhibiting non-European people in front of the European audiences in the nineteenth and twentieth century was concentrated in the metropolises in the western part of the continent. Nevertheless, traveling ethnic troupes and temporary exhibitions of non-European humans took place also in territories located to the east of the Oder river and Austria. The contributors to this edited volume present practices of ethnographic shows in Russia, Poland, Czechia, Slovenia, Hungary, Germany, Romania, and Austria and discuss the reactions of local audiences. The essays offer critical arguments to rethink narratives of cultural encounters in the context of ethnic shows. By demonstrating the many ways in which the western models and customs were reshaped, developed, and contested in Central and Eastern European contexts, the authors argue that the dominant way of characterizing these performances as human zoos is too narrow.

The contributors had to tackle the difficult task of finding traces other than faint copies of official press releases by the tour organizers. The original source material was drawn from local archives, museums, and newspapers of the discussed period. A unique feature of the volume is the rich amount of images that complement every single case study of ethnic shows.

“The authors problematize the very concept of ‘ethnic’ shows, with many of the contributors arguing that the dominant way of characterizing these performances as ‘human zoos’ is too narrow. The book fills in a gap (nearly a *tabula rasa*) in the scholarly literature about traveling ‘ethnic’ shows across Central Europe. Each author speaks through her/his voice, but the voices are those of a well-schooled choir.”

ROBERT W. RYDELL Professor of History and Director of the American Studies Program, Montana State University

“*Staged Otherness* makes a valuable contribution to scholarship in the field of ethnic shows. It includes many case studies that have never been at the center of academic attention. Furthermore, the book makes archival material accessible to scholars worldwide and offers critical arguments to rethink narratives of cultural encounters in the context of ethnic shows.”

ANDREA ZITTLAU Lecturer and Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Rostock

ABOUT THE EDITORS

DAGNOSŁAW DEMSKI is an associate professor at the Centre for Ethnology and Contemporary Anthropology at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw.

DOMINIKA CZARNECKA is an assistant professor at the Centre for Ethnology and Contemporary Anthropology at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw.

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