Pet Birds. Cages and Practices of Domestication in Eighteenth-Century Paris

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Both animal history and the dimensions of spatiality have been gaining attention in the cultural and social sciences in recent years. Unsurprisingly, in the historical sciences it is urban history that has been among the first to postulate a connection between both. When looking for proof that nature is not just a construct, but also influences culture and social life, Dorothee Brantz, for example, focuses on urban transformations during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She epitomizes space in order to overcome a presumably conceptual and discursive dichotomy between nature and culture (Brantz 2008). This rather abstract concept, put into practice by Brantz in her research on the use of animals for slaughter and for work in urban areas, leads to a more far-reaching question in social and cultural history that includes the relationships between humans and animals: In what ways did common spaces and spatial partitioning produce the differences between humans and animals?

This paper focuses on the particular phenomenon of »pet making« in early modern times. I argue that in Paris, which was a trading place of exotic and local species of birds throughout the eighteenth century (Robbins 2002), the construction of particular cages and the corresponding imagination and practice of domestication were a way of construing birds as »pets.« My guiding question is: To what extent did historical practices of caretaking constitute domestication by means of architectural design? Caging was embedded in a principal belief in the feasibility and pleasure of taming nature. As Ingensiep demonstrated looking at natural historians' descriptions of apes (Ingensiep 2006), there was a particular interest in teaching animals human-like behavior in the second half of the eighteenth century. In what way did this apply to birds?

By looking at different kinds of eighteenth-century birdcages, the status of these animals—their difference from or similarity to »the human« and their social and financial value—will be discussed.

While there has been research on animal architecture in art-historical accounts of zoos and horse stables, cages used for companion animals have strangely been ignored.[1] Despite this, cages seem to self-evidently reside at the core of a supposedly ahistorical human-animal division. This brief discussion of interpretive possibilities analyzes, in the main, eighteenth-century bird-keeping manuals. Written by noblemen with an interest in ornithology or with official bird caretaking tasks, they were among the first to explicitly explain and popularize practices of keeping birds for pleasure in the home, and are also the main historical source of eighteenth century cage construction advice available to us today.

1. Pet-making and cultural techniques of cohabitation

Recent conceptual history investigations have stated that »pets« found their way into dictionaries as well as into English and Dutch middle-class homes during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Boehrer 2007: 20–24). In principle, all animals deemed tameable, small, curious, rare, esthetic, or precious—such as horses, dogs, birds, cats, and sometimes even monkeys, ferrets, turtles, squirrels, otters, and rabbits, as well as later also hares, mice, hedgehogs, bats, and toads—could be kept as animals »for pleasure,« notably in well-to-do-households (Thomas 1983: 110). In 1789, the *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* gave »pet-status«[2] to

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1 For a review of the literature on animal architecture in French historiography see Baratay 2003. Robbins also touches upon the topic (Robbins 2002: 32–33).

2 For one of the first historiographical uses of the term »pet-status« see Raber 2007: 87.

dogs, cats, monkeys, snakes, lizards, cicadas, and birds; amongst the latter nightingales, canary birds, and several species of parrots as »lap animals« (*Schoßtiere*) (Reichardt 1789). The 1723 reference book *Dictionnaire universel de commerce* denominated aviary or cage birds as »singing birds,« »birds for pleasure,« or »companion birds« (Savary 1723: 892).

According to Georg Wacha, burghers of cities such as Vienna had been keeping domesticated livestock as well as songbirds since the fourteenth century (Wacha 1997: 250). Tamed ringdoves and canary birds had been popular in Spain and England since the sixteenth century (Wacha 1997). However, bird keeping has not been an anthropological constant, but differed according to the owners' social status and the bird species. Particular practices of keeping birds as pets emerged in Paris when the bird trade increased due to the import of canary birds and different kinds of parrots toward the end of the seventeenth century (Robbins 2002), and many members of the bourgeoisie tried to breed birds in their own homes and sell them (Hervieux 1709). Whereas housekeeping treatises and hunting manuals had been explaining techniques of catching and feeding birds throughout the seventeenth century, the genre of companion bird manuals emerged only at the end of the century and promulgated specific cultural domestication techniques.

Caging birds can be regarded as a cultural technique of human-animal cohabitation. Symbolic work on living with animals, that is to say its cultural meaning and densification, requires specific cultural techniques. According to a definition posited by Thomas Macho, cultural techniques differ from other survival techniques insofar as they can potentially be self-referential: one can read about reading, a portrait refers to the image of a potentially absent or dead person which is already an effigy of the living person, while hunting cannot refer to itself (Macho 2008). Accordingly, caging birds refers to traditional techniques of fencing farm animals, but becomes a »technique of second order« (i.e. self-referential; Macho 2008: 100) as a practice of enclosure by referring to spatial partitioning and enclosing as tools of domestication and cohabitation.

Margot Schindler et al. (Schindler 2006) claim that cages often tended to become »an ornament and object of prestige whereas the ›inhabitants‹

took a back seat« and were hence just subject to whims of fashion. This assumption may be the reason that research thus far has not acknowledged cages' historical relevance. However, various birdcage forms offer a projection surface for historical imaginations of emerging bourgeois values. As one example, one of the most-read novels of the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse,* published in 1761, suggests that bird aviaries had high symbolic value as regards the imagery of women and gardens (Rousseau 1761). On the practical level, different cage constructions created both a human-animal division and pet status.

Early modern bird cages were usually constructed by bird merchants or by specialized craftsmen. They were sold at markets and in shops, and can roughly be categorized according to their functions: decoy, transport, domestic and/or garden use. In Paris, many bird sellers were located around the *quai de la mégisserie* (Robbins 2002: 109). Several authors of eighteenth-century manuals describe the design, equipment, and placement of cages used for keeping birds for pleasure. Jean-Claude Hervieux de Chanteloup, who published a wide-spreading manual for the keeping of canary birds at the beginning of the century, re-edited at least eleven times in French and translated into several European languages, lists cages, aviaries (*volières*), and bird houses (*cabanes*). Aviaries, traditionally used by the nobility, were often located in gardens, whereas cages were smaller and placed on tables or hung indoors next to a window. It seems that people often kept a larger number of birds in one single cage so that Hervieux advised his readers not to place more than five or six couples together (Hervieux 1709).

At the end of the seventeenth century, keeping falcons, doves, and poultry in proper aviaries continued to be regarded as a prestigious noble privilege. At that time, however, »birds for pleasure« progressively increased in rank to a level similar to these »status birds«. Manuals started propagating and thus increasingly standardized the practices of keeping birds. While household literature for landlords concentrated on instructions for hunting, farming, and cookery, starting in the late seventeenth century, bird-keeping manuals emphasized »amusement.« This up-and-

coming genre of bird-keeping manuals, which in part included knowledge from ancient natural-history tomes and sixteenth-century ornithological texts, provided instructions concerning acquisition, breeding, feeding, training, nursing, and caging. These were addressed to the so-called »*curieux*«—usually erudite collectors of rare, ancient, or foreign »*naturalia*«, artifacts, and artworks; a category mainly comprising noblemen as well as members of a well-to-do bourgeoisie.

While the species and the modes of keeping birds still fulfilled functions of status representation, they became further socially encoded and gendered. According to Emma Spary, the writings by the famous natural historians and ornithologists Réaumur and Buffon connoted bird keeping and modes of collecting either to »manly« science or a »womanly« foible for luxury (Spary 2002). Likewise, Hervieux de Chanteloup's 1709 publication *Nouveuau Traité des Serins de Canarie* tried to balance these tendencies. While Hervieux mainly refers to the usually male *Curieux* in the text, his opening dedication to Louise Françoise de Bourbon, *princesse de Condé* states that bird keeping was an »innocent pleasure« which inherently relates it to female and possibly childlike pastimes (Hervieux 1709: epistle).

In his treatise, Hervieux de Chanteloup, royal »supervisor of the woods« (*commissaire ou inspecteur des bois à bâtir*) (Michaud 1840: 152) as well as »guardian of the princess's canary birds« (*gouverneurs des serins*), issued several cage and aviary instructions. First, he recommended overall visibility of the birds be provided by open bars instead of boards, as it offered a pleasure »quite exhilarating & very much pleasing to the eye« (Hervieux 1709: 110). Hervieux, whose intention was to train healthy birds, also provided advice about cage size and measurements for a bird's well-being, as well as the position of perches, feeding, and drinking dishes for both healthy and sick birds. He specifically drew attention to new birds that tended to hit their head against the bars when people approached them: he preferred bars to a screen of boards within the cage or bird house for the domestication process of an initially feral bird: »It is these same birds, uncovered in this manner, that become so familiar with the world by looking out in all directions, that nothing can alarm

them any more« (Hervieux 1709: 10).[3] Hence, transparent construction was declared as the driver of the face-to-face familiarization of bird and keeper.

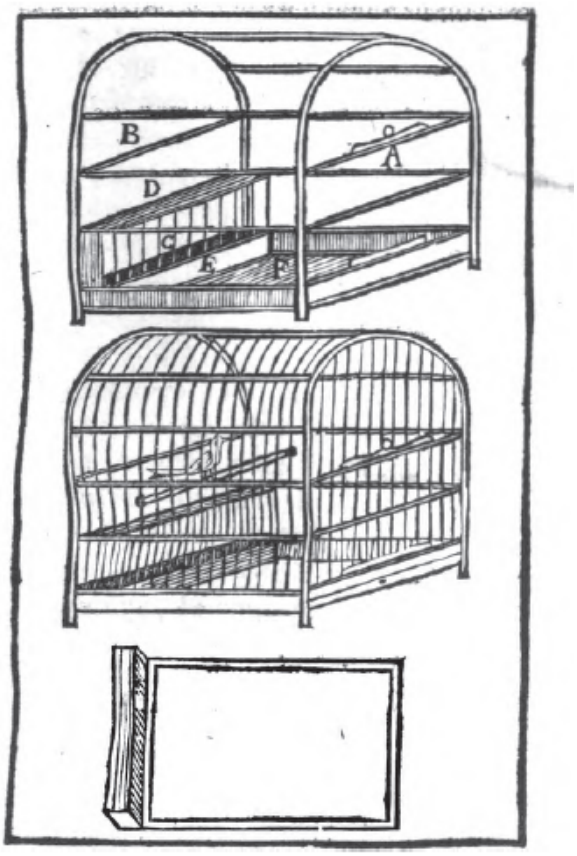

Plate 1: Hervieux 1709: 16–17.

This technique of caging can also be found in the principles and ideas of spatial delimitation and enclosure of the king's animals in the late seventeenth-century royal menagerie of Versailles: Hervieux's cage promotes

3 Original: »C'est que ces mêmes Oiseaux qui sont ainsi à découvert, deviennent si familiers en voyant de tous côtez & si souvent le monde, que rien ne peut les effaroucher.«

the mechanism of permanent visibility. It is also a sort of theater that refers to the practice of exhibiting the domestication and taming process of the bird itself. Is it far-fetched to move on to Michel Foucault's idea of a cultural model of the perfect prison? In his analysis of the architecture of the »Panopticon,« Foucault raised the question of whether Jeremy Bentham had Louis XIV's menagerie in mind when he designed his ideal human jail.[4] Indeed, in Hervieux's description one can see the inherent idea of the bird »tamer« who disciplines the animal—while not taking into account the bird's awareness of an omnipresent observer, but at any rate its allegedly voluntary surrender to its human companionship.[5]

4 See Foucault 1995, 201: »The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately. In short, it reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions—to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide—it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two. Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap.«

5 Foucault wonders whether Bentham based his ideal type on the concept of the Versailles menagerie (Foucault 1995: 204): »The Panopticon is a royal menagerie; the animal is replaced by man, individual distribution by specific grouping and the king by the machinery of a furtive power. With this exception, the Panopticon also does the work of a naturalist. It makes it possible to draw up differences: among patients, to observe the symptoms of each individual, without the proximity of beds, the circulation of miasmas, the effects of contagion confusing the clinical tables; among school-children, it makes it possible to observe performances (without there being any imitation or copying), to map aptitudes, to assess characters, to draw up rigorous classifications and, in relation to normal development, to distinguish ›laziness and stubbornness‹ from ›incurable imbecility‹; among workers, it makes it possible to note the aptitudes of each worker, compare the time he takes to perform a task, and if they are paid by the day, to calculate their wages.« In this case, why should Hervieux's birdcage not be a precursor, a way to unintentionally test different types of imprisonment (such as that proposed by Nobleville and analyzed in the following)?

Comparison with another manual shows that these popular books focused on aspects of domestication whereby the animal had to adapt to human needs and aims via education. The cage served as a technical space for the control of the initially wild, untamed being. Arnault de Nobleville, a physician whose *Aëdonologie, ou Traité du Rossignol franc et chanteur* was published in 1773, described the taming of nightingales as an eminent problem. The nightingale, which had been a popular domestic bird for centuries, was also labeled by Georges Louis Leclerc, *comte de Buffon*, author of the widely read *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux* (1779), as having the opposite temperament of a canary bird (Rothfels 2007). Buffon separated the »wild« and »natural« spheres from the »tame« and »artificial«: »If the Nightingale be the songster of the grove, the Canary Finch is the musician of the chamber. The melody of the former is derived from Nature alone, that of the latter is directed and improved by our instructions [*nos arts*]« (Buffon 1793c: 1).[6] That is why Nobleville recommended calming the not-yet companion nightingale through the use of strong measures for the first season after capture, that is to say through use of a rather small cage closed with boards on all sides excepting the foreside measuring sixteen inches long, fourteen inches high, and fourteen inches deep (Nobleville 1773: 48–62). In contrast to Hervieux, Nobleville placed less emphasis on the bird's sanity and mood. The interaction between human and animal was limited to a hatch at the bottom of the cage. Furthermore, he advised a second cage with bars for permanent use and a third one for blinding. Blinding birds with a red-hot wire was an early modern practice applied in order to calm the songbird after capture and to increase its educability by reducing distraction.

The question of the distinction between animals and humans was imminent, since both were subject to education. Whereas Buffon continuously anthropomorphized animals—both in his use of vocabulary as well as in his comparisons of animal behavior and social human actions—he still attempted to draw clear-cut boundaries when reflecting on parrots'

6 Leclerc 1793c: 1. Original: Leclerc 1779a, 1: »Si le rossignol est le chantre des bois, le serin est le musicien de la chambre; le premier tient tout de la Nature, le second participe à nos arts.«

ability to speak: »There are two kinds of perfectibility, one is sterile and is limited to the education of the individual. The other is fertile as it is diffused through a whole species and cultivated by the institutions of society. No animal is susceptible to this perfectibility of the species« (Buffon 1779b: 67).[7] Thus following the »Anciens,« the naturalist distinguished between supposedly similar conditions of human and animal capacities by attributing refinement and socializing practices to humans. In doing so, by underscoring the role of the mother in particular in an education both continual and tender, Buffon advanced late-eighteenth-century bourgeois family values. Consequently, he found that animals were merely lacking in constant affection:

> These birds [*perroquets*/parrots; JB] […] lack this expression of intelligence which is the high faculty of language. They are deprived of it like all other animals […] due to their short association with their parents whose care is limited to physical instruction [*éducation*], and it is not repeated and not continued long enough to produce durable and reciprocal impressions, it does not even suffice to establish a constant family union which is the first degree of all society and unique source of all intelligence (Buffon 1779b: 69).[8]

7 Original: »Car il faut distinguer deux genres de perfectibilité, l'un stérile, et qui se borne à l'éducation de l'individu, et l'autre fécond, qui se répand sur toute l'espèce, et qui s'étend autant qu'on le cultive par les institutions de la société. Aucun des animaux n'est susceptible de cette perfectibilité d'espèce […].«

8 Since the English translation of 1793 considerably changed the meaning of Buffon's text, the author of the present study translated this excerpt. I tried to make the historical semantics of the original French as clear as possible. Original: »Or ces oiseaux, auxquels rien ne manque pour la facilité de la parole, manquent de cette expression de l'intelligence, qui seule fait la haute faculté du langage: ils en sont privés comme tous les autres animaux, et par les mêmes causes, c'est-à-dire, par leur prompt accroissement dans le premier âge, par la courte durée de leur société avec leurs parens, dont les soins se bornent à l'éducation corporelle, et ne se répètent ni ne se continuent assez de temps pour faire des impressions durables et réciproques, ni même assez pour établir l'union d'une famille

What, then, if continuous education were applied to birds? Hervieux explained precisely how to instruct birds by singing repetitively and over a long time span. As opposed to Nobleville, Hervieux did not mention the practice of blinding, but instead suggested a rather gentle way of teaching melodies to the canary bird: he recommended covering the cage with cloth while training the bird with a flageolet, a bird flute. Hervieux meticulously described how the bird, separated from other animals, should remain like this for ten days before starting training with the flageolet, after which the bird could be taught one or two melodies by playing them to the bird a maximum of five times a day. This instruction, articulated in manuals distributed as of the early eighteenth century, appears to make birdsong into a historical phenomenon (Hervieux 1709: 90–110). Hervieux's books described and endorsed this particular instructional practice for a larger public in several editions throughout the century (1705, 1707, 1709, 1712, 1713, 1734, 1740, 1745, 1766, 1785, 1802) and thus became a potential way of »doing pet birds« (analogous to the concept of »doing gender«).[9]

2. The bird's place

The relations of keepers to their birds differed according to profession, gender, and social status, and were connected to the spatial proximity between humans and animals and to the cage's placement.

In early modern times, fostering enclosure of certain animals partly relied on religious divisions of wild and domestic species or individuals. In ecclesiastical definitions in early modern times, »mankind« was said to dominate all animals, justified by the well-known verses of Genesis (1:26 and 1:28). As Éric Baratay puts it, domestic animals were conceived of as

constante, premier degré de toute société, et source unique de toute intelligence.«

9 Some teaching practices to consciously direct the training of singing birds for the home were known to breeders beforehand. Tyrolean canary breeders and merchants, whose exportation activities in Europe reached their peak in the eighteenth century, had been training birds by whistling melodies to them, exploiting their ability to imitate.

being not only subjected to, but also naturally and originally attributed to humans for use (Baratay 1993: 87). The concept of human dominion was all-encompassing: in clerical treatises of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both domestic and wild animals contributed to humanity's pleasure either through their agricultural and work utility, their company, or the distraction and satisfaction of curiosity (*curiosité*) they offered when hunted (Baratay 1993: 89). While this seems quite cynically anthropocentric today, abbot Pluche, in his 1732 *Spectacle de la nature*, even confirmed a God-given, human-centered topography of animals' natural habitats: while »monsters« and dangerous animals were said to be far away, in the oceans for instance, wild animals lived in proximity to humans—for hunting—and domesticated animals lived in towns (Baratay 1993: 91).

A very famous 1751 painting by Jean Siméon Chardin, *La Serinette*, has as its subject an interior scene with a woman teaching a canary bird.[10] This lady—in a living room that evokes wealth and a foible for exoticism, with green tapestries, chairs covered with a white-green Chinese silk, and underscored by the dress she is wearing, white embroidered with roses—is apparently playing a melody to the canary on a barrel organ, the »*Serinette*.« The existence of many such *serinettes* for the musical instruction of birds, artefacts from the second half of the eighteenth century in France, support the view that this setting is quite close to the »reality« of the scenery.[11] Considering that the room in which the bird is placed served the dwellers' outward representation to guests, the decorative and at times quite expensive canary bird contributed to the room's (semi)public presentation. Birds certainly functioned as meaningful social capital, and prices for cages and for birds produced and reproduced social status in two ways: according to Hervieux, prices in 1745 ranged between three to

10 Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, Jean-Baptiste-Siméon 1751: La Serinette, or Dame variant ses amusements; oil on canvas, 50 cm x 43 cm, Frick Collection and Musée du Louvre. See www.louvre.fr.

11 Although mid-eighteenth-century genre paintings tended to be fairly similar to the actual interiors they presented, an iconographic influence of traditional representations of women with birds is likely, too.

forty-five livres for different canary breeds depending on their popularity and rarity of coloring.[12] Louise Robbins found that prices for cages ranged from »a low of 72 livres for a wheeled aviary with canaries, goldfinches, and other small birds, to a high of 4,000 livres for a seven-foot-high parrot cage with gold-plated brass ornamentation« (Robbins 2002: 32). Furthermore, the well-being of one or more canary birds could inherently represent the intellectuality of its owner: if tulip bulbs, shells, fossils, and further natural items were usually at the core of collectors' interests in study and social representation, then the ornithological knowledge a versed bird keeper acquired through specialized books and popular scientific manuals such as those by Hervieux, Nobleville, or Buc'hoz might well have been part of identifying a person as a »*curieux*.«[13]

Bird keeping in town dwellers' homes was discussed controversially during the eighteenth century. On the one hand, it is likely that canary birds grew in popularity in middle-class households during the eighteenth century because they were easy to both deal with and clean. As depicted by Hervieux, drawers of cage floors that could slide in and out facilitated cleaning (table 1). Nobleville added that they should be filled with dry moss where the bird droppings would dry »promptly.«[14] While they could be considered a sign of wealth, birds could also be classified as a lower-class phenomenon if they were kept in bad conditions. Pet keeping was subject to criticism regarding a lack of knowledge concerning hygiene, as pronounced by Louis-Sébastien Mercier in his *Tableau de Paris* in 1783. He wrote that poverty, pet keeping, and unclean living conditions were widespread phenomena at the time: »The poorer people are in Paris, the more often they keep dogs, cats, birds, & co. pell-mell in

12 Prices were unstable. According to Hervieux, a male »*serin blond doré*« cost four livres ten francs in 1709, while in 1745 it cost four livres, and twelve livres in 1785. In 1745, a »*serin plein & parfait*« was priced at forty-five livres.

13 For the profiling of an early modern »curieux« by collecting »naturalia« also see Goldgar on tulip collecting in seventeenth-century Netherlands: Goldgar 2007.

14 Nobleville 1773: 59.

a small room« (Mercier 1783: 196).[15] Similar to some of his contemporaries' opinions on bad habits among the lower classes of society, Mercier assigned a lack of hygiene practices to the working class. Mercier noted that in spite of police prohibitions, these people kept domestic animals for food in a presumably unsanitary manner: »Despite the police's proscriptions, most people breed rabbits in their hovel […]. They live with smelling races […]« (Mercier 1783: 196). Parrots in their cages hanging in windows completed the picture of noise pollution and dirtiness on Parisian streets: »Another keeps a parrot in the window; with the result that the neighbor studying history, medicine, or music hears the annoying and repetitive babbling of this animal all the time« (Mercier 1783: 197).

Bird-caging as a cultural technique reflected not only its own function, but was also referred to in other practices: journals and poems produced iconic and written discourses on liberty in contrast to enclosure which often included cages and thereby evoked new meanings. According to Louise Robbins, they »reflect[ed] the tensions of a culture that was based on chains of authority, but in which freedom was becoming a popular refrain.« For example, the integrity of young women was discussed using images of confinement which described cages as »providing a refuge, protecting the creature from a harsh world.« In contrast, some people envisioned only free animals as beautiful animals (Robbins 2002: 134). Of course, this interpretation of cages as anti-freedom imagery drew upon older, but often differently connoted images. During the eighteenth century, spatial relations and enclosure became topics not only of pet-making but of further identification with human living conditions. Mercier transferred bird-caging to a topical reflection of the domestic condition of the »sedentary working« craftsmen of Paris:

> The tailors, the cobblers, the stonemasons, the embroiderers, the needlewomen, all the sedentary crafts always keep an animal confined in a cage, as though to make them share the tedium [*ennui*] of their own slavery. There is a magpie in a small cage, and the poor

15 Translation by the author: »Plus les gens sont pauvres à Paris, plus ils ont de chiens, de chats, d'oiseaux, & c. pêle-mêle dans une petite chambre.«

> beast passes its entire life from morning to evening leaping, moving, searching for deliverance. The tailor looks at the captive magpie, and wishes it could keep him company forever. (Mercier 1783: 196)[16]

This description of the spatial proximity of humans and animals served the critical observer as a metaphor to denounce the conditions of society's working classes just a few years before the beginning of the French Revolution.

3. Symbolic function

Images of very popular aristocratic aviaries tended to evoke paradisiac gardens. Naturalist Pierre-Joseph Buc'hoz described them in his manual *Amusements des Dames dans les Oiseaux de Volière* in 1782. Biological interest mixed with baroque imaginings of arcadia seems to have influenced his concept of the aviaries »almost every Sir has built.« Facing the morning sun the aviary should incorporate some areas to which the birds can retreat on hot days. Furthermore, it should mimic natural habitats and be beautiful by means of murals on the interior colored in »sky blue & with a landscape, or, at least, in violet, green or Cremnitz white« as well as plants to which (artificial) nests could be attached: »in this aviary you will put […] five or six evergreen trees or, if unavailable, you will put […] plants you will have cut for this purpose« (Buc'hoz 1782: 324). Thus, natural and remote locations, such as breeding sites, were brought into a happy, human-made proximity. They could be called »heterotopias« in allusion to Michel Foucault's *Des espaces autres, Hétérotopies;* »another real space« in which the societal »other« is actually and materially encompassed. In addition to providing a location for many social happenings,

16 »Les tailleurs, les cordonniers, les cizeleurs, les brodeurs, les couturieres, tous les métiers sédentaires, tiennent toujours quelque animal enfermé dans une cage, comme pour lui faire partager l'ennui de leur propre esclavage. C'est une pie resserée dans une petite cage; & la pauvre bête passe toute sa vie du matin au soir à sauter, à se remuer pour chercher sa délivrance. Le tailleur regarde la pie captive, & veut qu'elle lui tienne éternellement compagnie.«

heterotopias contribute to stabilizing or renewing social structures by taking on several functions. While indoor cages have been shown to not only have been perceived as unjust prisons at times and indeed, on an architectural level, alternated between disciplining »Panopticon,« solitary cell, and species-appropriate confinement, they also evoked paradisiac imaginings of a protected artificial enclave. Seemingly authentic but controlled gardens that imitated nature became increasingly popular during the eighteenth century. Rousseau's protagonist Julie cultivates her aviary in this manner with several birds she calls her »guests» or even »masters« of their own domain instead of »prisoners« (Rousseau 1761: 121–122). The lady's aviary turns out to be a metaphor of her own decision to embrace bourgeois moral values: Julie was originally an aristocratic young lady who progressively becomes more bourgeois. Having first been in love with a man her age, she is forced into marriage with the much older M. Wolmar. Reaching a turning point, she decides to »prefer« the quiet and orderly life of a married couple over her former passion.

While this illusionary Arcadian imagery favors metaphors of voluntarily tamed or virtuous behavior—be it human or animal—practices such as those described by Nobleville conquered nature in a much more direct way. Here, the spatial conquest directly enters the wilderness: Nobleville proposed appropriating nature by actually transplanting trees used for breeding in his book's chapter entitled »How to establish nightingales in places where there are none.«[17] If a person missed the varied and untiring song of the nightingale in the own garden, what he described as »the most beautiful bouquet a tree can yield,« he suggested searching out a breeding pair in the woods, capturing it, cutting the branches with the birds' nest on it (or the entire tree), and then placing it in front of one's home (Nobleville 1783: 103).

17 Original: »De la maniere d'etablir des rossignols dans les endroits ou il n y en a point.«

Similar to the functions of a »heterotopia,« Buc'hoz and Nobleville transported nature that was unavailable in the immediate spatial vicinity to the human living sphere in a concentrated form.

Conclusion

In this brief overview on caging, three main issues which emerged, were negotiated, and changed during the eighteenth century have been raised: first, the educability and, hence the ontological status of certain birds; second, the positioning of the bird in the proximity of human living spheres and its consequences for the pet-owner's status; and, third, the aristocratic ideas of a paradisiacal garden aviary and its poetic transformation into a bourgeois ideal. Distinctions between humans and birds and hereby between wild animals and pets were established through the practical conceptualization of education, spatial relations, and the placement of birds and cages. In summary, the practical appropriation of birds, demonstrated using the cases of the canary and the nightingale, took place by means of the animals' integration into human spaces. Hence, the pet bird began to exist as soon as it was attributed to a proper place. Buc'hoz's manual and Rousseau's novel depicted an Arcadian, world-bettering, and bourgeois image of cages and caging, whereas »everyday« manuals on keeping and breeding birds tended to be either more brutal or drew attention to the birds' needs as well. Over the eighteenth century, cages functioned as imaginative spaces as well as spaces for interaction by creating avenues of communication for birds and keepers. A future discussion of approaches to cage settings analyzed using actor-network theory could add to the understanding of how certain birds entered into an interactive role with their owners.

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