Staged Otherness

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PART

TWO

Performing the Ethnographic Other
CHAPTER SIX

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

Dagnoslaw 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
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; MacAlloon 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. 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

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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 activi-
ties” evolved into something different than they originally were.

In this sense, there was a shift from exhibitionary forms offered by muse-
ums 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 refer-
ence 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)
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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-

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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).

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Exoticism 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 postmodern 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
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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.
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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.
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
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 reconstruction” (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 (Maurus, 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
reertoire 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. (*Wielkopolsanin*, 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
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).
The (Ethno-)Drama of Exoticism

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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