

Münsteraner Schriften zur
Volkskunde / Europäischen Ethnologie

herausgegeben von

Ruth-E. Mohrmann und Andreas Hartmann
Seminar für Volkskunde / Europäische Ethnologie
der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster

Band 13



Waxmann 2007
Münster / New York / München / Berlin

Andreas Hartmann, Silke Meyer,
Ruth-E. Mohrmann (Hg.)

Historizität

Vom Umgang mit Geschichte

Hochschultagung „Historizität als Aufgabe und Perspektive“
der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde
vom 21.–23. September 2006 in Münster



Waxmann 2007
Münster / New York / München / Berlin

Bibliografische Informationen der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Gedruckt mit Unterstützung der
Gesellschaft für Volkskunde Münster e.V.

ISSN 1435-0556
ISBN 978-3-8309-1860-8

© Waxmann Verlag GmbH, Münster 2007

www.waxmann.com
info@waxmann.com

Umschlaggestaltung: Pleßmann Kommunikationsdesign, Ascheberg
Titelfoto: Diözesanbibliothek und Überwasserkirche Münster, © Thomas Robbin
Satz: Stoddart Satz- und Layoutservice, Münster
Druck: Hubert & Co., Göttingen
Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Papier,
säurefrei gemäß ISO 9706

Alle Rechte vorbehalten
Printed in Germany

Herman Roodenburg

European Ethnology between History and Anthropology: The Uses of a Performance Perspective¹

In 1983, the 12th Working Conference of *Ethnologia Europaea* was held in Mátrafüred, an attractive holiday resort in the Hungarian mountains. The discussion focused on the recent interest among cultural historians in the field of 'popular culture' and one of the historians present was Peter Burke.²

I was not there at the time. In 1983, I was still working as a cultural historian at the Free University in Amsterdam and would only turn into a *volkskundige* (or rather, a European ethnologist) in 1987, when I transferred to the Meertens Institute.³ Not having attended the conference, I do not know exactly what went wrong in Hungary; I only know that things did go wrong. When I asked Burke a few years ago about the meeting, about the debate between the historians and the European ethnologists, he stared at me for a couple of seconds and then replied ironically: 'What debate?' In other words, two decades later, he still felt unhappy about the event. Rather surprisingly, Burke, the cultural historian who in his *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* had sketched an open and dynamic model of popular culture, found himself more or less neglected at the conference.⁴

1 The text of this contribution largely follows the lecture as 'performed' at the conference. Writing this as a first exploration of the subject, I have kept footnotes as scarce as possible.

2 Some of the papers presented at the conference were published in 1984: Peter BURKE: *Popular Culture between History and Ethnology*. In: *Ethnologia Europaea* 14, 1984, pp. 5-13; Wolfgang BRÜCKNER: *Popular Culture. Konstrukt, Interpretation, Realität. Anfragen zur historischen Methodologie und Theoriebildung aus der Sicht der mitteleuropäischen Forschung*. In: *IBID.*, pp. 14-24; Konrad KÖSTLIN: *Die Wiederkehr der Volkskultur. Der neue Umgang mit einem alten Begriff*. In: *IBID.*, pp. 25-31; Palle Ove CHRISTIANSEN: *On Historical Anthropology, the History of Everyday Life and the Study of Life-modes*. In: *IBID.*, pp. 32-43.

3 In the Netherlands, *volkskunde* has always been located at the Meertens Institute, a research institute established in Amsterdam by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2000, reflecting the disciplinary shifts that had transpired in the decade before, the term '*volkskunde*' was officially abandoned, in favour of '*Nederlandse ethnologie*'. As in Scandinavian countries, the term 'ethnology' has been considered semantically vacant for many decades in the Netherlands.

4 Burke and Muchembled published their books in the same year. See Peter BURKE: *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. London 1978 [dt. Helden, Schurken

To preclude any misunderstanding, I am not saying that the European ethnologists were unfounded in taking Muchembled to task. On the contrary, they were absolutely right. After the radical transformation of their discipline, many ethnologists were alarmed to see, first, that their territory was being invaded by a horde of cultural historians (and I, in a very modest role, used to be one of them) and, second, that most of them were poorly informed. Often the invaders knew neither about Hermann Bausinger or Hans Moser, nor Tübingen and Munich, the two schools they had established. No doubt they failed to realize how much of the *Volkskunde* they had just discovered had already been discarded by both schools. Instead, these historians started writing cheerfully about a time-honoured peasant culture, once again rooted in ancient, pre-Christian times. In the eyes of the ethnologists, they had just turned the clock back and Muchembled very much looked the villain of the piece. Writing on France under the *ancien régime*, Muchembled distinguished a dominant, united culture of church and state which over the centuries took hold of a timeless popular culture, drenched in violence and a wide variety of half-Christian and half-pagan customs and beliefs. No wonder one of the ethnologists present at the Hungarian conference recognized in Muchembled's portrayal of the early modern peasantry much of the old *Volkskunde*, with its ahistorical bias and obsession with origins – Wolfgang Brückner wished therefore to put a few things right, and that he did!

Of course, the French historian was not the only one to be lectured by the ethnologists. In 1976, Carlo Ginzburg had already published his study on the amazing worldview of Menocchio, a sixteenth-century miller from Friuli who for his heterodox opinions had to stand trial before the Inquisition. After its 1980 translation into English, the book became an international bestseller. But again, the ethnologists, among them Bausinger and Rudolf Schenda, had their reservations. Though Ginzburg's analysis resembled Burke's in its fine-drawn distinctions, the former situated Menocchio, most unexpectedly, in what he construed to be a largely pagan popular culture, even romantically described as a "deep-rooted cultural stratum", which through Menocchio's confessions had suddenly come to light emerging "as if out of a crevice in the earth".⁵ Such geological imagery, with all

und Narren. Europäische Volkskultur in der frühen Neuzeit. Stuttgart 1981]; Robert MUCHEMBLED: *Culture populaire et culture des élites dans la France moderne (XV^e – XVIII^e siècles)*. Paris 1978 [dt. *Kultur des Volks – Kultur der Eliten. Die Geschichte einer erfolgreichen Verdrängung*. Stuttgart 1982].

5 Carlo GINZBURG: *The Cheese and the Worms. The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore 1980, p. 58. See also p. xxiii: "an obscure, almost unfathomable, layer of remote peasant traditions".

its reifying connotations, had been favourite with the older generations of folklorists.

Moreover, in an article anticipating *Ecstasies*, his famous but also highly controversial study on the witches' sabbath (translated into English in 1989), Ginzburg quoted copiously from the writings of Otto Höfler, a major Austrian folklorist sharing the Nazi ideology and working with the Ancestral Inheritance, the scientific organization of the SS.⁶ Clearly, the ethnologists had a point; there was cause for alarm, and Muchembled and Ginzburg were not the only historians caught blundering.⁷ As Bausinger summed up, 'Sie waren es nun, welche die Linien der Volkskultur in wenig konturnierte Frühstufen zurückverfolgten, während die Volkskundler oft genug ihre Hauptaufgabe darin sahen, vermeintliche Kontinuitätslinien zu durchschneiden und im rezenteren Bereich konkrete Ausgangspunkte zu postulieren.'⁸

Chances missed?

Looking back on the 1980s, the decade in which the new cultural history established itself, one can understand why the ethnologists responded as they did. In these years, they were still in the midst of developing their discipline to focus on contemporary society and on the social sciences. Along the process, in a seminal reflexive turn, they were shedding off the discipline's precariously ideological feathers. Thanks to this successful operation, European ethnology has earned itself a new and much sounder reputation. At present, ethnologists are solicited on all sorts of contemporary issues, both by neighbouring disciplines and by a growing number of policymakers. As Wolfgang Kaschuba put it with a nice ironical touch, we suddenly find ourselves to be experts on such wide-ranging issues as racism, national stereotyping, the media, knowledge, urbanity and social move-

6 Carlo GINZBURG: *Charivari, Jugendbünde und Wilde Jagd. Über die Gegenwart der Toten*. In: IDEM: *Spurensicherungen. Über verborgene Geschichte, Kunst und soziales Gedächtnis*. Berlin 1983, pp. 47-60; Hermann BAUSINGER: *Traditionale Welten. Kontinuität und Wandel in der Volkskultur*. In: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 81, 1985, pp. 173-191; Rudolf SCHENDA: *Eine Benandante, ein Wolf oder Wer?* In: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 82, 1986, pp. 200-202. See also Carlo Ginzburg: *Ecstasies. Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*. New York 1991.

7 See for instance Ruth-E. MOHRMANN: *Volkskunde und Geschichte*. In: *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 34/35, 1989/90, pp. 9-23; Wolfgang BRÜCKNER: *Volkskunde als historische Kulturwissenschaft*. Würzburg 2000.

8 BAUSINGER *Welten* (see note 6), p. 176.

ments. And all this in spite of our anarchist leanings, our partiality for looseness and informality, for *bricolage* and the transdisciplinary in everything we study.⁹ Whatever we think of this sudden recognition and of the social and political changes underlying it (in the Netherlands, for example, the politically motivated murders of Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh helped raise a new interest in 'Dutchness' and Dutch history), ethnology has no doubt gained a new cognitive identity.¹⁰

Yet, there is still Burke's disappointment. Perhaps, in being all too focused on redefining the discipline, we more or less ignored our historical neighbours, did not really follow how their thinking developed, and forgot to reconsider our own historical research. Though in Germany historical studies still abound, there is also confusion. Part of this output, especially that of the Tübingen school-based studies, confines itself, in accordance with Bausinger's views, on the subject to the 'European modern', meaning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These studies define European ethnology as studying contemporary society 'with an extension into the past'.¹¹ Another, no less important part of the historical output – studies based on the views of Hans Moser, Karl-S. Kramer and the Munich school – employs a larger time-frame, with no qualms about writing on the pre-modern or even on the later middle ages.¹² We find a similar, though less outspoken, division of labour in the European ethnology pursued in other countries; the Netherlands are a case in point. But there is also a lack of reflecting on how both historical perspectives relate to recent developments in contemporary cultural history. We seem to do our historical research more or less on our own, thus running a fairly obscure outpost within the historical field as a whole.

Moreover, in doing this research, are we really professing our discipline, or are we perhaps producing books and articles that, in the eyes of the cultural historians, may just as well have been written by historians themselves? What makes our historical output differ from what they produce? In

9 Wolfgang KASCHUBA: *Volkskundliche Wissenschaftskultur und Moderne. Zum gesellschaftlichen Status ethnographischen Wissens*. In: *Volkskultur und Moderne. Europäische Ethnologie zur Jahrtausendwende. Festschrift für Konrad Köstlin zum 60. Geburtstag am 8. Mai 2000*. Vienna 2000, pp. 105-22.

10 Cf. Peter Jan MARGRY, Herman ROODENBURG: Introduction. In: MARGRY, ROODENBURG (eds.): *Reframing Dutch Culture. Between Otherness and Authenticity*. Aldershot 2007.

11 Péter NIEDERMÜLLER: *Das neue Europa. Veränderung eines kulturellen Konzepts. Ethnologische Perspektiven*. In: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 15, 2004, p. 96; Rolf LINDNER: *Was kann Europäische Ethnologie (nicht)?* In: *IBIDEM*, p. 165.

12 MOHRMANN (as in note 7), BRÜCKNER (as in note 7).

the Netherlands, we have been asked these questions, among others, by the cultural historian Willem Frijhoff. Though he praised the historical studies produced by European ethnologists, he also argued that, in order to stay attractive both to the historical and the social sciences, we should orient ourselves to the present, hence developing our questions and research agendas chiefly within this contemporary perspective.¹³

Looking back, then, I believe we might have welcomed – more than we actually did – those cultural historians who knew about European ethnology and, who in their own studies on popular culture, were hardly interested in any putative lines of continuity. Even Muchembled, in his 1988 publication *L'Invention de l'homme moderne*, would admit the shortcomings of his earlier work, recognizing that his views on the peasant population in early modern France had been static and ahistorical.¹⁴ And so, five years after Mátrafüred, he already preferred another, more dynamic approach; the enemy was not so formidable. I cannot help but think that European ethnologists unwittingly condemned themselves to a fairly marginal role in the rise of the new cultural history as a result of their overly defensive attitude throughout the 1980s. The ethnologists could have played a more prominent part.

Second, by turning away too quickly we forgot to trace in greater detail how the historical dimensions of the discipline actually relate to the new cultural history. We know that European ethnology as it developed in the last ten or twenty years may best be situated between history and anthropology or, more precisely, straddling cultural history on one side, and cultural anthropology, sociology and cultural studies on the other. We also know that European ethnologists, still caught within their 'national tribes'¹⁵, prefer to focus on the everyday, or rather, the 'familiar', the 'taken-for-granted', the '*Basisvertrautheiten*' in our daily lives. But it seems that we have not really theorised the consequences of this perspective vis-à-vis the cultural historians. Perhaps we were too busy transforming the discipline or, now that we have largely performed this task already, we are still hindered by our (slightly) anarchist leanings.

13 Willem FRIJHOFF: *De volkskunde herplaatst tussen geschiedenis en antropologie*. In: *Volkskundig Bulletin* 14, 1988, pp. 45-54; see also IDEM: *Volkskunde en cultuurwetenschap. De ups en downs van een dialoog*. Amsterdam 1997, p. 49.

14 Robert MUCHEMBLED: *L'Invention de l'homme moderne*. Paris 1988 [dt. *Die Erfindung des modernen Menschen*. Reinbek bei Hamburg 1990], p. 83.

15 On 'tribes', see Orvar LÖFGREN: *Life after Postmodernity. Volkskunde in the New Economy*. In: Gudrun König (ed.): *Volkskunde 00. Hochschulreform und Fachidentität*. Tübingen 2001, pp. 157-168.

In what follows, I would like to spell out the 'familiar' – in all its contemporary complexity – by having a fresh look at Pierre Bourdieu's notions of habitus and hexis as well as a couple of similar notions proposed by Paul Connerton and Diana Taylor. Like Marilyn Strathern's 'auto-anthropology', European ethnology may be said to produce 'knowledge about self-knowledge'.¹⁶ But much of this self-knowledge, being largely of a pre-reflexive or 'doxic' nature, may be said to form part of our habitus or habit memory (Connerton). Interestingly, Bourdieu, Connerton and Taylor all developed their ideas with inspiration from phenomenological authors, particularly Maurice Merleau-Ponty.¹⁷

Finally, I would like to suggest a dual comparative perspective, based partly on Bourdieu's notion of 'strategic research sites'. In this, European ethnology may cut out a clearer position for itself within what Michaela Fenske recently described as an 'open cultural anthropology practice', a broad historical and anthropological perspective allowing its practitioners (cultural historians, cultural anthropologists and European ethnologists) to equally regard the present and the past, including the past of non-European cultures.¹⁸

Habitus, habit memory and the repertoire

Thanks to Bourdieu, habitus has become a standard notion in the humanities and social sciences, but remarkably enough, its bodily dimensions, those identified as hexis by Bourdieu, are what many of his interpreters – not recognizing his indebtedness to Edmund Husserl and especially to Maurice Merleau-Ponty – have tended to neglect.

I believe that in the years to come, Bourdieu's ideas on habitus and hexis may be looked at afresh. In the past twenty years, many disciplines, from philosophy and literary criticism to history, cultural anthropology and cultural studies, have manifested a particular concern for the body. Yet due to the so-called 'cultural' or 'linguistic' turn in the humanities, much of this interest has been dominated by mentalist, strongly language-based assump-

16 Marilyn STRATHERN: *The Limits of Auto-Anthropology*. In: Anthony JACKSON (ed.): *Anthropology at Home*. London 1987, p. 29.

17 For a recent plea for a phenomenologically informed European ethnology, see Jonas FRYKMAN, Nils GILJE (eds.): *New Perspectives on Phenomenology and the Analysis of Culture*. Lund 2003.

18 See Michaela FENSKE: *Historical Ethnography as Cultural Anthropological Practice*. In: *Journal of Folklore Research* 44, 2007, pp. 67-99.

tions. More recently, a growing number of studies have proposed a different approach. They focus on the kinds of knowledge that are situated in the body and often employ concepts such as Bourdieu's notions of habitus and hexis, Marcel Mauss' 'techniques of the body' and Connerton's idea of a 'bodily' or 'habitual' memory.¹⁹ There has been a shift in emphasis, from a mainly semiotic and structuralist approach to one based on performance and performativity.

The shift had already revealed itself in the writings of Bourdieu. What he derived from former teacher Claude Lévi-Strauss was the mentalist idea of a social and cultural world structured by a set of taxonomies, binary oppositions and homologies. What he derived, mainly from Merleau-Ponty, was the understanding that such taxonomies are always incorporated into bodily dispositions – they are always 'practical' taxonomies. Hence, instead of the abstract rules Lévi-Strauss was wont to discuss, Bourdieu preferred to speak of 'dispositions' or 'schemata' that he assumed simply dictated practice. Bourdieu believed, furthermore, that they were invoked and developed through practice itself, thus allowing for a considerable range of strategy, improvisation and variability. Stressing its generative and largely pre-reflexive or 'doxic' nature, he also described praxis as a 'practical sense' or 'a feel for the game'. In other words, it is not so much a matter of conscious obedience to rules, as Lévi-Strauss saw it: it is first and foremost a matter of 'regulated improvisation', of largely 'doxic' or pre-reflexive practices that are nonetheless structured by the habitus, by all the embodied dispositions and schemata. Crucial to this whole process is the role of early socialisation, of what we as children already incorporate and unwittingly convert into bodily automatisms, into 'second nature'.²⁰

19 Marcel MAUSS: *Sociology and Psychology. Essays*. London 1979; Paul CONNERTON: *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge 1989; Diana TAYLOR: *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham and London 2003; among many other titles, see for instance Paul STOLLER: *Embodying Colonial Memories. Spirit Possession, Power and the Hauka in West Africa*. New York, London 1995; Andrew STRATHERN: *Body Thoughts*. Ann Arbor 1998; Jo-Anne ENTWISTLE: *The Fashioned Body. Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge 2000; Herman ROODENBURG: *The Eloquence of the Body. Studies on Gesture in the Dutch Republic*. Zwolle 2004; IDEM: Pierre Bourdieu. *Issues of Embodiment and Authenticity*. In: *Etnofoor* 18, 2004, pp. 215-26; Birgit MEYER: *Religious Sensations. Why Media, Aesthetics and Power Matter in the Study of Contemporary Religion*. Amsterdam 2006.

20 Pierre BOURDIEU: *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge 1977. For a very helpful summary of Bourdieu's thinking on habitus and hexis, see Jeremy F. LANE: *Pierre Bourdieu. A Critical Introduction*. London and Sterling, VA. 2000; for a more detailed version of the present paragraph, see ROODENBURG: *Pierre Bourdieu (as in note 19)*.

Connerton clearly profited from the insights of Bourdieu, with whom he shared a phenomenological stance. Connerton, however, approaches the issues from a somewhat different angle, focusing on 'habit' or 'bodily' memory, which he construes as a wrongly neglected aspect of Halbwachs' social or collective memory. Habit memory refers to the ways in which our bodies remember a certain performance (for example, when we remember how to ride a bicycle or how to read). It is a particular kind of memory. As Connerton writes "often it is only by the fact of the performance that we are able to recognize and demonstrate to others that we do in fact remember".²¹ This definition accommodates Bourdieu's bodily automatisms, though Connerton is at pains to avoid the terms *habitus* and *hexis*.

To elucidate the particular nature of habit memory, of how the past is sedimented in our bodies, he makes a further distinction between 'inscribing practices' and 'incorporating practices'. While the first type of action refers to practices through which information is retained in all kinds of technical devices, from books and gramophone records to computers, the second type of action points to practices that specifically use the body as a device for remembering. The distinction, so Connerton cautions, is mainly a heuristic one. Most, if not all, inscribing practices involve an element of incorporation, just as an incorporating practice may contain a component of inscription.²²

A third distinction was made by Diana Taylor, who distinguishes between what she calls the 'archive' and the 'repertoire'. Archival memory, according to Taylor, exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films and compact discs. Conversely, the repertoire exists as embodied memory, as performances, gestures, orality, movements, dancing and singing.

Taylor, for her part, profited from Connerton. Her archive and repertoire clearly resemble the latter's inscribing and incorporating practices. Interestingly, Taylor points out that the archive/repertoire divide exceeds that of written versus spoken language, for the archive encompasses more than written texts, just as the repertoire contains both verbal and nonverbal performances. What makes them different is their means of transmitting knowledge (the archive through supposedly enduring materials; the repertoire through embodied action of the people actually involved), and of course the requirements of storage and dissemination. Similarly, the relationship between the two modes of transmission is not sequential. The rep-

21 CONNERTON (as in note 19), pp. 22-23.

22 CONNERTON (as in note 19), pp. 77-78.

ertoire does not disappear as the archive gains ascendancy; on the contrary, both usually work in tandem. Moreover, we should not construe the relationship as one of true versus false, unmediated versus mediated, or primordial versus modern – dichotomous qualifications not always shied away from by cultural historians such as Jacques le Goff or Pierre Nora (or, we might add, the young Muchembled).²³

Right now, there is a quickly growing number of studies predicated on the writings of Mauss, Bourdieu, Connerton and Taylor, and on insights derived from phenomenology in general. I believe that they may all be of help in specifying what we precisely understand by the 'familiar' or the 'taken-for-granted' in everyday culture, and to focus our research on issues of embodiment, performance and – keeping in mind Taylor's entwinement of 'archive' and 'repertoire' – intermediality. Conversely, as experts on Taylor's 'repertoire' – have we not always focused on 'performances, gestures, orality, movements, dancing, and singing'? European ethnologists may substantially contribute to the present discussions on embodiment and performance, both in the humanities and the social sciences.²⁴

Strategic research sites

Finally, I believe that Bourdieu's writings provide us with an interesting comparative approach to the 'familiar'. Finding now its closest partners in cultural history and cultural anthropology and making its main task to systematically defamiliarize the European 'familiar' in all its national and global complexity, European ethnology simply needs such a comparative framework. It may profit considerably from adopting a dual comparative perspective: from construing not only contemporary cultures outside Europe, but also from the 'strategic research sites' of a past Europe, more or less in the way Bourdieu developed his notions of *habitus* and *hexis* by construing Algerian Kabylia (and partly also the French Béarn) as such strategic sites.

23 TAYLOR (as in note 19), pp. 18-22.

24 For a recent summary, see Doris BACHMANN-MEDICK: *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*. Reinbek 2006, chapter 2; for views of historians, see Jürgen MARTSCHUKATT, Steffen PATZOLD (eds.): *Geschichtswissenschaft und 'performative turn'*. *Ritual, Inzenierung und Performanz vom Mittelalter bis zum Neuzerit*. Cologne 2003; Peter BURKE: *Performing History. The Importance of Occasions*. In: *Rethinking History* 9, 2005, pp. 35-52. See also the important innovating writings of Erika FISCHER-LICHTE and Barbara KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT. Though both authors approach performance from the perspective of theatre studies, their thinking differs substantially.

Before Bourdieu of course, Emile Durkheim and Mauss (to invoke only the French tradition) advocated a similar approach. In their view, anthropology, still conceived of as the study of 'primitive' society, could offer a fresh and probing perspective on 'modern' society. But in striving to abolish the conventional distinction between anthropology and sociology, Bourdieu went a step further. Alternately turning an anthropological gaze to our own society and a sociological gaze towards a non-western one, Bourdieu aimed to defamiliarise the familiar. He sought to call into questions all the phenomena we take so readily for granted in our own society, while, at the same time, to familiarize the strange, the 'other'. As Jeremy Lane put it, Bourdieu's project was twofold: 'On the one hand, he sought a way of suspending his readers' pre-reflexive investment in everything they took for granted about their own social universe. On the other, he had to work to preserve the critical force of his anthropological work and prevent it from being reduced to the study of exotic curios.'²⁵

Perhaps we may even say that looking at the European past has a double relevance to European ethnology. For in doing so we are not only confronted with the 'unfamiliar' (as the by now worn-out phrase goes, 'The past is a different country'), but we may also be confronted with elements of the contemporary 'familiar' in gestation, as it were, *in statu nascendi*. This certainly applies to all forms of 'self-knowledge' involving the body and embodiment. We find illustration of this in postures and gestures, such as the dressed body and its whole bodily comportment, most notably when appreciated as the foremost dimensions of ritual and ceremony. These dimensions were often explicitly discussed in former centuries, when they were less incorporated, not yet transformed into the 'second nature' we see in contemporary European culture.

Looking to the past (whether modern, early modern or medieval), may thus help us to defamiliarize the contemporary 'familiar' in two ways. It supports us to suspend our 'pre-reflexive investment' in the taken-for-granted. And, moreover, it allows recognition of how much of this pre-reflexive self-knowledge has been literally incarnated through the decades and ages, while still leaving room for improvisation and variability. Going against Fenske (but following Frijhoff), I would argue that we keep defining the present as ethnology's main orientation. Nevertheless, I fully agree with Fenske's plea to take the past as seriously as we do our own time.

25 Pierre BOURDIEU: *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge 1990, p. 24; cf. LANE (as in note 20), pp. 120-124; on the issues of authenticity involved, see ROODENBURG: Pierre Bourdieu (as in note 19).