

Sarah Willner, Georg Koch, Stefanie Samida (Hg.), Doing History. Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur, Münster, New York (Waxmann Verlag) 2016, X–258 S. (Edition Historische Kulturwissenschaften [EHK], 1), ISBN 978-3-8309-3269-7, EUR 29,90.

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Historical performance and reenactment have become increasingly popular in the last decades, but both their study and their practice are often shunned by academic historians. To redress this problem, the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam (Centre for Research into Contemporary History/ZZF) undertook the Research Project »Living History: Reenacted Prehistory between Research and Popular Performance« in 2012. They held an international conference at the ZZF in June 2014, which resulted in this volume. Its fourteen contributions represent a variety of fields and interdisciplinary approaches, such as media studies, cultural studies, and contemporary history. Through different methodologies, ranging from participation in and observation of reenactments, interviews with actors, and the reading of historical sources such as newspapers and films, the authors study »historical-cultural discourses, actions and imaginations« (p. 4) of times ranging from prehistory to the present. In order to look at »history in its practical application« (p. 5), the book focuses on actors of historical performance and reenactment to underscore their sensorial-emotional dimensions. It is organized around three pairs of concepts, chosen for their central place in historical and cultural studies in the last decades (p. 7): »Körper_Emotion« (Body/Emotion), »Erlebnis_Raum« (Experience/Space), »Ding_Bedeutung« (Thing/Meaning).

The first part, »Körper_Emotion«, focuses on the participants of historical performance. Arguing that body and emotions are intimately linked, the editors want to investigate the »role of the sensorial in historical-cultural practices« (p. 8). Stefanie Samida follows a group reenacting the journey of Roman soldiers along the Limes to examine how the bodies of the reenactors influenced their experience. Juliane Brauer analyzes the effects of historical performance on the museum experience to show that, while performance and heightened emotional participation leave lasting impressions on visitors, they nevertheless have their educational limitations. Sarah Willner uses interviews of visitors to an archeological trail to study how ambiance, landscape, knowledge and personal preferences influence the emotions involved in their experience of the historical site.

In the second part of the book, »Erlebnis_Raum«, the editors want to show how historical experience is tightly linked to space as a central dimension of society and human action (p. 12). In the first contribution, Frank Bösch distances himself from the present past of reenactment to offer an illuminating conceptual discussion of the construction of future historical moments in the present. Wolfgang Hochbruck's article studies the reenactment of the battle of Gettysburg in the *longue durée*. He shows how his site of reenactment leads to a »spatialization of history to a point



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where time disappears« (p. 113). Georg Koch looks at the relationship between media, archeologists and reenactment of prehistoric history in film documentaries in Germany and Great Britain. Returning to the conceptual plane, Bernhard Tschofen interrogates the interrelation of emotions, objects, and space in historical experience of heritage tourism through guidebooks and written accounts. Introducing the role of »tacit knowledge« (p. 144) in the historical experience of place, he reconstructs the cultural and intellectual traditions associated with visits to historic places. Tschofen argues against the strict separation of »doing history« and academic historical knowledge and wishes for the creation of a »trading zone« for the different groups of actors of historical knowledge.

The third and last part of the book, »Ding_Bedeutung«, studies material culture in living history, especially reenactments and the meaning and knowledge attached to it. The editors are interested in the objects of doing history as *actant* (or non-human actor) following Latour's actor-network theory. The first contribution by Mads Daugbjerg stays close to the objects and attempts to show »the power of things« in the Gettysburg reenactment scene. The two following articles, by Anja Dreschke and René Gründer, interrogate the relationship between rituals and reenactment by focusing on the determining role of the material on the atmosphere of the ritual. Dreschke's study focuses on the rituals of the Cologne Tribes, and in particular a marriage ceremony. Gründer's study introduces the question of the place of religion, especially non-Christian religion, in reenactment groups. He studies historic reenactment through reconstructed objects in neopagan Asatru-groups, concluding that objects are used to authenticate both religious and secular reenactment.

Knowledge is central to reenactment. Sven Kommer interrogates the role and the nature of knowledge in his study of the Medieval Market scene. This knowledge is linked to objects but also to practices. Through interviews, the author shows the coexistence of several levels of knowledge on the medieval scene and its importance for the relationships of the field. Finally, Miriam Sénécheau offers a historical study of a historical reenactment, the »Germanic procession« planned by the Nazi Party in 1933 in Berlin. She shows the importance given to the reconstitution of objects by the organizers in the preparations of the parade and how reconstructed artefacts, costumes, and rituals were authenticated through the participation of archaeologists and their academic discourse.

In the introduction to their book the editors claim that »history is created in the interplay between person, body, space and object« (p. 1). They convincingly show why these concepts and the questions they raise are central to the study of the performance of history. The editors apply what they call a »practical-theoretical approach« to the question of »doing history«, but orient their theoretical discussions around the themes arising from the case studies included in the book. However, by separating these aspects in three dichotomous categories, the book loses some coherence. Indeed, the individual contributions do not fit these categories convincingly as most focus on more than two concepts. It would have been more interesting to study these six concepts in relation to one another, which is what the editors originally wanted to do.

The book would have also profited from a final discussion, which would have permitted more in-depth exploration of common questions arising in the articles, but which were not part of the six concepts organizing the book. Authenticity, for example, is central to the



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performance of history not only for its material culture but also for the imagination of the historical space. Omnipresent in the book is the tension between knowledge produced in the academy and knowledge acquired through »doing history«. It would have been interesting to further discuss this issue through Tschofen's idea of a trading zone between the realms of academic history and of »doing history«. This book, by putting forward academic actors navigating both realms, provides us with a concrete first step towards negotiating this trading zone.



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