

INTRODUCTION

Approaching Historical Reenactments

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Reenactments as Historical and Cultural Tools

At first glance, historical reenactment looks like an amateur hobby, in which people dress up and perform an idealized past to audiences.¹ The term has usually been applied to the activities of minority popular history groups operating outside of formal education. However, beyond its marginalization within the field of history, historical reenactments have significantly increased in number and become popular with the public (de Groot 2016). The diversity and complexity of historical reenactments have also drawn the attention of scholars in many disciplines worldwide. This trend of increasingly complex reenactments is a relatively new development that puts into question the belief that historical reenactment is simply about entertainment and a mere trivialization of history. Recent research has shown its potential in providing a meaningful way for people to experience history. This is especially true in relation to those events relevant to the construction of the nation and national identity, as well as the dramatic historical facts that mark the collective imagination of a national community.

Historical reenactment is broadly defined as a social and personal re-creation of history, based on an exercise of historical imagination and bodily mimicry of certain historical circumstances. It allows people to experience history by creating a close relation with their past in people's act of producing the reenactment. It is sometimes argued that this enables people to

Historical Reenactment
New Ways of Experiencing History
Notes for this section begin on page 13.
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approach the mental, emotional, and spiritual experiences of those living in past times. Reenactors do not contemplate the past from a distance but must step into the position of historical persona in their speaking, dressing, moving, and relating to objects and the environment (Brescó and van Alphen, this volume). In this way, it privileges an affective relation to the past over a cognitive one. In the past two decades, different focuses of interest in historical reenactment have been developed. Schematically speaking, these can be divided in two main groups of studies: on the one side, early research discusses the epistemology and internal dynamics of historical reenactments, posing explanatory frameworks, definitions, and key constructs with which to conceptualize the past (Agnew 2004; Cook 2004; Daugbjerg 2014; Gapps 2009). These studies explore reenactment in terms of content authenticity, historical accuracy, forms of simulation and mimicry, experience, and performativity.

A more-recent set of studies have drawn attention to the effects of reenactments in society, from reenactors, onlookers, institutions, and communities (Magelssen and Justice-Malloy 2011; Thompson and Suzuki 2014). In this respect, ethnographic and historical studies have enhanced the knowledge of its internal logic—that is, its instrumentation, participants, and social effects. In other words, the focus is here on the dynamics of reenactment within society at large. Within these studies it has been shown that the impact of reenactment has crossed the barrier of academia and reenactors' associations and affinity groups. This phenomenon has caught the eye of culture and entertainment companies, leading to a considerable growth of these practices across social fields in recent years. They have been integrated in different contexts devoted to cultural production and consumption in museum displays and tours, governmental cultural programs, tourism, TV programs, and the entertainment industry (de Groot 2016). This situation has been motivated by the acknowledgment of the efficacy of historical reenactments in catching people's attention, and the opportunity they provide to put oneself in someone else's shoes through the participation in or witnessing of an ephemeral re-creation.

Due to space limitations in this introduction we report on the first group of studies, concerned with the epistemology and internal dynamics of reenactments; many chapters of this book contribute to the second group. This research has also proposed the reflection in terms of trends of thought, such as the affective turn (Agnew 2007), postcolonialism (Agnew and Lamb 2009), and disciplinary analysis more akin to the cultural studies theory (Daugbjerg 2014). Studies from anthropology, sociology, and linguistics have brought insights into historical reenactment's characteristics, functions, and impact worldwide (Agnew and Lamb 2009), which has brought attention to reenactments in a broader range of contexts and how these practices are related

to larger structures. Of particular interest here is the reflection on historical reenactment from its core—that is, historical science. In the words of Vanessa Agnew, reenactment “apparently fulfills the failed promise of academic history . . . [and] deals with the crisis of authority” (Agnew 2004, 330–31). While it may at first seem that history has banished historical reenactment from its field of studies, it is clear that the phenomenon of historical reenactments has not gone unnoticed by the discipline.

As a scientific discipline, history has engaged in interesting debates on the construction of historical knowledge and its impact on society, especially in the twentieth century (Iggers 2005). Schematically, these debates have been marked by tensions between traditional history—that is, the nineteenth century positivist and historicist approaches to history—and the new history represented by historiographic trends of the mid-twentieth century, such as the United States’ new social history, Italian micro-history, the neo-Marxist history of the Frankfurt school, or the French history of ideas (Collingwood 1946; Iggers 2005; Lorenz 1999). Traditional history results in studies with economic and military perspectives on history, stressing the role of historical leaders, battles, and the constitution of the nation-state. In contrast, the new history is a product of the social changes of the twentieth century, focusing more on the sociocultural processes and subjective variables of human evolution (Ankersmit and Kellner 2013).

As Tyson Retz elaborates in his chapter, historians such as Collingwood had approaches to what historical reenactments might offer, and most interestingly to the concepts reenactment is related to. For Collingwood, the idea of reenactment is intimately related to historical imagination and empathy, essential skills both in the method of the professional historian and for students of history; for a thorough debate on this, see Tyson, this volume. On the other hand, taking distance from historical meta-narratives, and attending to the new history studies of daily life, cultural rituals and festivities, among others, gave flesh to history in the eyes of the public. History studies of the second half of the twentieth century were underpinned by these cultural and social perspectives; from the end of the 1960s the linguistic turn strongly impacted the way history was understood within the discipline.

Are historical reenactments a reaction to new history approaches from conventional history, or vice versa? Our preliminary answer is that historical reenactments have characteristics of both traditional and new historiographies trends, and that it may be said that it is a response to the claim of more experientially close and cultural history, but at the same time it is used to maintain narratives of foundational heroes and live-changing battles. This tension is most evident if it is approached from the pedagogical lens. Schools have struggled to balance the need for creating an imagined community through affective links to the past (where all seem to speak as one, through a

single voice) and the formation of critical, democratic citizens with the tools to challenge accepted (or preferred) versions of the past, which is essentially multi-voiced or dialogical. Historical reenactments are powerful tools for creating affective relationships but are also more dynamic than more traditional forms of history in that the historical narrative is created anew at each reenactment and can thus quickly respond to social changes (Gapps, this volume). Institutional constraints can also inhibit this responsiveness.

It is also important to consider what type of historical reenactment is being analyzed. In other words, under the umbrella of this term we can find very different and even oppositional activities. Paraphrasing Agnew's (2018) idea that reenactments are a big church, it makes sense to think that there are very different activities under this label—some even opposing each other. Let us take an example of this through the comparison of two apparently similar activities. Both are based in Argentina, but similar examples can be found in other countries. In the first case, students celebrate a national day related to the country's independence in school (see Carretero, Perez-Manjarrez, and Rodríguez Moneo, this volume). This is to say, the students are following a closed ritual where the nation is viewed as an almost sacred matter with few possibilities to generate an alternative script (see also Conner-ton 1989). To some extent it could be said that the students do not speak by themselves: it is the nation-state who speaks for them and of course there is just one voice.

In the second case, eight former soldiers in the Falklands War (also called the Guerra de las Malvinas) (1982) perform a theater play called *Mined Field* by Lola Arias (see also her film about the same topic, *Theatre of War*) based on their battlefield experiences. As is well known, this war was initiated by Argentina—ruled at that time by a military junta—as a desperate political maneuver to garner political support by occupying the island. The United Kingdom reacted immediately, showed its military superiority, and recovered control over the islands. This war produced 905 victims on both sides and its main political impact consisted in an increase of the popularity of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and the fall of the dictatorship in Argentina. The eight actors in the play were at the same time soldiers in the war (four British and four Argentinian). As such, they went through a great deal of suffering and, even though they survived, the war produced an enduring psychological trauma on all of them. Of course all this appears in the play but they are not just remembering literally what they did in the war. In other words, the play does not consist of a series of monologues. Instead, it is multivoiced in its approach. In other words, this play is a performance carried out according to the procedures of the documentary theater where the stories and the actors are based on real experiences, while offering an important transformation through a dialogue with the other. Thus, the actors say

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the text is written by the author of the play but this does not correspond to a closed script: its content is full of an intense experience of re-elaboration, where the individual experiences have been reconsidered through a very profound process of reflectivity.

In sum, in both cases what is taking place is a reenactment experience. In one case a national independence day, obviously related to war and military conflict, is reenacted inside the school, and in the other case a more-recent war is reenacted in a theater. In both cases nationalistic issues play an important role. Therefore, there is a clear similarity in terms of what is being reenacted but there is also an enormous difference in how it is being reenacted. We can speculate that the resulting effects on participants will diverge in these two cases. As a matter of fact, the commemoration of the Falklands War is carried out every year in all the Argentinean schools through diverse reenactment activities because it is a mandatory piece of the national curriculum. Thus, these reenactments are very much related to the promotion of nationalism (Benwell 2014). In our opinion this difference between what is being reenacted and how it is being reenacted deserves further theoretical and empirical attention. Any reenactment has its roots in two very old cultural practices. On the one hand, theatrical experiences and, on the other hand, liturgical ones. Concerning the first experiences it is easy to see how the same theater play could be a very different meaning according to the final *mise-en-scène* defined by the director as well as by the actors. The interpretation of the original text carried out by both of them could finally produce very different versions of the same events. And something similar could be said of liturgical rites, as indicated by Agnew, Lamb, and Toman (2020), comparing Catholic and Protestant rites.

The Importance of Collective Memory

Another particularly important concept to mention in this context is that of memory. For years history and memory have been treated as two separate fields, but now they are receiving growing attention as interrelated fields; this change situates reenactments as an object of study that could be fruitfully studied by this interrelation (Carretero, Berger, and Grever 2017). Historical reenactments can be seen as an embodied and performative form of memory, tightly connected ways of giving meaning to a group's past. Memory studies have been a growing area of interest in the social and cultural sciences for several decades now and encompass a broad range of phenomena to which a subset is relevant for reenactments. Memory studies has emerged as a field separate from but linked to history. Reenactments present an interesting phenomenon to mobilize and integrate ideas from both fields. Central to

the field is the notion of collective memory. According to the concept's founder, Maurice Halbwachs (1992), collective memory implies an affective relationship to the past that supports a group identity. In this sense, the fact that most in a group remember that pi (π) is equal to 3.14 . . . is not a collective memory, but Argentinians' memory of the Falklands War is a collective memory. Halbwachs sharply contrasted history (the domain of professional historians) and memory (a group's vital connection to the past). Memory in this sense is functional for a group's present concerns and interests, including supporting its stability and solidarity among its members. In other words, it helps to construct a collective "we" through devices that allow group members to imagine and construct their shared past, present, and future. While more-recent scholarship has highlighted how history can also serve as cultural input for different groups, some distinction between history and collective memory is necessary to point out different ways of relating to the past (Wertsch 2002).

This is rather different from the notion of memory typical in psychology and common sense as a storage container; instead, it implies a process of remembering in order to do something in the present (Bartlett 1932; Brockmeier 2018; Wagoner 2017a). The storage concept of memory continues to have its place—for example, in the form of an archive (Assmann 2011)—but it remains a subordinate concept within memory studies. With regards to individual memory, the notion of reconstruction has been key to bring to the fore its creative, adaptive, and cultural dimensions, in the place of the dominant emphasis on inaccuracy and distortion (Wagoner 2017b). Similarly, reenactments are a particularly dynamic form of collective memory in that they must be physically performed by people who take on the position of historical persons; thus, reenactments can be changed at each iteration (Gapps, this volume). Contrast this with an official memorial, which is literally set in stone, and must instead be transformed through recontextualization, surrounding it with new objects, rituals, and debates. In addition to their dialogical potential (often unrealized, such as when they take the form of ritual performances in schools—see Carretero, Perez-Manjarrez, and Rodríguez Moneo, this volume), reenactments also have a clear *narrative* form that not only sets events within a historical sequence that gives closure and a genre, but also assigns actors and presents a moral (White 1987).

Consider the nationally scripted reenactment of the 1994 Rwandan genocide on its twentieth anniversary (Warner 2014). The genocide involved the brutal death of eight hundred thousand Tutsis and moderate Hutus with the goal of destroying the Tutsis ethnic group. Interestingly, the reenactment begins in the early twentieth century with the arrival of Belgian colonists, who measure noses to construct a racial hierarchy. These same actors (the only white actors in the performance, played by Russians) adopt the

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role of United Nations (UN) peacekeepers when the killing begins, driving off through the fallen bodies. Finally, the Tutsi army arrives on scene and tenderly carries the bodies off the field. The promotion of an inclusive national identity against a foreign enemy is apparent in this reenactment. Such constructions are necessary for the nation to calm ethnic tensions and move forward as a unified national group. The performance was staged in a large stadium with thirty thousand people present. Counselors stood by to aid those who had traumatic flashbacks during the performance. The events are still very a living memory for Rwandan adults and thus have resonances at both the individual and collective levels.

These events are part of what Jan Assmann (2011) has called communicative memory, which, in contrast to cultural memory, contains the memories of individuals who experienced the events concerned. As such, communicative memory is a moving boundary of eighty to a hundred years from the present. Afterwards, events become solidified in official symbols and narratives about the past that make up cultural memory, as one finds in many of the world religions. The Holocaust is an example of a case currently shifting over to cultural memory as all the remaining survivors age and die. This distinction clearly has relevance to the kinds of events depicted through historical reenactment. For distant events, historical reenactments can be seen as a powerful device for making the past vividly present and putting current group members in the shoes of their forebears, to instil either pride or shame. For more-recent events, reenactments can be used as a means of working through a difficult past and giving it narrative closure, as seen with regards to the Falklands War theater example above. Chapters of this volume present a wealth of diverse case studies that explore how reenactments can be an active and dynamic device of memory, and in other cases act to maintain a frozen repetition of the past. It is also important to consider that this repetition very often also has a social and political function, particularly in relation to nationalistic and patriotic objectives (Carretero 2011, chap. 4), as will be shown in the next example related to the American Civil War (1861–65).

Reenactments as “Real” Ties Among Past, Present, and Future

Interestingly, reenactments of the American Civil War started even before the real fighting had ended, but they experienced a new impulse in the 1960s. In this case, we will present a short analysis through a scene from the well-known television series *House of Cards*, of enormous popularity in the past decade. It does not seem necessary to justify the decisive influence of current television series in the formation of historical representations of

students and citizens. Furthermore, it is quite plausible to conclude that they could be even more influential than academic education, which includes numerous reenactments in both formal and informal settings (see Carretero, Perez-Manjarrez, and Rodríguez Moneo, this volume). It is very important also to mention that historical reenactments have been traditionally associated to patriotic rituals as the Pledge of Allegiance (Ellis 2005). The scene that we are going to analyze—which could perfectly be a real situation—reproduces the visit of Frank Underwood, vice president of the United States in the aforementioned series, to a place of memory, called living history in the United States, dedicated to the commemoration of the Civil War; all the action takes place in a historical reenactment. Certainly, it is enormously attractive to many people that history is not only studied but also turned into actions. There are hundreds of citizens—thousands in some cases—simulating military actions for several days as if they were the real soldiers of about one hundred and fifty years ago, and there are thousands of other citizens as spectators. In this case, Frank Underwood, due to his high political rank, is a privileged spectator of that reenactment, along with many other people. As is customary in these cases, a ranger, in charge of the activity, acts as the host of the vice president, and it is in this context that the following dialogue takes place:

Ranger: Just imagine what it looked like back then, at the edge of the ridge there was a dense thicket which allowed the northern troops to come in and form on the Mule Shoe. The Southern regiments were entrenched in these areas at the apex of the line. As you can see, the topography forced the two sides down towards each other.

Vice President: This is the Bloody Angle?

Ranger: That's right.

Vice President: I was reading about it last night.

Ranger: Close quarters, hand-to-hand combat. All told, about 15,000 Union and Confederate soldiers lost their lives here at the Bloody Angle on a battlefield that's only about half a mile wide. Now, Mister Vice President, we have a surprise for you today. I'd like to introduce you to Corporal Augustus Elijah Underwood of the 12th Regiment of McGowan's Brigade, your great-great-great-grandfather.

Augustus E. Underwood: I died here, in this battle.

Vice President: I think there's been a mistake. My grandfather never mentioned any Underwoods in the war.

Ranger: We did our research. He definitely fought and died here.

Augustus E. Underwood: I was 24. And my son, your great-great grandfather, was two years old, I never met him.

Vice President: It happened here? At the Bloody Angle?

Augustus E. Underwood: At the edge of those woods, my skull was bashed in with a rock.

Ranger: Thank you, now, over here, we've got something that's very interesting as well.

Vice President: Just a moment, tell me more.

Augustus E. Underwood: It was the middle of the night, we were out of musket balls, just bayonets, and only half of us had those. I had nothing, just these hands. It was so dark, you couldn't see nothing, but you could hear them, the Yanks running toward us, then you could smell them. First Yank that brushed up against me, I grabbed him by the throat, falls down on the ground, I bit him so hard I could taste the bone. Then he grabs a rock, brings it down right here, that was that. I was buried in a mass grave, no headstone.

Violin scene, some minutes later

Vice President: Did Augustus play?

Augustus E. Underwood: I like to think I did.

Vice President: What's your name?

Augustus E. Underwood: When I'm here, I'm Augustus Underwood.

Vice President: What's your real name?

Augustus E. Underwood: Doesn't this feel real to you?

Vice President: Will you show me where he died? The exact spot.

Augustus E. Underwood: I will, sir.

Vice President: I'm gonna pay respects to my ancestor. I would appreciate a little privacy.

Augustus E. Underwood: Just beyond those trees.

Vice President: Thank you, I'll be good from here.

Final scene

Vice President: Today we break earth on the Overland Campaign Visitors Center, so that the generations to come will fully absorb the importance of this hallowed ground, the wilderness where the campaign commenced. Augustus, would you do the honor? *The vice president invites Augustus.* And now a moment of silence and prayer for the dead. . . . Thank you, God bless the United States of America.

We think this example shows very clearly the reasons why these types of re-creations are as effective as devices that generate a historical representation that, on the one hand, is vivid and realistic, but, on the other hand, does not seem to favor a critical understanding of the past. Perhaps the concepts that best synthesize the reasons for its great impact are emotion, identity, and realism. Undoubtedly these are three powerful weapons so that, as Vice President Underwood affirms in the excerpt above, "the generations to come will fully absorb the importance of this hallowed ground," displaying, as is usual in political language, a certain type of secular religion. In other words, memory must be added to the three elements mentioned, since this understanding is intended to last over time. And for this it is intended that the people who visit the site in question identify with its protagonists and even see possible ancestors exercising a specific role in the battle, as is

the case of Augustus. The excitement is provided by the whole context of shooting, even in salvos, and hand-to-hand fights for hours and sometimes days. And realism cannot be expressed in a better way than when Augustus enunciates that semantically impossible phrase, albeit with correct syntax, “I died here, in this battle,” and then challenged his own descendant by asking him, “Doesn’t this feel real to you?” In other words, the historical reenactment becomes even more real than reality itself. However, in re-creations of this type, which are enormously similar to the school events that go through the daily school life of millions of students in dozens of countries, central elements are absent, and without those elements historical understanding is practically impossible. Thus, it could be also said that the reenactment is insufficient to grasp a complex view on the historical events represented by these actions. This view would be based on the rational and critical elements that historiography provides us—that is, the social and political concepts that would allow us to fully understand that war event and its historical context. For example, what did each side of that contest represent? Which one defended slavery and which one sought to abolish it? In short, what model of society was at stake in that war and what did it mean in the context of that country?

The answers to these questions, or other similar questions, tend to be totally absent from historical reenactments of this nature. Thus, what is being presented is basically an idealized and romantic narrative that the state itself offers, explicitly, as is the case with Vice President Underwood. Interestingly, he is also saying that this representation of the past, based on a supposed equivalence between the aims of the North and the South in the US Civil War, will last in the future. In other words, the fabricated reality of the reenactment in this case plays a clear educational purpose not only for students but also for citizens in general. And this purpose is clearly not just to provide an explanation of the past but also to formulate a specific tie with the present and the future, which also avoids any possible criticism of that past.

On the contrary, probably a number of reenactments offer the possibility for citizens to generate a critical view of the past. In this spirit, the present book provides a variety of case studies of reenactments to explore the diversity of the phenomenon, and seeks unifying concepts to understand it.

Preview of the Book

The book has been arranged into four parts to provide straightforward points of entrance to different thematized aspects of reenactments, such as theoretical and methodological issues, identity construction, its political dynamics, and educational functions. The book closes with an epilogue.

Part I addresses some broad theoretical and methodological issues that characterize reenactments vis-à-vis other modes of representing history, including the elasticity of the term (chapter 1), and the significance of affective immersion in the activity (chapter 2).

In chapter 1, Bill Niven asks if we are stretching the term “reenactment” to a breaking point, given the variety of activities we now classify with it. He explores the possibility of a typology of reenactment forms as well as principles by which it might be made. Reenactments take on much of the territory of collective memory and indeed seem to be our most contemporary form of commemoration, yet with a difference: they enable us to inhabit historical roles while at the same time not obliging us to commit ethically to lessons learned (the mantra of universal cosmopolitan Holocaust memory), which makes it possible to move from one role to the other in a free play of experiment with different identifications (see also chapter 3). These points are illustrated with the case study of the reenactment of the Kindertransport, the rescue of some ten thousand mainly Jewish children from Nazi Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, mainly to Britain, in 1938 and 1939.

In chapter 2, Adriaansen focuses on historical reenactors’ thrill of being immersed in the past while reenacting a historical event, which has often been referred to as the “period rush.” He sets out to conceptualize this phenomenon in the framework of Huizinga’s (1949) and Hans-Georg Gadamer’s (2004) theories of play. By applying ludic theory, it is shown that the immersiveness of the period rush need not be understood as a being immersed in the past itself, but rather as being immersed in the play of the reenactment. Highlighting the play element of reenactments will show that they often function as historical simulations—operationalized models of historical reality and of the behavior of historical actors—rather than as mere representations of the past. In this way this chapter aims at constituting an analytical framework for the interpretation of immersion in the context of historical reenactment that acknowledges that we are not dealing with the past itself, but rather with its traces.

Part II highlights how reenactments function as tools for cultural and national identities in Spain, at heritage sites (chapter 3) and annual festivals (chapter 4). In chapter 3, González Álvarez, Alonso González, and Rodríguez Hernández reflect on reenactments as sociopolitical contexts where the public engages with constructed notions of cultural heritage, and build bottom-up narratives about contemporary representations of the Iron Age in Spain. The intended purpose is to disseminate the results of historical and archaeological research, linked to museums and heritage centers, or ongoing archaeological excavations. However, these events can be also understood as popular culture, contexts where the public knowledge about the past is

negotiated and reproduced by different stakeholders. The authors show how ancient colonial identities are outstanding referents for contemporary identitarian social movements underpinning political parties and social feelings, and thus are related to nationalism, regionalism, and the invention of traditions. Finally, the authors discuss how reenactment can be an opportunity for social scientists to explore contemporary societal perceptions of the past, and how contemporary issues can be uncritically naturalized through their projection on to the distant past in a form of naïve presentism.

In chapter 4, Brescó and van Alphen analyze the *Moros y Cristianos* (Moors and Christians) festival, particularly to the extent that it re-creates different local episodes related to the Reconquista—the historical period spanning from the Islamic conquest of the Iberian Peninsula at the beginning of the eighth century until the takeover of the emirate of Granada by the Catholic monarchs in 1492. With a long and entangled history, and characterized by a carnivalesque and ludic atmosphere, these festivals are popular annual dramatizations of a battle between good and evil, heroes and villains. Drawing on Paul Connerton’s bodily approach to collective memory, this chapter sets out to analyze *Moros y Cristianos* as a performative version of the Reconquista master narrative and the degree to which this celebration contributes toward reinforcing a Spanish national identity in opposition to the Muslim other. Along these lines, the authors compare traditional ritual performances, based on a continuity with the past, and modern historical reenactments, where authenticity stands as a key element in the simulation of the past qua past. The chapter concludes by highlighting the importance of commemorative celebrations, like *Moros y Cristianos*, not only for the study of collective memory—in its affective and performative dimension—but also as a case study from which to analyze and rethink modern historical reenactments.

Part III extends the politics surrounding reenactments to include coming to terms with troubled pasts of colonialism (chapters 5 and 6) and state terrorism (chapter 7). In Chapter 5 Gapps discusses reenactments of Australian colonial history and the cultural and political wars around statues and memorials that have dominated recent engagements with Australia’s Frontier Wars. The Australian Statue Wars are in many ways a reflection of the increasingly global nature of political contention. But they have significant local inflections that are driven by Indigenous Australians and their political allies. The Statue Wars erupted in response to protests over the constant reminders of the trauma of decimation and dispossession in a remarkably unchanged colonial commemorative landscape. When statues of Captain Cook were graffitied and paint-bombed in 2017, the Australian government’s Heritage Council was forced to look at the level of protections in place for monuments that relate to Australia’s early colonial history. Surprisingly, it found legislation was indeed adequate for the protection of colonial historic sites

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and monuments, but not for the protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands cultural and historic sites. The concept of counter-memorials is discussed, as it has become the rallying cry for historians and others not willing to tear down colonial monuments.

While most research on reenactments has been done in Western countries, Zurné in chapter 6 analyzes Indonesia's reenactments of the Nation Revolution (1945–49) against the colonial powers, which has long been glorified. At the end of President Suharto's thirty-two-year rule (1967–98) and monopoly over the production of history, there was an opening of new spaces to renegotiate Indonesian history and a loss in reenactments popularity. However, in 2013 a local historical society resumed the yearly event, seeking to realize an imagined reality centered around three particular values: authenticity, spectacle, and comradeship, rather than a re-creation of the past as such. This narrative emphasizes rather the power of ordinary Indonesian citizens in history-making, counteracting the state-centered nationalism under former president Suharto's rule. This case study shows how reenactments can be considered prisms through which the politics of historical representations are negotiated, involving not only reenactors themselves but also the local municipality, ministry, and even the national Indonesian army.

Reenactments have tended to focus on re-creating battles, geographic discoveries, and other historical events that affirm national identities. In chapter 7, González de Oleaga explores instead the different performative strategies employed at each of the secret detention, torture, and extermination centers that operated in Argentina between 1976 and 1984 and that are now open to the public. Although not reenactments in the strict sense of the term, they share with it the characteristic features of experience, subjectivity, and transmission. The idea of experience, understood as the possibility of allowing the subject to live past events, is fundamental to reenactments. Yet, in this attempt, the subjective distance between past and present is blurred, as if it were possible for the subject to relive the reenacted events without any distance. A better understanding of how these mechanisms are viewed and designed can provide insight into the problems associated with the generational transmission of traumatic memory.

Finally, part IV explores the pedagogical functions of reenactments in both formal (chapter 8) and informal (chapter 9) educational contexts. In chapter 8, Carretero, Perez-Manjarrez and Rodríguez Moneo examine the effects of school historical reenactments in students' identity construction and historical understanding, focusing on the case of Argentina. They examine the translation of historiographical knowledge into the school, with special attention to the widespread nationalistic approach to history education. This is followed by an analysis of students' narratives of the Argentinian school historical reenactment of national independence. The findings sug-

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gest that historical reenactments are based on romantic and heroic narratives and nationalistic discourses that serve to exalt national identity and national values, as well as an invented common group destiny. In highlighting their relation to identity and psychological concerns, the authors discuss the findings' implications for civic education and historical thinking development.

In chapter 9, Retz thematizes historical reenactment's attention to the details of physical, emotional, and psychological experience in the place of large-scale historical processes and structures, which have been the traditional modes of historical representation. Even if we grant that historical reenactment is more visceral, immediate, and creative than traditional modes of historical representation, can it claim to be a more insightful and productive means of gaining self-knowledge? Retz argues first that the educational potential of historical reenactment is restricted by its inattention to the structures that give rise to historical movements and events. Second, he suggests that an enhanced attention to such structures offers the potential for historical reenactment to be a more self-reflective and critical practice. Themes explored in presenting these two arguments include the relation of reenactment to empathy, where reenactment sits within frameworks of historical thinking and historical consciousness, as well as the primacy of critical techniques in historical interpretation and representation.

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Notes

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