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Christine Gundermann et al.

KEY TERMS OF PUBLIC HISTORY

Authenticity

Imagination

Emotion

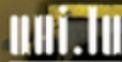
Performativity

Experience

Historical
Culture

Memory

Historical
Thinking



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CONTEMPORARY AND DIGITAL HISTORY

Reception

PUBLIC HISTORY IN
EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES

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G

Christine Gundermann, Juliane Brauer, Filippo Carlà-Uhink, Judith Keilbach,
Georg Koch, Thorsten Logge, Daniel Morat, Arnika Peselmann, Stefanie Samida,
Astrid Schwabe and Miriam Sénécheau

Key Terms of Public History

Public History in European Perspectives



Edited by

Thomas Cauvin, Karin Priem and Sandra Camarda

Volume 2

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Preface

This book is the fruit of research undertaken by the Public History Network. Thanks to generous support from the German Research Foundation, this group pursued collaborative research between 2017 and 2021 under the rubric of ‘Public History – Theory and Methodology of a New Historical Subdiscipline’. Our team consists of representatives of archaeology, ancient, modern and contemporary history, history didactics, public history, European ethnology/empirical cultural science (*Empirische Kulturwissenschaft*) and film and media studies. We decided to publish our work in the form of a collective monograph as this best reflects our working process. While the text is a joint effort, the authors chiefly responsible for each chapter are listed in the appendix.

Our overriding goal was to go beyond the idea of public history as an applied field of academic history, teasing out its potential as a sub- and transdiscipline. As such, public history speaks to a wide range of questions concerning multimodal, multimedial and performative phenomena that have yet to be addressed in this way in other historical sub-disciplines. Approaches to public history are extremely heterogeneous. Many discourses have developed autonomously in connection with key concepts specific to a given field of research; other discourses have been strongly oriented towards analyses of best practice, particularly in the English-speaking world. Although public history has been discussed as such for more than forty years, it is still in its infancy as a sub-discipline of academic history – which is where we come in. We do not seek to propagate a ‘grand unifying theory’ encompassing all current approaches to theorising public representations of history along with a set of methods. Instead, by taking account of previous approaches and perspectives, we aim to create a basis for communication for all disciplines concerned with manifestations of history in the public sphere. We make no claim to interpretative sovereignty based on a specific new model, instead striving to strengthen one of the basic mechanisms of academic research, namely co-operative scholarly discourse.

We would like to thank the German Research Foundation for its trust in our work, the University of Cologne for supporting our network administratively, the Max Planck Institute for Human Development Berlin, the Free University of Berlin, the University of Hamburg and the University of Education Freiburg for facilitating our workshops, and student assistants Janina Raeder, Katharina Wonnemann, Karl Dargel, Marlen Schulze, Michael Schuhmacher, Laura Kern and Tabe Ritterbeeks for their support during the project.

This book was originally written in German and published by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. As we believe it is crucial to broaden the discourse on the theoretical foundation of public history, we decided to translate the book into English to grow

the critical audience and introduce a German approach to this topic. We owe a debt of gratitude to publishers De Gruyter, and in particular to our key interlocutor Rabea Rittgerodt, for including us in their publishing programme, to Thomas Cauvin, Karin Priem and Sandra Camarda for incorporating the book into the series *Public History in European Perspectives*, and to Alex Skinner, who supported us with translation and editing.

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1 Introduction

Public history is a new and booming field in the German-speaking countries. In the last fifteen years, degree programmes, specialized courses and other educational offerings focused on ‘public history’, ‘applied history’, ‘history in the public sphere’ and ‘public history mediation’ have emerged, particularly in university history departments. It is now rare to find a conference or research field devoid of references to public history as the public or publicly visible representation of history. Yet it soon becomes apparent that the term ‘public history’ is understood and used in quite different ways. In the German-speaking world – as in the United States, where public history first took off as a field of activity within and beyond the university – a variety of definitions have appeared that are intended to bring clarity. These have changed over time in parallel with altered perspectives on, and questions about, representations of history. In the 1970s, scholars chiefly sought to get to grips with the phenomenon of ‘history-making’ done outside of research institutions, as Robert Kelley put it in 1978.¹ While he was still describing the work of professional historians outside of universities and schools, in the early 1990s the US National Council on Public History (NCPH), the first and now largest organisation representing the interests of public historians, emphatically included non-professionals. Its striking assertion was that public history was ‘history for the public, about the public, and by the public’.² In the first instance, then, ‘public history’ should be understood as contrasting with ‘academic history’. Since the early 1990s, researchers have focussed primarily on the practices and goals

1 ‘In its simplest meaning, Public History refers to the employment of historians and the historical method outside of academia: in government, private corporations, the media, historical societies and museums, even in private practice. Public Historians are at work whenever, in their professional capacity, they are part of the public process. An issue needs to be resolved, a policy must be formed, the use of a resource or the direction of an activity must be more effectively planned – and an historian is called upon to bring in the dimension of time: this is Public History.’ Robert Kelley: ‘Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects’, in: *The Public Historian* 1/1 (1978), 16–28, here 16.

2 Charles C. Cole, Jr.: ‘Public History’s Influence on Historical Scholarship. Public History: What Difference Has it Made?’, in: *The Public Historian* 16/4 (1994), 9–35, here 11.

of public history. Archaeologist Faye Sayer, for example, defines public historians as people who engage ‘in the practice of communicating the past to the public’.³ Contemporary historian Irmgard Zündorf also underscores that public history encompasses any form of the public portrayal of history that ‘takes place outside of schools and academic institutions’. With respect to public historians, she states:

In addition to the professional mastery of historical methods, they require the competence to make complex scholarly findings accessible to audiences without historical training in a simple, interesting way that is well adapted to the media of transmission used.⁴

From a historical perspective, when it comes to public history academics have too often become mired in definitional issues. This is especially evident in the introductory texts published in recent years.⁵ Although the definitions presented there allow the reader to orient themselves within the structure of a given book, they are far less effective at placing public history within the academic field itself. Public history often comes across as a catch-all for history as it appears in different media and institutions. Above all, there has been a strong tendency to use the term as a description of best practice. An exception to this is Marko Demantowsky’s blueprint, which presents public history as a blend of established concepts, such as historical culture and memory, while also presenting the field for the first time – informed by sociology – as a discourse on identity.⁶ We take a different approach in this book. With the help of key concepts, we

3 Faye Sayer: *Public History. A Practical Guide*, London 2015, 2.

4 Irmgard Zündorf: ‘Zeitgeschichte und Public History (Version: 2.0)’, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 6 September 2016, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.2.699.v2>. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of literal quotations from non-English language publications are our own.

5 For example, Thomas Cauvin: *Public History. A Textbook of Practice*, New York 2016; Sayer: *Public History*; Cherstin Lyon et al: *Introduction to Public History. Interpreting the Past, Engaging Audiences*, Lanham (MD) 2017; David Dean (ed.): *A Companion to Public History*, Hoboken (NJ) 2018. Irmgard Zündorf and Martin Lücke present at least two key concepts (*Geschichtskultur* and *Erinnerungskultur*, that is, ‘historical culture’ and ‘culture of remembrance’) in the first German-language introduction, but without providing a detailed rationale for this choice. See Martin Lücke and Irmgard Zündorf: *Einführung in die Public History*, Göttingen 2018.

6 Marko Demantowsky: ‘What is Public History’, in: Marko Demantowsky (ed.): *Public History and School. International Perspectives*, Berlin and Boston 2018, 3–37, here 26.

aim to orient readers within public history's theoretical foundations, whose roots in turn lie in a variety of (sub-)disciplines, to bring these core theoretical elements together, and thus to strengthen the study of public history as a sub-discipline of academic history.

Even a cursory glance at the various sub-disciplines of history in the academy reveals that representations of history are already being researched under quite specific conditions. Ancient history, for example, uses the concept of reception to thematise modes of the cultural revival and transformation of both people and things from antiquity. History didactics has articulated its research focus, in near-paradigmatic form, through the concept of historical culture. Modern and contemporary history, in particular, have integrated the concepts of collective memory and – in German speaking countries – culture of remembrance (*Erinnerungskultur*) as innovative models into their own research practices. But scholars outside the field of academic history have also been exploring forms of 'making history', with a particular focus on heritage or cultural heritage (the two terms are used synonymously in this book) as well as tradition. Many discourses have for decades been conducted largely in isolation from one another, although the scholars involved were investigating similar or even identical phenomena. The core focus of our book, then, is one that has already been conceived, theorised and modelled through a wide variety of terms and by different disciplines. To talk about it across disciplines and research it in transdisciplinary fashion requires us to get to grips with these terms. We thus regard them as key concepts of public history and consequently as the theoretical basis for a research-oriented public history.

In this context, we understand public history as the study of the communication of history. This minimal definition is chiefly intended to render visible the practices and performances – and thus the multimodal communication – of history as an object of research. As an academic discipline, we therefore divide it into the fields of theory, empirical research, pragmatics and norms, drawing on a highly successful model developed by German history didactics.⁷

⁷ For an introduction, see: Bernd Schönemann: 'Geschichtsdidaktik, Geschichtskultur, Geschichtswissenschaft', in: Hilke Günther-Arndt (ed.): *Geschichts-Didaktik. Praxishandbuch für die Sekundarstufe I und II*, 5th edn., Berlin 2011, 11–22; Jörn Rüsen: 'Auf dem Weg zu einer Pragmatik der Geschichtskultur', in: Ulrich Baumgärtner and Waltraud Schreiber (eds.): *Geschichts-Erzählung und Geschichts-Kul-*

Theory within public history is where its objects of investigation are conceptualized, and as we hope to show in this book, this is an excellent jumping-off point for the discussion of other core concepts. Empirical public history, meanwhile, is home to impact research in the broadest sense, examining the historical practices, ideas and narratives of individuals and social groups and analysing a wide range of public history media and institutions. Pragmatic and normative public history not only enable discussion of the social and always ethically charged goals of history communication, but also stimulate debate on the potential principles or general quality criteria of public history's products and practices.⁸

We adhere to certain basic premises that determine the coordinates of public history as a sub-discipline and will briefly outline them here. In recent years, there has been much debate about where public history ought to be located as a research topic – should it form part of modern history or history didactics? Should it instead be seen as a branch of the cultural sciences (*Kulturwissenschaft*), given that it combines so many transdisciplinary elements? We see the discipline of history as a whole as a key benchmark for public history, because the latter is always ultimately concerned with a specific history (or specific histories) in light of their various performances and forms. But history is not the only reference discipline, because research into the communication of history is infeasible without impulses from media and theatre studies, social and cultural anthropology, and archaeology, for example. We thus emphasise the transdisciplinary character of public history. As a result, our book mainly grapples with concepts used in the historical disciplines to explore representations of history, effectively building a bridge to neighbouring disciplines.

Public history is not bound to specific topics, eras or spaces. In its various forms, it can relate to any topic, any time period, any region and any other focus of academic history, which is why it is impossible to assign it to any of its traditional sub-disciplines: this is an overarching and open field. Although public history, especially in

tur. Zwei geschichtsdidaktische Leitbegriffe in der Diskussion, Munich 2001, 81–97, here 89 f.

⁸ For an introduction, see: Christine Gundermann: 'Public History. Vier Umkreisungen eines widerspenstigen Gegenstandes', in: Christine Gundermann et al. (eds.): *Geschichte in der Öffentlichkeit. Konzepte – Analysen – Dialoge*, Berlin 2019, 87–114, here 105 ff.

Germany, has received a great deal of impetus from history didactics, it is not a subset of this sub-discipline either. First, it goes beyond the key paradigms of historical consciousness and historical culture by enquiring systematically into, and harnessing, the significance and potential of other theoretical conceptions. Second, although public history too fosters historical thinking, it does not foreground this aspect in the manner of history didactics. Public history thus stands alongside the traditional sub-disciplines of academic history, while always forming part of them – insofar as specialised knowledge from these sub-disciplines is always vital to researching the communication of history.

Hence, we do not view public history as a discipline running counter to academic productions of history. Such conceptual antagonism was particularly important in the early days of public history as it informed the description of phenomena and, above all, facilitated the valorisation of non-academic historical output. This distinction is still used today, primarily to characterise typical fields of activity.⁹ But we oppose any attempt to exclude academic and teaching institutions from the field of public history for two reasons. Understood as a scholarly discipline, public history researches the communication of history in every possible setting. This includes places such as universities, academies and schools insofar as they too form part of the public discourse on history. The communication of history involves many actors, in a wide variety of institutions and with different motives and goals, who influence each other. Rather than questioning the value of history produced according to academic criteria, we wish to make it a subject of discourse as an aspect of the making and experiencing of history, because this too takes place in society. In this respect, public history as a discipline has the potential to become an agent of reflection for other sub-disciplines of academic history, without limiting itself or being limited to assessing how effectively historical research provides guidance for present-day citizens.

This volume brings together ten key concepts central to public history and thus provides a building block for its theorisation. Crucial

⁹ As can be seen in Irmgard Zündorf's definition, presented above, and, for example, in Habbo Knoch: 'Wem gehört die Geschichte? Aufgaben der "Public History" als wissenschaftlicher Disziplin', in: Wolfgang Hasberg and Holger Thünnemann (eds.): *Geschichtsdidaktik in der Diskussion. Grundlagen und Perspektiven*, Frankfurt a.M. 2016, 303–346, here 304.

here are those terms that seek to define our topic more precisely. For us, memory, historical culture, reception and heritage were obligatory key or basic concepts. Each entails fundamental *modi operandi* from history didactics, modern history, classical studies and the broad field of the cultural sciences.

The concept of performativity crosscuts these models, as *doing history* plays a crucial role everywhere. Scholars concerned with this ‘doing’ have addressed, in reflexive fashion, a key element of early public history movements while also emphasising the social dimension of practising history, which is more or less pronounced in each of the basic concepts (historical culture, memory, reception and heritage), but has been increasingly emphasised in recent times.

Through the concepts of authenticity and experience, we focus deductively on the two major ‘advertising promises’ characteristic of current representations of history. No present-day museum, documentary film or game fails to highlight the experience of history or promote the authenticity of its own product. The aim here is to explain terms in an easily understandable way while scrutinising their analytical acuity – thus turning ‘advertising promises’ into categories of analysis.

We have included the terms ‘emotion’ and ‘imagination’ because – like performativity – they constantly overlap with all other conceptual fields. Authenticity cannot be understood without reference to emotions and imagination. Reception cannot be described without imagination, while memory is impossible to conceptualise without emotion. Both emotion and imagination are concepts that underlie the construction of historical meaning as well as underpinning historical learning. Emotions in particular have become increasingly present in recent years when it comes to the appeal and sustainability of historical experiences – and they have been framed by an altered discourse within the discipline of history. Without emotions, meanwhile, it would be impossible to explain one of the core topics of this book: historical thinking.

After careful consideration, we have opted not to present mediation (in German *Vermittlung*) as a key concept of public history here – in full awareness that this oscillating term designates a crucial field of activity for public historians outside research institutions and is promoted as such. Instead, we focus on ‘historical thinking’, a term we believe currently best captures how people systematically appropriate or engage with history. This concept is not only less hier-

archical than that of mediation, thus avoiding an implicit top-down perspective, but is also domain-specific. We thus present key theorems and principles from history didactics, in the belief that this is the best way to qualitatively analyse –and more richly configure – educational products, specifically in the field of public history.

We are aware that this selection allows us to make no claim to exhaustiveness and that others would have made a different choice. All we can aspire to is an exemplary and focussed look at a wide range of topics. Many central terms open up a conceptual field that inevitably requires reference to, or differentiation from, other concepts. In such cases, we have decided to use information boxes. These are colour-coded and summarise, briefly and concisely, our understanding of these terms and how they relate to the key concepts we have presented. The individual articles are always structured in a similar way to help orient the reader. In each case, we begin with an example and take a brief historiographical look at the term and the concepts behind it. But the focus is on the current form taken by the key concepts, which are first examined systematically in all their theoretical depth and then explored with a view to their operationalisation within public history. We do not present a (supposedly) neutral description of all approaches, but deliberately and interpretatively select those we see as crucial to successful transdisciplinary communication in the field of public history. Our contributions are always to be understood in part as a component of current academic discourse.

This book is intended as an introduction. With this compact tool, master's students, for whom public history courses are typically offered, can quickly and confidently orient themselves in the field beyond their own historical sub-discipline. Teachers of public history can also use this book to thematise individual concepts, potentially from outside their discipline, in a targeted way. This enables them to present conceptual models across (sub-)disciplinary boundaries and examine their own subject's theoretical concepts for their strengths, gaps and potential for supplementation. In our teaching, we have found that this greatly enhances the planning and implementation of transdisciplinary courses, and we hope that in this respect too our book can prove a useful aid for other teachers within and outside history departments. The chapters on the key concepts can therefore be read independently. They are listed in alphabetical order and adhere to no implicit logic. Where necessary, reference is made to the other key terms or to information boxes found elsewhere in the

book. Here it may be helpful to refer to the index of subjects and persons, but all the chapters are in principle comprehensible on their own. Three to five suggestions on further reading conclude the chapters on the key concepts; a comprehensive bibliography can be found at the back of the book.

Our volume seeks to provide an introduction to basic conceptual schemas and theoretical approaches within public history for interested readers, regardless of their own disciplinary background or expertise. It thus has one overriding goal: to facilitate cooperative and reflexive communication across disciplinary boundaries. This has great potential to promote joint research into *history in the public sphere*, strengthen public history as a scholarly discipline and ultimately enrich the practices of public history.

2 Authenticity

2.1 Introduction: True history

After large parts of the Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral were destroyed by fire in spring 2019, one of the French capital's landmarks seemed lost to the world for an indefinite period. Against this background, video game publisher Ubisoft came to the public's attention with an unprecedented marketing strategy, seeking to make the cathedral accessible to interested parties digitally, in the form of the game *Assassin's Creed Unity*. This game had been launched in 2014 as the eighth instalment in the successful *Assassin's Creed series*, set in Paris during the French Revolution. As a player, one moves and fights one's way through the city, seeking to uncover a conspiracy. The avatar witnesses various historical events, such as the storming of the Bastille, while also encountering historical figures. The game includes a detailed depiction of Notre-Dame. Through a free download, Ubisoft intended to give 'every player the chance to experience the beauty of the cathedral in *Assassin's Creed Unity* on the PC' after the fire.¹ In this context, the company emphasised the special nature of the gaming experience as anchored in its detailed digital replicas of historical architecture.

Against this backdrop, the German weekly journal *Focus* speculated that the data collected to facilitate this digital replica might even play a key role in the rebuilding of the cathedral – it was, according to the magazine, the most accurate reconstruction currently available. It seemed self-evident that the architecture depicted in the game series met the key requirements of a historically authentic representation of history. The game publisher's assertion went unquestioned, a seeming matter of course. This example not only demonstrates the efficacy of a long-standing marketing strategy and the potential of digital public history. It also forces us to think about authenticity as a guarantor and core feature of 'true history'.

People are fascinated by historical topics, especially when their depictions are labelled 'authentic'. Popularised history in the form of

1 Quoted in: 'Nach Notre-Dame-Brand: Ubisoft verschenkt "Assassin's Creed Unity"', in: *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 April 2019, <https://www.haz.de/Nachrichten/Digital/Paris-Nach-Notre-Dame-Brand-Ubisoft-verschenkt-Assassin-s-Creed-Unity>, last accessed: 20 October 2019.

feature films, theatre plays, TV documentaries, computer games, as well as comics, draws on this fascination, perpetuating what is more generally referred to as the history boom. The promise that a narrative constitutes ‘true history’ also functions as an advertising factor, turning authenticity into an element of branding.²

This phenomenon has long since taken hold as an economic strategy³ and has been subjected to critical analysis.⁴ Studies almost always scrutinise issues of product design: an ‘authentic’ product avoids exhibiting its commercialisation while concurrently implying a neat fit with the lifestyle and self-image of the targeted consumers. The promise of authenticity creates a link between object and subject, with the production of nostalgia (see the info box below) playing a crucial role, as the example of *Assassin’s Creed Unity* shows.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia describes a particularly emotional form of attention to the past. The term comes from the Greek (*nóstos*: return, homecoming; *álgos*: pain) and was used synonymously with the newer term ‘homesickness’ from the seventeenth century until well into the twentieth century. Homesickness/nostalgia is characterised by a temporal and a locational dimension. Homesickness is the longing for a place that is only recognised as home, and thus as a place of belonging, from a temporal distance, in the process of moving away from it. Until the end of the nineteenth century, nostalgia and homesickness referred to a nervous disorder affecting mainly soldiers, sometimes seriously and in certain cases even fatally. In the first half of the twentieth century, as social and spatial mobility intensified, homesickness/nostalgia became a subject of pedagogy. The longing look back over one’s shoulder at the place left behind was now the preserve of immature children and adolescents, who still had to learn to endure separation from parents and home. In the Federal Republic of Germany, it was not until the 1970s that the concept of homesickness was given a specific meaning in terms of both space and time. Nostalgia was now increasingly understood as a longing for the past, typically remembered as a particularly harmonious time. Homesickness, on the other hand, referred to the yearning desire for a place left behind. The 1970s are in fact regarded as a nostalgic decade. In reaction to the experience of accelerated social, economic and political change, and to the

2 See Susanne Knaller: ‘Original, Kopie, Fälschung. Authentizität als Paradoxie der Moderne’, in: Martin Sabrow and Achim Saupe (eds.): *Historische Authentizität*, Göttingen 2016, 44–61, here 44.

3 See James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine: *Authenticity. What Consumers Really Want*, Boston 2007.

4 See Sarah Banet-Weiser: *Authentic TM*, New York 2012.

structural upheavals marking the transition to postmodernity, confidence in the future of modernity was superseded by a longing for the supposed stability of times gone by. The nostalgia boom manifested itself in a rediscovery of the past, especially in forms of consumption that presented history as less conflict-laden than the present and as a means of shoring up the identity of mainstream society. Later, memory (see Chapter 9) became the new key concept of a discipline of history increasingly geared towards cultural history. As the concept of nostalgia was temporalised, it was also increasingly depathologised. Nostalgia is no longer an affliction, but refers to the capacity for emotional self-regulation. Today, retro technological trends and vintage designs embody an identity-stabilising approach to history. The predilection for nostalgia highlights the need for a special closeness to a past remembered as positive, while also underscoring the way in which this past is communicated through various media.

Recommended reading

Becker, Tobias: *Yesterday: a new history of nostalgia*, Berlin 2023; Schrey, Dominik: *Analoge Nostalgie in der digitalen Medienkultur*, Berlin 2017.

Within the field of public history, it is often unclear what exactly is meant by ‘authentic history’. In the broadest sense, the phrase involves a reference to the past, indicating that a given representation is authentic. At the same time, however, it promotes the idea of an authentic experience when consuming history. The promise of authenticity thus refers both to representations (in museums or films, for instance) and to the perceptions and feelings of visitors or participants in a given historical offering; these two aspects are connected, as we discuss below. In public history, then, authenticity appears omnipresent and refers to a semantic field that is home to qualities such as ‘credible’, ‘reliable’, ‘immediate’ and ‘true’.

The concept of authenticity is of crucial importance in several academic fields, including history, cultural studies, critical heritage studies and media studies. Without this concept, it is impossible to analyse public representations of history. Yet there is still no comprehensive, unambiguous definition of authenticity capable of capturing its manifold meanings from a historical and contemporary perspective.⁵ The term was long used in academic history in the context of source criticism. It was also regarded by other fields, such as early folklore studies (*Volkskunde*) – which was dedicated to the search

Diverse meanings

⁵ See Susanne Knaller and Harro Müller: ‘Authentisch/Authentizität’, in: Karlheinz Barck et al. (eds.): *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, vol. 7: *Register und Supplemente*, Stuttgart and Weimar 2010, 40–65, here 40.

for and preservation of the authentic – as the starting point for their evolution into recognised disciplines.⁶ In both academic and non-academic discussions of history, this concept has now triggered the rise of discourses centred on the notions of original, copy and forgery, as well as those of genuineness and validity, along with originality in the sense of immediacy within the individual's experience.

In what follows, we bring out the range of meanings of authenticity. We believe it is helpful to use authenticity as a category of analysis when interpreting the offerings of public history, but at the same time it must also be understood as a source term (meaning a word used in a historical source). In addition, we highlight specific questions about authenticity or 'authentic' representations of history as posed in a variety of academic disciplines. We show that authenticity is a construction that points up the quality of the relationship between people and historical objects. In public history, the term is beset by contradictions, oscillating between the verification of the genuine on the one hand and its simulation on the other; it is also located between the historical event, the represented object and the perception of the object. At the same time, authenticity exhibits a paradoxical structure inasmuch as it is always mediated, that is, produced through a medium: what is considered authentic must first be designated as such, so that authenticity is always applied to the object in question as a quality.⁷ We begin by locating authenticity within the history of concepts, before going on to discuss its current uses and finally operationalising these with reference to four practically oriented case studies from the field of public history.

2.2 Conceptual history

The concept of authenticity draws on various sources and is linked with the fields of law, theology, philosophy and the arts; it has played a major role in the academic discipline of history only for a few decades. In an entry in the lexicon of *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe* or 'basic aesthetic terms', scholar of literature and culture Susanne

6 Regina Bendix: *In Search of Authenticity. The Formation of Folklore Studies*, Madison (WI) 1997.

7 Jonathan Culler has highlighted this paradoxical structure using the example of tourism. See Jonathan Culler: 'Semiotics of Tourism', in: *American Journal of Semiotics* 1/1–2 (1981), 127–140, here 139.

Knaller and Germanist Harro Müller provide a detailed overview of the various uses of the term, which originates from the Greek, and how it has changed over time.⁸

While the word *authentikós* (genuine, reliable, correct) was used to describe the credibility of writings in relation to an author, the Latin word *authenticus* included the sense of ‘authenticated’.⁹ Here we can discern a connection between authenticity, author and authority that exists in various languages;¹⁰ the Latin term also implied an ‘original’ as distinct from a copy.¹¹ On the one hand, then, the focus is on the content of written documents and, on the other, on a specific copy. A similar distinction can be made between the meanings of the term in its broader usage. Whereas in the Middle Ages the adjective ‘authentic’ referred to the *credibility* of a text,¹² in the twentieth century it was used in the sense of *original* and *genuine*.¹³ In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, meanwhile, the term was rarely used, though concepts can be found in a number of fields that paved the way for our current understanding of authenticity.¹⁴

In his book on the imitation of Greek works of art (1755), Johann Joachim Winckelmann stated that ‘imitation of the ancients’ was essential to the production of great art.¹⁵ Here he laid the foundation for a theory of originality that later had an impact on historical scholarship and helped shape its understanding of authenticity in the twentieth century. At the same time, the literature of the eighteenth century saw a shift towards sentiment and sensuality, a development rooted in a rhetoric of subjective expressiveness, as evident in the

Credibility versus original

Art and literature

⁸ See Knaller and Müller: ‘Authentisch/Authentizität’.

⁹ Tino Mager: *Schillernde Unschärfe. Der Begriff der Authentizität im architektonischen Erbe*, Berlin 2016, 20.

¹⁰ See also Helmut Lethen: ‘Versionen des Authentischen. Sechs Gemeinplätze’, in: Hartmut Böhme and Klaus R. Scherpe (eds.): *Literatur und Kulturwissenschaften. Positionen, Theorien, Modelle*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1996, 205–231.

¹¹ Mager: *Schillernde Unschärfe*, 21.

¹² Knaller and Müller: ‘Authentisch/Authentizität’, 41.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁴ See Knaller and Müller: ‘Authentisch/Authentizität’.

¹⁵ Johann Joachim Winckelmann: *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerey und Bildhauerkunst*, 2nd edn., Dresden and Leipzig 1756, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/winckelmann1756/0001>, last accessed: 1 December 2020, 3.

case of epistolary literature and autobiographies.¹⁶ Susanne Knaller refers in this context to a paradoxical structure that, as we have seen, is also found later in the concept of authenticity: the immediacy and truthfulness of the feelings portrayed was of course the effect of literary construction.¹⁷ Here the sensibility expressed in literature related both to authors' feelings and readers' (self-)perception. The understanding of literature, then, is linked to moral philosophical considerations concerning people's relationship to themselves and others, as found for example in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who conceptualises the human being's relationship to himself as their fidelity to their inner nature.¹⁸ In light of the interest in the art of 'the ancients' and in authors' and readers' sentiments, a distinction emerged in the eighteenth century that is conceptualised today as 'object authenticity' and 'subject authenticity'. In other words, authenticity may refer to the quality of an object, the self-understanding of persons or subjects' self-construction.

Realism and
objectivity

With the establishment of natural scientific explanatory models in the nineteenth century, the concept of reality also changed, and this increasingly went hand in hand with the postulate of objective fact. In the literature of realism, the world was observed in documenting fashion, with the truthfulness of the portrayal being guaranteed both by the use of rhetorical devices and by the artists as authenticating agents, whose sentiments were no longer of interest. The rise of photography then went hand in hand with the idea of a direct depiction of reality, as photographs were supposedly produced automatically and 'without the creative intervention of man'.¹⁹ Though the term 'authenticity' was absent from the contemporary debate on both literary works and photographic images, the ideas of realism and objectivity helped shape our current concept of 'authenticity'.

The authentic
work of art

It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that Theodor W. Adorno introduced 'authenticity' as an element of aesthetic theory. Together with Max Horkheimer, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (German orig. 1947) he contended that 'with advancing enlightenment, only authentic works of art have been able to avoid the mere

¹⁶ Knaller and Müller: 'Authentisch/Authentizität', 48.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 47 f.

¹⁸ Dieter Sturma: *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Munich 2001, 183.

¹⁹ See André Bazin: 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' (French orig. 1945), in: *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Summer, 1960), pp. 4–9, here 7.

imitation of what already is.²⁰ In his later writings, he defines authenticity as an empty shell, which ‘is supposed to be the character of works that gives them an objectively binding quality, a quality that extends beyond the contingency of mere subjective expression, the quality of being socially grounded.’²¹ Elsewhere, he refers to authentic works of art as the ‘self-unconscious historiography of their epoch’.²²

While Adorno is interested in the authenticity of works of art, philosophers such as Jürgen Habermas, Jean-Paul Sartre and Charles Taylor use the term with the human being in mind, seeking to get to grips with human self-awareness, conduct of life or way of life.²³

2.3 Current use of the term

Even as used today, the term ‘authenticity’ is multifaceted. To bring some systematicity to it, Knaller and Müller have proposed a heuristic distinction between object authenticity and subject authenticity,²⁴ with the former referring to the property of an object that can be empirically verified, while the latter means a form of self-understanding related to specific notions of identity.²⁵ The interaction between these two forms of authenticity has been addressed by historians Achim Saube and Martin Sabrow,

20 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno: *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*, Stanford, 2002, 13.

21 Theodor W. Adorno: ‘Words from Abroad’ (German orig. 1959), in: Theodor W. Adorno: *Notes to Literature*, New York, 2019, 188–200, 199.

22 Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory* (German orig. 1970), London, 2013, 194.

23 Knaller and Müller: ‘Authentisch/Authentizität’, 57–60.

24 *Ibid.*, 45.

25 In line with this, Achim Saube describes authenticity as a form of self-realisation that was central to the hippie movement, but also to the New Social Movements. See Achim Saube: ‘Authentizität (Version: 3.0)’, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 25 August 2015, https://docupedia.de/zg/Saube_authentizitaet_v3_de_2015. Anthropologists Richard Handler and William Saxton have also researched ‘living history’ phenomena in light of their significance to an ‘authentic existence’ in the sense of subject authenticity. See Richard Handler and William Saxton: ‘Dyssimulation. Reflexivity, Narrative, and the Quest for Authenticity in “Living History”’, in: *Cultural Anthropology* 3 (1988), 242–260.

among others, with reference to the appropriation (see info box in section 8.2) of history.²⁶

Authentic
objects

Objects are considered authentic if they are originals. Their authenticity is bound up with authorship or historicity, which is the basis of their aura (see the following info box) or *pastness* (see info box in section 11.1) and distinguishes them from forgeries, imitations and copies. For example, to recognise a painting as a ‘genuine’ Rembrandt, or a piece of writing as a ‘historical document’, experts are required, who authenticate objects using scientific methods and specific evaluation criteria. It is the experts’ authority that endows objects with authenticity; this authentication goes hand in hand with the production of hierarchies, as the expert assessment is ultimately central to value judgements about which objects are to be preserved and protected (see Chapter 5, ‘Heritage’).

Aura

The term ‘aura’ was coined by Walter Benjamin in his essay ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ (German orig. 1935). There he explores the change in human perception brought about by the introduction of reproduction techniques that render works of art accessible to a broad section of the population. Benjamin defines the aura as a ‘unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be’,²⁷ thus describing the authenticity of a thing as ‘the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced’.²⁸ In the age of mechanical reproducibility, according to Benjamin, this aura is withering away as the unique existence of an object is substituted by a plurality of copies and the urge grows to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its reproduction. Benjamin sees this decay of the aura in a positive light: for the first time, works of art can emancipate themselves from their cult value, which is rooted in their unapproachability, and take on other social functions aimed at ‘the masses’.

In the museum context, the term ‘aura’ is used to describe historical objects. These are said to be capable of mediating between past and present by presenting the historically distant with spatial proximity and thus, in a sense, building a bridge between the living individual today and the completed past. The aura of museum objects has been explored, among other things, in connec-

²⁶ Martin Sabrow and Achim Saube: ‘Historische Authentizität. Zur Kartierung eines Forschungsfeldes’, in: Martin Sabrow and Achim Saube (eds.): *Historische Authentizität*, Göttingen 2016, 7–28, 14 f.

²⁷ Walter Benjamin: ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in: *Illuminations*, New York, 1968, 219–253, 224.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 223.

tion with object-oriented exhibition didactics, as championed by scholars such as Gottfried Korff from the 1970s onwards. As Roman Weindl explains in his overview, the call to present originals in the museum was underpinned by the assumption that the aura of museum artefacts would have a positive impact on pedagogy or education, for example in the form of a ‘holistic awareness’. This appraisal of originality is diametrically opposed to Benjamin’s concept of aura.

The potential of original objects is currently being discussed chiefly against the backdrop of increasing digitisation and virtualisation. Although such objects’ aura is linked to their historicity, it is to a significant extent dependent on their presentation and staging. In this respect, the aura has a paradoxical structure akin to that of authenticity: its immediacy is constituted through the medium involved. In his analysis of literature about didactics of history and museums, Weindl concludes that many authors use the concept of aura in a rather unclear way. He notes that it functions primarily as a heuristic term due to the dearth of theoretical ideas centred on the effects of museum objects.

Recommended reading

Benjamin, Walter: ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in: *Illuminations*, New York, 1968 (German orig. 1935), 219–253; Weindl, Roman: *Die ‘Aura’ des Originals im Museum. Über den Zusammenhang von Authentizität und Besucherinteresse*, Bielefeld 2019, 15–19.

As mentioned, authenticity has a paradoxical structure, as it is always constructed and mediated. It presupposes the communication of the authentication carried out by experts and goes hand in hand with a specific presentation of a given object, which we will return to below with reference to concrete examples. The procedures and strategies through which objects’ authenticity is constructed and staged are manifold. They differ depending on medium and performative approach and are analysed and theorised from various perspectives in literary, theatre, cultural and media studies.²⁹ Questions about

Construction
and mediality
of authenticity

²⁹ Such an authentication strategy may also be associated with stocks of knowledge considered traditional. The case of the Norwegian *bunad* national costume is a good example of this. Its (more cost-effective) production in Southeast Asian textile factories raised the controversial issue of whether special and locally based knowledge is necessary for the production of an authentic *bunad* or whether the production method can be learned like any other technique. This conflict illustrates that the authenticity of an object is not only engendered by its materiality, but also by the production process and in particular the producers’ knowledge about an object’s cultural significance. See Thomas Hylland Eriksen: ‘Traditionalism and Neoliberalism. The Norwegian Folk Dress in the 21st Century’, in: Erich Kasten

textual and paratextual processes that produce authenticity effects often take centre stage in this context.

This medial construction of authenticity differs fundamentally from the scientifically corroborated authentication of historical objects, which is why Saupe and Sabrow distinguish between scientific ‘authentication’ (*Authentifizierung*) on the one hand and ‘authenticisation’ (*Authentisierung*) as staging on the other.³⁰ This conceptual distinction is absent from media-related disciplines.

Experiencing
authenticity

Yet the concept of authenticity as the (discursively generated) property of an object or as the effect of textual techniques is inadequate. In fact, authenticity results from the relationship between object and subject, as authenticity must be perceived or experienced as such (see Chapter 4, ‘Experience’).³¹ In addition to the external verification (heterology) of authenticity, then, self-verification also plays a crucial role (autology).³² With regard to history, plausibility is of key importance, helping ensure that objects are perceived as originals (see the info box on ‘*pastness*’ in section 11.1) and that simulated actions or situations are experienced as authentic.

Authenticity in
the discipline
of history

Authenticity is not used systematically as an analytical term in academic history; it has found its way into scholarly vocabulary mainly with reference to the status of objects. The term signals the realness of a source, indicating that it was produced at a certain time and place and by specific actors. Authentication does not necessarily provide information about a source’s truth content. It is, however, a fundamental prerequisite for any sort of historiographical work and forms part of source criticism. There are also fields of academic activity, such as provenance research, in which one of the core tasks is to investigate backgrounds, a process bound up with authentication. In the discipline of history, meanwhile, with a few exceptions,

(ed.): *Properties of Culture – Culture as Property. Pathway to Reform in Post-Soviet Siberia*, Berlin 2004, 267–286.

³⁰ Sabrow and Saupe: *Historische Authentizität*, 10.

³¹ See Eva Ulrike Pirker and Mark Rüdiger: ‘Authentizitätsfiktionen in populären Geschichtskulturen: Annäherungen’, in: Eva Ulrike Pirker et al. (eds.): *Echte Geschichte. Authentizitätsfiktionen in populären Geschichtskulturen*, Bielefeld 2010, 11–30, here 21.

³² See Knaller: ‘Original, Kopie, Fälschung’, 45.

the term plays no role when it comes to grappling with representations of the past.³³

One of these exceptions is the typology of authenticity devised by didactician of history Hans-Jürgen Pandel. He works with a broad understanding of the term, viewing authenticity as ‘a property attributed to statements, written and visual sources, things and places, in order to mark their realness, credibility and reliability’.³⁴ Here he distinguishes between the authenticity of persons/events, the authenticity of types, representational authenticity and experiential authenticity.³⁵ The first form, for him, means that a person did in fact live or that an event did in fact take place. Type authenticity refers to the fictitious portrayal of a person whose characteristics are nonetheless typical of the era, social position or region portrayed. Representational authenticity, according to Pandel, is present when the fictional elements of a historical narrative are representative of the era and region depicted according to the current state of research. Through the concept of experiential authenticity, he seeks to convey the idea that the ‘inner experiences and emotions were in fact felt as such by the narrator in the situation in question’.³⁶ Supplementing these ideas, Pandel has proposed a system of coordinates that can be used to determine the ‘degree of authenticity’ of sources (created in the past), representations (present-day presentations of history) and imaginaries (fictionalised history). Yet this systematisation overlooks the fact that representations of history can also be sources, while also failing to make a conceptual distinction between empirical validity and simulated *pastness* (see the info box in section 11.1). Pandel’s typology is helpful chiefly when used to analyse medial and performative representations of the past.³⁷

Typologies of authentic representations

33 Pirker and Rüdiger: ‘Authentizitätsfiktionen’, 14.

34 Hans-Jürgen Pandel: ‘Authentizität’, in: Ulrich Mayer et al. (eds.): *Wörterbuch Geschichtsdidaktik*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2006, 25–26, here 25.

35 See Hans-Jürgen Pandel: ‘Die Wahrheit der Fiktion. Der Holocaust im Comic und Jugendbuch’, in: Bernd Jaspert (ed.): *Wahrheit und Geschichte. Vom Umgang mit deutscher Vergangenheit*, Hofgeismar 1993, 72–109.

36 Pandel: ‘Authentizität’, 26.

37 See Christine Gundermann: ‘Inszenierte Vergangenheit oder wie Geschichte im Comic gemacht wird’, in: Hans-Joachim Backe et al. (eds.): *Ästhetik des Gemachten. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur Animations- und Comicforschung*, Berlin 2018, 257–283.

Authenticity
as a way of
appropriating
history

While Pandel's ideas can be criticised, they highlight the need for historians to get to grips with authenticity and to use the term analytically beyond the characterization of sources. Above all, its popular use in the context of public history offerings suggests that it should be viewed less as evidence of empirical validity and more as a mode of appropriating history. It is thus important to examine authenticity effects such as the aforementioned *pastness*.

The field of public history shows that authenticity cannot necessarily be derived from the inherent quality of objects or the credibility of testimonies. In addition to authentic objects or testimonies, the 'authentic experience' also plays a central role here. Living history or reenactments thus represent a way of appropriating history whose authenticity is based on the 'reliving' of past situations or events. The paradoxical structure in evidence here is also of interest, as 'authentic experience' in the sense of a physical experience (see Chapter 4) is made possible by the use of replicas of historical objects that can be touched, worn and perceived by the senses. The origin of the objects used, which are not authentic from a provenance research perspective, plays a subordinate role in this experience.

Historical offerings must therefore be scrutinised with a view to how they stage their links to reality and, if applicable, scholarship. The economic potential of history is currently derived in substantial part from this dimension of authenticity. If we look at numerous historico-cultural products, we find that the 'authenticity' of the history presented constitutes an effective sales pitch,³⁸ with providers often evoking a specific 'atmosphere' associated with it.

Atmosphere

Particularly in the case of video games and in the field of living history, researchers often refer to 'atmosphere' to describe authenticating arrangements, a term first used mainly by philosopher Gernot Böhme. In academic history, some of the first attempts to apply it appear, for example, in the analysis of tourist products, as conveyed by terms such as *(hi)stori-scapes* or *themed environments*.

For a number of years, 'atmosphere' has been used to describe 'authentic spaces', in other words spaces that are (supposedly) staged in a historically authentic way and were created as such for a specific purpose. This approach

³⁸ Wolfgang Hardtwig and Alexander Schug (eds.): *History Sells! Angewandte Geschichte als Wissenschaft und Markt*, Stuttgart 2009.

not only helps us focus on a particular object-subject relationship, but also to describe the experiencing subject within a specifically configured space. Atmosphere, or more precisely a past-oriented atmosphere, then becomes an analytical term that allows us to describe the space in which a performance takes place (be it a reenacted battle, a quest in digital space or a walk through a specially designed exhibition area) as a space of perception and sensation for reenactors/living historians, players in digital environments and visitors. This concept thus takes emphatic account of participating subjects' feelings, taking us well beyond the arrangement of objects in space. It also factors in the aesthetic configuration of the space in terms of its capacity to generate *pastness* (see info box in section 11.1). Drawing on the concept of atmosphere thus allows us to analyse the relationship between receiving subject and staged history within space to a greater extent than, for example, the focus on 'object authenticity'. Such atmospheres are temporally and culturally bound. The example of digital games, however, points to their (potential) ability to transcend such constraints. Often designed for the global market, such games can establish cosmopolitan historical settings that may then mould notions of history within popular culture.

Recommended reading

Kerz, Christina: *Atmosphäre und Authentizität. Gestaltung und Wahrnehmung in Colonial Williamsburg*, Stuttgart 2017; Zimmermann, Felix. 'Historical Digital Games as Experiences – How Atmospheres of the Past Satisfy Needs of Authenticity', in: Marc Bonner (ed.): *Game | World | Architectonics – Transdisciplinary Approaches on Structures and Mechanics, Levels and Spaces, Aesthetics and Perception*, Heidelberg 2021, 19–34.

Authenticity as a concept is both bound by culture and time. Closely linked to the history of Western European culture and scholarship, it cannot be assumed to be universal, as we briefly outline in the chapter on heritage (see Chapter 5) with reference to UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Academic historians are gradually beginning to focus on practices of authentication due to the growing interest in questions of performativity (see Chapter 10),³⁹ and as a result of the establishment of science and knowledge communication as a field of research and practice. Public history, as a young sub-discipline of academic history, is also fuelling the debate on issues of authenticity.

³⁹ For an introduction, see: Jürgen Martschukat: 'Geschichtswissenschaft und "performative turn": Eine Einführung in Fragestellungen, Konzepte und Literatur', in: Jürgen Martschukat and Steffen Patzold (eds.): *Geschichtswissenschaft und 'performative turn'. Ritual, Inszenierung und Performanz vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit*, Cologne 2003, 1–32.

2.4 Operationalisations

In the following, we provide examples of the engendering of authenticity in four fields of public history, the goal being to demonstrate both the analytical potential and semantic multiplicity of the concept of authenticity.

2.4.1 Authentic history in the museum

Authenticity is a core element of museum exhibition practices: the exhibits on display are usually originals and function as objectifications of past reality, which are intended to confirm the truthfulness of the narrative presented in the museum. Authenticity in the museum thus denotes the genuineness of what is presented and is closely linked to the aura of the exhibit. Authenticity is understood as a quality of an object arising from its history (and distinguishing the exhibit from a replica). Yet the authenticity of objects in the museum not only lies in their originality but also in their presentation and reception.⁴⁰ Stefan Burmeister, then, refers to a reevaluation of the concept of authenticity, which increasingly foregrounds viewers' experience of it (an issue we will be looking at in more detail later on), directing our attention to a property of the relationship between (staged) object and visitors.

Presentation
of exhibits

This leads us on to the question of how museums manage to evoke a sense of authenticity in their visitors. In this context, authentication strategies that focus on the selection and presentation of objects are characterised by two main elements. First, the significance of the object, as determined by experts, defines how it is presented and which protective measures are to be taken. Second, visitors' expectations also determine how an object is exhibited (see Chapter 11, 'Reception'), with these expectations in turn being shaped by the specific conditions of perception created in museums. In their architecture, museums are conceived as protective spaces.

⁴⁰ See Stefan Burmeister: 'Der schöne Schein. Aura und Authentizität im Museum', in: Martin Fitzenreiter (ed.): *Authentizität. Artefakt und Versprechen in der Archäologie, Workshop vom 10. bis 12. Mai 2013, Ägyptisches Museum der Universität Bonn*, London 2014, 99–108, here 99.

However, curtained windows not only protect exhibits from destructive daylight, but also make it plain that the objects on display are valuable, old and genuine testimonies to the past that are worthy of protection. Meanwhile, the placement of certain objects on particularly fine fabrics in specially illuminated display cases creates an auratic effect. Visible measures such as these, therefore, not only serve to protect objects as historical artefacts, but also create the impression that these objects have a certain value. Above all, then, it is the staging that transforms an object into a particularly valuable, authentic and auratically potent artefact from the past. According to Burmeister, even mass-produced archaeological goods can be staged auratically in this way.⁴¹ In addition, the labelling of the exhibited objects reinforces their authentication and auratisation. Labelling that is particularly brief and, potentially, uses only technical terms, that offers no analogies or provides viewers with no information that might allow them to place the object within webs of interrelationships, contributes to its perception as rarefied and to the experience of its extra-ordinary nature. If, for example, fibula types are exhibited in a display case and labelled as ‘triquetra brooch’ or ‘pelta brooch’ in a list, but there is no explanation or diagram revealing exactly how the fastening mechanism works on clothing, nor how the two forms can be distinguished, this contributes to auratisation but does little to help the viewer understand what is shown.

To better grasp the interplay between aesthetic staging as an auratic strategy, historical experience (see Chapter 4) and social conventions surrounding authenticity, the field of museum studies is increasingly turning to performative explanatory approaches. If authenticity is no longer understood as the property of an object, but as a relationship between object and subject, the physical movement through the staged exhibition space also comes to the fore, expanding our understanding of those moments when the representation of history is perceived as authentic.⁴²

Museum visitors’
experience of
authenticity

⁴¹ Ibid., 102 f.

⁴² For an introduction, see: Luise Reitstätter: *Die Ausstellung verhandeln. Von Interaktionen im musealen Raum*, Bielefeld 2015; Heike Buschmann: ‘Geschichten im Raum. Erzähltheorie als Museumsanalyse’, in: Joachim Baur (ed.): *Museumsanalyse. Methoden und Konturen eines neuen Forschungsfeldes*, Bielefeld 2010, 149–169.

An analytical perspective on the museal aura of exhibits also shifts the discourse on replicas and hands-on approaches in museums. The mode of perception associated with the aura of objects' in the museum long consisted of *looking at* them. With the introduction of replicas and models that invite touch and multisensory engagement, we can discern a certain democratisation of the museum, insofar as these make it possible to present history in a barrier-free and, in a best-case scenario, inclusive way. In this context, it becomes clear that the concept of authenticity, as applied to the museum, is always linked to social hierarchies, in that the touchable, approachable object was and is considered less valuable. Yet these value attributions shift when the focus is on the museum experience or the (education-oriented) experience of history. Many exhibition venues unquestionably seek to evoke the impression of authenticity. However, museal practices show that this is also possible – if necessary – in the absence of an original.⁴³ Through this lens, museums can be understood and analysed as seismographs recording societal notions of authenticity.

2.4.2 Authentic history in memorials

Memorial sites are defined through the authenticity of a place. They differ from monuments in that they mark the specific place where something occurred. This criterion is evident, for example, in the German government's conception of memorials, which stipulates that only those at authentic locations are eligible for funding. The 'authenticity of the site [...] depends on the manifestation of a historical event in an architectural substance visible to the visitor'.⁴⁴ The place is thus attributed an aura arising from its historicity. With

⁴³ See Burmeister: 'Der schöne Schein', 106.

⁴⁴ See Deutscher Bundestag: *Unterrichtung durch den Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien. Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes. Verantwortung wahrnehmen, Aufarbeitung verstärken, Gedenken vertiefen*, Drucksache 16/9875, 19 June 2008, 3, <https://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/16/098/1609875.pdf>, 18, last accessed: 26 December 2020.

regard to the concept of authenticity, then, we can make out clear parallels between memorials and heritage sites (see Chapter 5).⁴⁵

In the German-speaking countries and in Europe as a whole, memorial sites often work with a dual form of authenticity, especially when they invite us to recall the Nazi reign of terror or the SED dictatorship in East Germany. At the site of the relevant events, contemporary witnesses provide additional confirmation of the authenticity of the history depicted on the basis of first-hand experience. They may relate their experiences in person as part of guided tours, talks or workshops. Furthermore, visitors increasingly have the chance to listen to or view audio and/or video excerpts from digitised interviews with contemporary witnesses at hands-on stations. Both the locations and the contemporary witnesses hold out the promise of authenticity, though quite different aspects are involved in each case.

Places and
contemporary
witnesses

The authenticity of contemporary witnesses goes beyond the above-mentioned ‘subject authenticity’, as it involves more than the ‘genuineness’ and credibility of the performance through which they present their experiences. At memorials, they are granted the authority to represent knowledge of the ‘entire’ history of a place or an event. For example, contemporary witnesses not only guide visitors through the Hohenschönhausen memorial (a former prison of the East German Stasi) as eyewitnesses, but also as experts on the entire history of the oppression, persecution and imprisonment of political dissidents in the GDR. This practice is highly controversial within the pedagogy of memorials. What is generally less recognised, however, is that sites dedicated to the history of the East German dictatorship are often the outcome of civic engagement. In the immediate aftermath of the GDR’s collapse, men and women inscribed their own interpretation into realms of memory. This *hidden agenda* still characterises exhibition concepts and educational work today. However, due to the lack of transparency, there is little sign of the fact that these were originally the perspectives of contemporary witnesses and that this presentation is not based exclusively on histori-

⁴⁵ For an exemplary study, see: Sybille Frank: *Der Mauer um die Wette gedenken: Die Formation einer Heritage-Industrie am Berliner Checkpoint Charlie*, New York and Frankfurt a.M. 2009.

cal research.⁴⁶ A constellation of this kind points up the power effects that may result from the linkage of authenticity and authority.

When it comes to memorials, it is particularly helpful to distinguish between authenticity as self-description, and thus as a source-based notion, and authenticity as an analytical concept. The analytical approach allows us to explore techniques of authentication and systematically scrutinise practices of communicating history. In the case of an ‘authentic site’, for example, one might analyse the connection between conservation techniques and the aura attributed to the site or examine the authenticating function assigned to contemporary witnesses. In this context, it is also interesting to note that memorial sites increasingly have to resort to medial forms of contemporary witness, given that eyewitnesses appear less and less frequently for reasons of health or age. Here, curatorial interventions markedly restrict the authority and interpretative sovereignty of contemporary witnesses. Their testimonies tend to be severely shortened and embedded in a historical narrative that often aims to create the ‘illusion of polyphonic memories’.⁴⁷ At the same time, however, specific methods are used in the medial presentation of contemporary witnesses to emphasise their authenticity, for example by leaving in pauses, their efforts to find the right words or their struggle to maintain composure in edited interviews. This creates the impression of immediacy and authenticity but does not necessarily prove the historical accuracy of statements.

2.4.3 Reenactment and living history

The connection between authenticity and staging is also evident in the field of historical theatre, which includes practices such as reen-

⁴⁶ See, for example, Christine Gundermann: “‘Die Quellen sprechen für sich!’ Die Gedenkstätte Museum in der ‘Runden Ecke’ in Leipzig als Lernort”, in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 70/7–8 (2019), 418–435. See also Juliane Brauer and Irmgard Zündorf: ‘DDR-Geschichte vermitteln. Lehren und Lernen an Orten der DDR-Geschichte’, in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 70/7–8 (2019), 373–389.

⁴⁷ Saskia Handro: ‘Musealisierte Zeitzeugen. Ein Dilemma’, in: *Public History Weekly* 2/14 (2014), <https://public-history-weekly.degruyter.com/2-2014-14/musealisierte-zeitzeugen-ein-dilemma>, last accessed: 28 November 2020.

actment and living history.⁴⁸ Here, the understanding of authenticity depends not least on the aim of the performance. Experimental archaeology – which, for example, tests reconstructed objects in order to gain insights into their use – deploys the term differently to reenactors, who dress as authentically as possible when (re-)staging a battle in order to experience a *period rush*.⁴⁹ Generally, according to Stefanie Samida and Miriam Sénécheau, those involved understand authenticity as a reference to empirical verifiability and truth.⁵⁰

Interestingly, the authenticity of the clothing or objects used does not arise from their history, but is measured in light of the materials and techniques used to produce them, which correspond as closely as possible to those of the ‘recreated’ space-time. The closer the approximation to the historical techniques and materials, the greater the ‘authenticity’ attributed to the object. Here, the claim to authenticity is based not only on the quality of the replica, but also on its use for specific actions, with its authenticity potentially being further enhanced by the performance of these actions at a site that is itself perceived as authentic.⁵¹

In the authentic experience, which is the goal of many reenactments and is particularly important to reenactors, we can discern once again the paradoxical structure of the concept of authenticity. Every representation of a historical event is a construction: empirically valid sources are placed in relation to each other and considered with a view to certain questions. It is thus impossible to bring the past into the present in an unmediated way. In addition, the idea that authentic experience is possible when reenacting historical events (see Chapter 4) implies, first, that the selected events were perceived as historically significant in the first place. Second, it presupposes

Replicated objects and
reenacted events

48 See Wolfgang Hochbruck: *Geschichtstheater. Formen der ‘Living History’. Eine Typologie*, Bielefeld 2013. On the connection between authenticity and staging, see: Sabine Schindler: *Authentizität und Inszenierung. Die Vermittlung von Geschichte an amerikanischen historic sites*, Heidelberg 2003.

49 See Stefanie Samida: ‘Krieg(s)spiele(n)’, in: *Forum Kritische Archäologie* 4 (2015), 13–15, here 13.

50 See Miriam Sénécheau and Stefanie Samida: *Living History als Gegenstand Historischen Lernens*, Stuttgart 2016, 46.

51 See Berit Pleitner: ‘Erlebnis- und erfahrungsorientierte Zugänge zur Geschichte: Living History und Reenactment’, in: Sabine Horn and Michael Sauer (eds.): *Geschichte und Öffentlichkeit*, Göttingen 2009, 40–47, here 46.

that knowledge about the further course of history is ignored. Battle reenactments in particular, whose authenticity effect is often attributed explicitly to the collective performance, differ from past reality in one essential point, which contradicts any claim to authenticity, at least when viewed from the outside: no one is *really* killed or injured on the battlefield. This can neither be experienced by spectators nor relived by reenactors.

Gettysburg,
1863

If we use the concept of authenticity as a category of analysis, we can identify diverse forms of authenticity in historical theatre and varying expectations of authenticity among participants and spectators. Wolfgang Hochbruck, among others, has demonstrated this in his study of reenactments of the 1863 Battle of Gettysburg, which can be traced back to 1888.⁵² He demonstrates that, at first, participating or observing veterans were perceived as a link to the past and thus as guarantors of authenticity, which meant that there was no need for clothing, equipment or weapons to correspond to the period depicted; they could come from the present or take imaginary form. But this changed when veterans were no longer able to take part in the performances. Now uniforms, equipment and weapons had to be the most accurate possible replicas, while authentic experience became linked to the use of authentic objects. As guarantors of authenticity, contemporary witnesses were thus superseded by objects at the historical site.

2.4.4 Authenticity in film

Filmic media use a variety of strategies to generate authenticity, with specific techniques having been developed for documentary and fictional forms.

Documentary
films

In the field of documentary film, for example, 'direct cinema' is considered particularly authentic.⁵³ This genre became established in the 1960s in connection with the introduction of lightweight 16 mm cameras and portable sound recorders. These made it possible

⁵² See Wolfgang Hochbruck: 'Reenacting Across Six Generations, 1863–1963', in: Sarah Willner et al. (eds.): *Doing History. Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur*, Münster 2016, 97–116.

⁵³ See Monika Beyerle: *Authentisierungsstrategien im Dokumentarfilm. Das amerikanische Direct Cinema der 60er Jahre*, Trier 1997.

to follow the protagonists with the camera at every turn, documenting their everyday lives. The premise of direct cinema was to avoid intervening in the situation at hand and to make no changes, for example to enhance the camera angle or improve the lighting. As a result, the finished films often include obstructed views, parts of people are cut off, and the image and sound quality varies. It is precisely these elements that create the impression of authenticity, as they embody the claim to depict the reality as encountered in unchanged form.⁵⁴

The social actors who appear in documentary films may appear authentic to varying degrees. Here, the impression of unfiltered behaviour can often be attributed to the fact that in their everyday lives the protagonists followed by the camera often find themselves in situations in which they speak or act in front of others. They are used to ‘performing’ and are capable of presenting themselves to an audience in an unaffected and ‘authentic’ way. Yet those who lose control of their emotions in documentary films are also perceived as authentic.⁵⁵ This can be observed, for example, in historical documentaries in which contemporary witnesses recall the past. In films and television programmes, interviewees who have recounted their experiences many times before, and are used to presenting them as a narrative, come across as much less authentic than eyewitnesses who speak with great emotion, falter, make grammatical errors or are overwhelmed by their memories.⁵⁶ The authenticity of the people shown in documentary films is thus rooted in contrasting characteristics: in the routine nature of their public appearances or in their lack of practice in describing what they experienced.

Feature films often incorporate documentary footage to lend authenticity to their portrayal of the past. In fictional productions, for example, sets and costumes may be based on historical photographs or documentary films, while docudramas often integrate his-

Feature films

⁵⁴ See Judith Keilbach: ‘Authentizität als filmische Konstruktion’, in: Christoph Classen et al. (eds.): *Echt inszeniert. Historische Authentizität und Medien in der Moderne*, Potsdam 2021, S. 31–57.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ See Judith Keilbach: *Geschichtsbilder und Zeitzeugen. Zur Darstellung des Nationalsozialismus im bundesdeutschen Fernsehen*, Münster 2008, 162 ff.

torical footage into certain scenes.⁵⁷ Here, it is the difference in image quality that indicates which of the shots show ‘historical reality’. This fusion extends the authenticity of the documentary images into the storyline, lending it credibility. Props that situate the story temporally have a similar effect: the newspaper on the table or the news broadcast flickering on the television screen contribute to the impression that the events depicted are historically authenticated.⁵⁸

Camera work, image quality and editing can also contribute to the impression of authenticity. *Schindler’s List* (United States, 1993) and *Saving Private Ryan* (United States, 1998) illustrate some of the visual techniques that lend authenticity to filmic portrayals. Both films were directed by Steven Spielberg and depict historical events of the 1940s: *Schindler’s List* portrays how businessman Oskar Schindler saved Jewish workers in his factory from extermination, while *Saving Private Ryan* depicts the Allied landing in Normandy (1944). Both films have been discussed by film critics in terms of their realism and authenticity,⁵⁹ but they employ quite different methods. *Schindler’s List*, for example, is shot in black and white, distinguishing itself with an image quality that is generally considered authentic; the film shots are reminiscent of newsreels from the 1940s, not least due to the stark contrasts.⁶⁰ *Saving Private Ryan*, meanwhile, is a colour film whose opening sequence, in which Allied soldiers attempt to reach Omaha Beach, appears authentic primarily due to the use of hand-held cameras. Unlike steady tracking shots, those made with hand-held cameras speak directly to the viewer’s perception of moving through space and thus seem ‘real’. Moreover, in

57 Tobias Ebbrecht: *Geschichtsbilder im medialen Gedächtnis. Filmische Narrationen des Holocaust*, Bielefeld 2011.

58 See, for example, Derek Paget: *No Other Way to Tell It. Dramadoc/Docudrama on Television*, Manchester 1998, 69.

59 See, for example, Barbie Zelizer: ‘Every Once in a While. Schindler’s List and the Shaping of History’, in: Yosefa Loshitzky (ed.): *Spielberg’s Holocaust. Critical Perspectives on Schindler’s List*, Bloomington 1997, 18–35, here 22 f.; Kenneth Turan: ‘Soldiers of Misfortune’, in: *Los Angeles Times*, 24 July 1998, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1998-jul-24-ca-6540-story.html>, last accessed: 23 December 2020.

60 Yosefa Loshitzky: ‘Holocaust Others. Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* versus Lanzmann’s *Shoah*’, in: Yosefa Loshitzky (ed.): *Spielberg’s Holocaust. Critical Perspectives on Schindler’s List*, Bloomington 1997, 104–118, here 109 f.

Saving Private Ryan, the chaos depicted during the attempt to land in the face of enemy fire is intensified by the editing. The fast cuts and flexible camera work create the impression that the film shows how the soldiers involved actually experienced the Normandy landings.

In addition to these elements of film aesthetics, on-screen text that places the events depicted in a specific geographical and temporal context, and thus implies historical verifiability, also helps authenticate the fictional events shown. And finally, advertising and film criticism also play a part in authentication. Film posters announce a ‘true story’, directors and actors give interviews in which they describe the lengths they went to in order to make an authentic film, while critics (and sometimes historians) weigh up how close the portrayal comes to historical reality in their reviews.

In film, the impression of authenticity is generated through specific strategies and techniques, and it is always a construction. From an analytical perspective, these authentication processes can be systematically examined, with historical comparison revealing how they change over time. In this respect, film is no different from other areas of public history in which authenticity plays a central role. However, the paradoxical structure of the authentic becomes particularly evident in the case of film: authenticity is generated only through mediation.

2.5 Conclusion

To summarise: authenticity is multifaceted and always derives from the relationship between objects and subjects. Historical exhibits or replicas of objects can induce an experience of authenticity if visitors or participants are willing to enter into it. As an analytical approach to public history, the concept makes it possible, on the one hand, to explore the strategies and techniques employed in presenting and staging history. Through case studies, we have shown that these methods can vary significantly depending on the location, medium or mode of representation. On the other hand, the term opens up an analytical perspective on diverse forms of the appropriation of history – including contemplative reverence in a museum, dream-like reception in cinematic spaces, immersion in literature, active participation in a reenactment and virtual experience in video games.

The above-mentioned *Assassin's Creed Unity* is not the only example to show that the promise of authenticity is of crucial importance to the design of public history offerings. Museums, reenactment groups and game providers are thus utilising a strategy that has long been deployed successfully in the advertising of consumer goods. It is our contention that historians should pay greater attention to this economic aspect, which is increasingly linked to the concept of authenticity.

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3 Emotions

3.1 Feeling history. An introduction

‘Feeling history instead of reading it’. With this slogan, the BZ tabloid newspaper commented in August 2012 on the new panorama installation by artist Yadegar Asisi at Checkpoint Charlie.¹ The Austrian-German artist and architect is renowned for his 360-degree panoramas, which are currently among the largest in the world. In September 2012, he opened *DIE MAUER – das Asisi Panorama zum geteilten Berlin* (‘THE WALL – the Asisi panorama of divided Berlin’) at the former Berlin border crossing of Checkpoint Charlie. Covering an area of 900 square metres and with interior dimensions of 15 meters in height and 60 meters in circumference, the artist, who grew up in Saxony, presents a fictional day in the western part of the city in November 1980. The panorama is not so much about conveying history as about experiencing it. Today’s visitors can immerse themselves in the all-round panorama, which promises to take them back in time, giving them the chance to relive and empathize with the things West Berliners might have seen, experienced and felt in the divided city in 1980.

Asisi’s panorama foregrounds curiosity, pleasure, excitement and fun, that is, an emotional experience of history² that is achieved by imitating historical perspectives. Visitors stand on a four-metre-high platform, creating the illusion that they are looking from Sebastianstraße in the West Berlin district of Kreuzberg over the Wall and into the centre of East Berlin. They see the graffiti-covered Wall, and in front of it the countercultural life in the squats clustered along it. Further, the raised platform provides a view over the Wall to the border installations, such as the brightly illuminated ‘death strip’ and the watchtowers with their armed border guards. Behind them, the grey facades of buildings can be seen against a cloud-covered sky.

The experience of history is an emotional one

¹ Hans-Werner Marquardt: ‘Geschichte fühlen statt lesen’, in: BZ, 10 August 2012, <https://www.bz-berlin.de/artikel-archiv/geschichte-fuehlen-statt-lesen>, last accessed: 15 January 2021.

² It thus ties in with the nineteenth-century panorama as a popular form of depicting history. See Bernhard Comment: *Das Panorama. Die Geschichte einer vergessenen Kunstform*, Berlin 2000. Molly C. Briggs et al (eds.): *Panoramic and Immersive Media Studies Yearbook*, vol. 1, Berlin 2025.

The visual focal point is the television tower, which clearly marks the direction of the viewer's gaze from west to east. Visitors can choose whether to walk along the base of the wall and see nothing but the graffiti or take the elevated position on the platform. Both perspectives are designed to be as realistic as possible in order to facilitate an 'authentic' experience (see Chapter 1). This allows today's visitors to grasp just how privileged their perspective is, just as it was for West Berliners. People who lived in the eastern part of the city are not visible and, by the same token, could not see over the Wall themselves. This perspective is withheld from today's audience.

When history
becomes a tourist
attraction

The Wall panorama, together with the private Checkpoint Charlie Museum and the BlackBox Cold War exhibition (run by the Berliner Forum für Geschichte und Gegenwart, that is, the Berlin Forum for History and Contemporary Issues) form a dense ensemble of historical representations, in a variety of formats, on Berlin's Friedrichsstraße. The site has a particularly historic feel thanks to a US Army observation booth in the middle of the street, in front of which – bolstering the sense of authenticity – sandbags are stacked up and men pose in what looks like original uniforms. For a tip, they pose for photographs with tourists. The visibility of the site as a key historical location is also enhanced through a seemingly authentic warning sign, which indicates in the languages of the Allies and in German that the 'American sector' ends here.

With this density of experiences on offer, Checkpoint Charlie is the go-to tourist site for visitors wishing to gain a sense of what Berlin might have felt like during the era of the Wall. Yet in the political magazine *Cicero*, journalist Ernst Elitz commented aptly in summer 2018:

Today, Checkpoint Charlie is a fairground with all the charm of an inner-city rubbish dump [. . .]. Shell game players rip off tourists, while actors made up as GIs pose for photographs with excited visitors in front of a mock control post. A shudder in front of the Wall is *de rigueur* on the tourist trail.³

What all this reveals is that the experience of history relies on emotional engagement in two respects. First, the staging aims to arouse curiosity and interest among visitors. Second, the intention is to

³ Ernst Elitz: 'Touristenhölle mitten in Berlin', in: *Cicero*, 9 August 2018, <https://www.cicero.de/kultur/Checkpoint-Charlie-Berlin-Tourismus-BlackBox-Kalter-Krieg>, last accessed: 15 January 2021.

convey historical emotions such as trepidation and fear (historical shudders) in the face of the border installations.

The Wall panorama epitomises a key trend in contemporary public history. The past seems particularly fascinating, attractive and therefore profitable when it is presented as an experience (see Chapter 4) or an event, one no longer limited to cognition but also addressing emotions. In line with this, the historical representation must not only appeal to the mind but must be experienced with all the senses, pulling at the heart-strings. This example clearly shows the crucial and dual significance attributed to emotional experience in the encounter with history. First, emotions are the subject of the presentation. In this instance, the focus is on the emotions of West Berliners in the shadow of the Wall on a November day in 1980. Second, history is supposed to be felt, that is, the experience on offer should stir up visitors' emotions, arouse their curiosity, invite their empathy and entertain them.

Emotions, to cite our key supposition, are an analytical category well-suited to capturing the specific performative character of historical representations (see Chapter 10). But what are emotions, let alone historical emotions? Where exactly do they fit within the process of historical communication? What are the strategies and practices of emotionalisation and how do they shape or alter today's representations of history? In the following, we will first clarify what emotions are, before going on to show that there exist quite different approaches to emotions and history, making their role in public history and their analysis an intricate and complex affair.

3.2 Emotion, affect and feeling. An attempt at classification

Philosophers were already pondering human emotions more than two millennia ago. Aristotle, for example, gave one of the best-known and earliest definitions of the phenomena. They

Emotions make the historical experience appealing

Emotions between universalism and constructivism

are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgements and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites.⁴

This definition is the starting point for emotion research, as it encompasses both a universal perspective on emotions and the element of their mutability or transformation.

Affects are universal
physical reactions

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, as academic disciplines and methods became established and split into various branches, two opposing ideas about human emotions gained traction. These continue to typify specific disciplinary approaches to human feelings today. One is the older, and more discursively influential, universalist notion of human feelings that transcend time and culture. The other is a cultural constructivist perspective on emotions. The universalist view, championed chiefly by neuroscientists, posits that humans possess a set of basic emotions that has remained unchanged over thousands of years and functions independently of culture. These scientists try to fathom human emotions primarily by looking at brain activity. Representatives of the neurosciences often prefer the term ‘affects’ over that of ‘emotions’, the underlying idea being that the former is ‘purely physical, pre-linguistic, and unconsciously emotional’.⁵

Emotions
change over
the course of
history

However, scholars in the humanities argue otherwise, asserting that, rather than anthropological constants, human feelings are culture- and era-specific. In contrast to the assumption of unmediated physical affects, this perspective posits the existence of conscious feelings and assumes that these are incorporated into both verbal and non-verbal representations. The latter are the sources that need to be analysed in order to trace past feelings and their transformations.

Recent research on emotions in the humanities has attempted to break free from the traditional dichotomies of nature vs. culture and thus universalism vs. social constructivism.⁶ Over the last two decades, while searching for an operationalisable synthesis crosscutting the humanities and life sciences, historians in particular have

⁴ Aristotle: *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, translated by George A. Kennedy, New York 1991, 121.

⁵ Jan Plamper: *Geschichte und Gefühl. Grundlagen der Emotionsgeschichte*, Munich 2012, 22.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 16 f.

spawned approaches that promise to help shed light on the questions alluded to above about emotions and emotionalisation in public history.⁷ In line with these proposals, the term ‘emotion’ will be used below as a ‘meta-concept’, with ‘emotion’ and ‘feeling’ being used synonymously. Meanwhile, we intentionally omit the term ‘affect’: by positing a pre-linguistic unconscious, it stands opposed to the above-mentioned synthesis.⁸

Emotions are a key dimension of experience and cognition; this is an insight shared across disciplines. However, inquiring into the form, manifestation and representation of people’s emotions in past times requires a substantially different approach to that of the natural and life sciences. Unlike neuroscientists, historians cannot look inside the heads of their research subjects and visualise brain activity using imaging techniques. Historians instead turn to historically transmitted representations of the emotions of those who lived during a given period of investigation, that is, sources that can be used to reconstruct past feelings. But it is not only the epistemological methods that differ fundamentally, but also the questions guiding research into human emotions in history. While neuroscience, for example, has examined the affect of fear in the amygdala of the human brain as a result of chemical reactions, historians are interested in the words and practices used to express fear in specific cultures and times, in how the representations of the emotion of fear changed and how the feeling of fear was translated into impactful actions.⁹ Yet even if emotions are conceptualised through the lens of cultural constructivism, it would be a mistake to imagine them as disembodied. The following section thus proposes a definition of emotion that adheres to the idea of a transdisciplinary synthesis while foregrounding emotions’ historicity.

Fear is a
bodily
reaction and
a cultural
practice

7 Plamper: *Geschichte und Gefühl*; Rob Boddice: *History of Emotion*, Manchester 2018.

8 In line with the proposal put forward in Plamper: *Geschichte und Gefühl*, 22.

9 Frank Biess: *Republik der Angst. Eine andere Geschichte der Bundesrepublik*, Hamburg 2019.

3.3 Emotions and history. A three-step analysis

A theory of emotions in the field of public history requires an analytical distinction at three levels.

Emotions are
historical
objects

First, we are dealing with the past emotions of historical actors. Historians' theorising in this regard has been conducted within the branch of research established internationally over the last ten to fifteen years under the rubric of the *history of emotions*. Here emotions are the objects of historical investigation. Researchers have, for example, delved into fear,¹⁰ anger,¹¹ humiliation¹² and laughter¹³ in history. The academic study of emotions has, therefore, been pursued at the object level.

Subjective
emotions in
the encounter
with history

Second, in the concrete situations in which history is communicated and received, a role is always played by the feelings of those involved, such as the exhibition organisers, the museum educators and the visitors. These emotions are situated at the subject level of those who partake in mediation practices in whatever role. Subjective emotions of this kind are increasingly being addressed in theory-building within history didactics, for example by scrutinising the emotional reactions of pupils in processes of historical learning.

Emotionalisation in the
mediation of
history

Third, it is vital to probe the concrete forms of emotional appeal in the various formats of historical representation. This we seek to capture under the rubric of emotionalisation. Here we need to focus more closely on the mediation setting. What do narratives about the emotions of historical actors look like? Which media, language and practices are used to present these historical emotions? How does this relate to the desired emotional reaction of the recipients? Against this backdrop, what are the techniques and manifestations of emotionalisation?

The analysis of emotions at the object and subject levels must initially be pursued separately. But at the third level of emotionalisa-

¹⁰ Bettina Hitzer: *Krebs fühlen. Eine Emotionsgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 2020.

¹¹ Imke Rajamani: *Angry Young Men. Masculinity, Citizenship and Virtuous Emotions in Popular Indian Cinema*, Berlin 2016.

¹² Ute Frevert: *Die Politik der Demütigung. Schauplätze von Macht und Ohnmacht*, Frankfurt a.M. 2017.

¹³ Martina Kessel: *Gewalt und Gelächter. 'Deutschsein' 1914–1945*, Stuttgart 2019.

tion, this distinction cannot always be clearly maintained, and this is precisely the problem we discuss below.

3.3.1 Object level: Emotions as objects of historical representation

The prelude to a history of emotions was provided as early as 1941 by French historian Lucien Febvre, who stated that emotions are ‘contagious’ and therefore relevant to action: ‘They imply interpersonal relations and collective behaviours’.¹⁴ The past provides plenty of examples of this, such as the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914. The German newspapers were brimming with reports on the emotional *mélange* of relieved tension, festive euphoria and anxious concern. One reporter from Freiburg, for example, wrote:

It is truth, the cold, cruel truth, a liberating message redeeming us from the torment of terrible uncertainty: the Emperor has spoken. But while on Saturday the rewarding enthusiasm found expression in songs of jubilation, now the most solemn of silences spreads over the thousands who will soon be flocking together. A silence, however, under which a volcano of emotions simmers and boils. A sombre seriousness of iron determination has etched itself onto the faces of men.¹⁵

The ‘August experience’ and the relevance of emotions to action

Contemporary propaganda made a point of cultivating the narrative of the infectious enthusiasm that had supposedly gripped the German populace. Examples include the production of iconographic photographs of cheering crowds and so-called ‘sound pictures’ (*Hörbilder*), the preservation on wax cylinders of the seemingly spontaneous singing of nationalist songs; these could then be played long after the first deaths at the front had been reported. Historians later probed how emotions shaped people’s actions and examined the contagious potential of emotions at the outbreak of war. Christopher Clark described how, for the most part, the peoples of Europe ‘sleepwalked’ into the conflict, eagerly anticipating events, euphoric that the explosive tension could finally be released through the dec-

¹⁴ Lucien Febvre: ‘Sensibilität und Geschichte. Zugänge zum Gefühlsleben früherer Epochen’, in: Lucien Febvre: *Das Gewissen des Historikers*, Frankfurt a.M. 1990, 91–108, here 93.

¹⁵ H. K.: ‘Die Stimmung in Freiburg’, in: *Freiburger Zeitung*, 1 August 1914, 3.

laration of war.¹⁶ Jeffrey Verhey, meanwhile, has shown that the enthusiasm was nowhere near as widespread as the propaganda tried to suggest.¹⁷ This is evidenced by diary entries from the time. In October 1914, an unknown soldier describes his departure for the front, noting that he had made his way to the railway station amid cheers and shouts of hurrah. But once on the train, the prevailing mood changed:

Now we were sitting at the carriage windows. Jokes flew back and forth, and the mood was more than exuberant. Two minutes to go before departure. Suddenly, the mood becomes serious and more serious still. Slowly, the enormous train starts to move; I don't know, we all felt so strange. Did we sense what awaited us all?¹⁸

Whether jubilation or anxiety, the sources on the 'August experience' (*Augusterlebnis*) are full of descriptions of emotions that make it abundantly clear that the history of August 1914 can be written as one of conflicting emotions.¹⁹

A concept of
emotion for
historians

The more recent German-language history of emotions began almost fifteen years ago with the observation that feelings, as Ute Frevert states, are 'historically powerful' (*geschichtsmächtig*), justifying actions and driving historical processes. Emotions are also 'history-laden' (*geschichtsträchtig*) [. . .]. They not only make history, they also have a history. Rather than anthropological constants, they change with respect to expression, object and evaluation'.²⁰ This means that although emotional experience is something that substantively connects people across time and cultures, the meaning of emotions, as well as the interpretation of emotional behaviour and

¹⁶ Christopher Clark: *Die Schlafwandler. Wie Europa in den Ersten Weltkrieg zog*, Munich 2015.

¹⁷ Jeffrey Verhey: *Der 'Geist von 1914' und die Erfindung der Volksgemeinschaft*, Hamburg 2000.

¹⁸ *Aus dem Kriegstagebuch unseres Jungen*, Berlin 1919, 8, available online at https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN73859301X&PHYSID=PHYS_0003, last accessed 15 January 2021.

¹⁹ See also Daniel Morat: 'Cheers, Songs, and Marching Sounds: Acoustic Mobilization and Collective Affects at the Beginning of World War I', in: Daniel Morat (ed.): *Sounds of Modern History: Auditory Cultures in 19th- and 20th-Century Europe*, New York and Oxford 2014, 177–200.

²⁰ Ute Frevert: 'Was haben Gefühle in der Geschichte zu suchen?', in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 35/2 (2009), 183–209, here 202.

the rules governing the showing and hiding of emotions, are subject to change. Emotions and their expression are variable; they are learnt, moulded and ‘managed’.²¹

Getting to grips with this mutability, getting to the bottom of the rules of emotional behaviour: these are the goals of a history of emotions and for this we need an operational concept of emotions, along with corresponding methods.

This mutability is a key feature of the historical concept of emotion. A second characteristic locates emotions in the human body. However, unlike in the natural sciences, from this perspective the body too is regarded as the outcome of historical processes and as subject to change. According to historian Sarah Ahmed, emotions are the ‘impressions’ that encounters with the world leave on our bodies. These impressions alter the body time and again.²² Emotions thus inscribe themselves into the body and are bound to the body. This is because people can use their bodies to communicate emotions, to make them visible and audible, while at the same time emotional experience is stored in the body. Happy people move in a freer and more carefree manner, while anxious people have something literally ‘breathing down their necks’ and anger often makes people’s ‘blood boil’. Emotions, then, are something we ‘do’; they are practices of the self, as Monique Scheer underlines. She thus expands her concept of emotions to include ‘the dimension of action’:

I want [. . .] to emphasise that feeling is closely interwoven with expression, with bodily activations and movements. Instead of making a strict distinction between inner feeling and outer expression, we should scrutinize how the outer and inner constitute each other.²³

Emotions, then, may be defined as culturally and structurally learned, and as internalised but also negotiated through social practices. The central actor and medium when it comes to the inscription of emotions,

Emotions
are physical

A definition
within the
discipline of
history

²¹ Arlie Russell Hochschild: ‘Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure’, in: *The American Journal of Sociology* 85/3 (1979), 551–575, here 573.

²² Sara Ahmed: ‘Collective Feelings: Or, the Impression Left by Others’, in: *Theory, Culture & Society* 21/2 (2004), 25–42, here 30.

²³ Monique Scheer: ‘Emotionspraktiken. Wie man über das Tun an die Gefühle herankommt’, in: Matthias Beitzl and Ingo Schneider (eds.): *Emotional Turn?! Europäische ethnologische Zugänge zu Gefühlen & Gefühlswelten*, Vienna 2016, 15–36, here 16.

but also for acting them out, communicating and expressing them, is therefore the body. According to the concepts at large in the anthropology of the body, the latter is a product of both biological and cultural factors, a conceptual union of body, mind and society.²⁴

This definition captures the mutability of emotions and situates their efficacy at the threshold of, and in the interaction between, the individual ‘inside’ and the social ‘outside’. What this means for the history of a specific emotion can be illustrated through the example of homesickness.

Homesickness
as a deadly
‘Swiss disease’

Initially, homesickness was not considered an emotion at all, but a medical condition. Between the seventeenth and late nineteenth centuries, homesickness was a medically well-defined, fatal illness.²⁵ This phenomenon was first described in 1688 by Swiss physician Johannes Hofer, who investigated the condition of many terminally ill Swiss soldiers abroad. The history of homesickness thus began as a history of the so-called ‘Swiss disease’.²⁶ The symptoms of the illness were ‘constant sadness, frequent sighs, constant thoughts of home, restless sleep, loss of strength, poor appetite, anguish, fever, weakness and emaciation’.²⁷ Homesickness, it was believed, would inevitably lead to death unless those affected were sent back to their homeland. This homesickness was a longing for that which had been left behind: home, the Alps, family or farm.

Homesickness
as an adaptive
problem

The medical discourse on homesickness as a fatal illness did not change until the middle of the nineteenth century. Industrialisation required people to be more mobile as they left their home area on trains, steamships and horse-drawn carts. Homesickness began to assume the form of an obstructive and disruptive factor in this process of increasing mobility, one that had to be overcome as a temporary adaptive problem. Accordingly, homesickness was described in the medical literature of the later nineteenth century using terms such as pain of separation, sadness, loneliness and melancholy.

²⁴ Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margret M. Lock: ‘The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology’, in: *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, New Series 1/1 (1987), 6–41, here 6.

²⁵ Simon Bunke: *Heimweh. Studien zur Kultur- und Literaturgeschichte einer tödlichen Krankheit*, Freiburg 2009, 25 f.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

Homesickness had become more akin to a symptom of a depressive mood or an emotion than an illness.

Around 1900, homesickness as an emotion-based adaptive problem was essentially attributed to those considered immature (by which the dominant discourse meant ‘common’, uneducated people), but above all to children and adolescents. This transformation of homesickness from illness to adaptation-related emotion can be neatly traced in the homesickness discourse at large in the educational literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁸ Around 1900, heroine Heidi in Johanna Spyri’s world-famous children’s book was still seriously ill; she suffered from pathological homesickness, much like the Swiss mercenaries of the seventeenth century. Only her return to the Swiss Alps saved her from inevitable death. After the turn of the century, children’s sorrow and their consuming longing for a forsaken homeland and parental home turned into an educational challenge. In contrast to Heidi, the children of the early twentieth century were no longer incurably ill, but merely immature. It was the task of parents and educators to guide them as they struggled with emotional adjustment problems, to help them overcome these challenges and thus mature. In 1913, for example, the *Lexikon der Pädagogik* described the overwhelming feeling of homesickness as entirely natural and advised forbearance: ‘It is important to practise patience and show a great deal of love’.²⁹ At the same time, the pedagogical discourse focussed on preventing homesickness through appropriate upbringing. ‘Strength of character’ (*Charakterstärke*), ‘morality’ (*Sittlichkeit*) and ‘reason’ (*Vernunft*) were seen as sensible antidotes and were assigned to parents as clear-cut child-rearing goals.

In the decades that followed, the perception that homesickness was a sign of low self-esteem and that it afflicted only overly sensitive, weak children gained growing traction. As a result, children’s literature abounded with girls suffering from homesickness, whereas boys were more inclined towards wanderlust and were driven by their desire for adventure. Mothers were, therefore, advised not

Homesickness
as a pedagogical
challenge

²⁸ Juliane Brauer: ‘Heidi’s Homesickness’, in: Ute Frevert et al. (eds.): *Learning How to Feel: Children’s Literature and Emotional Socialization, 1870–1970*, Oxford 2014, 209–227.

²⁹ S. P. Widmann: ‘Heimweh’, in: Otto Willmann and Ernst M. Roloff (eds.): *Lexikon der Pädagogik*, vol. 2, Freiburg 1913, 703–705, here 703.

to overly indulge their children, as maturity could develop chiefly through inner strength.

Nostalgic
homesickness
in the post-war
period

This homesickness discourse underwent significant changes in Germany after the Second World War in light of the millions of refugees and displaced persons. Homesickness, as the yearning for a lost homeland and era, became a publicly displayable and permissible emotion, and not just for children. This nostalgic homesickness was in fact a fundamental and widespread sentiment in West Germany in the 1950s. It is no coincidence that the hit song 'Heimweh' ('Homesickness') by Freddy Quinn topped the German hit parade for 21 weeks in 1956 – a record to this day.

Homesickness
as critique of
modernity

In the 1960s and 1970s, homesickness declined in importance in West German public discourse. It made a comeback around 1980, this time in the guise of a 'legitimate' modernity-critical sentiment in an era characterised as postmodernity, as the 'tapering off of progress-centred modernity'.³⁰ The feeling of homesickness revalidated the desire for, and right to, roots and a sense of security. Homesickness was not only permissible; after a period in the middle of the century in which many had lost, fled or been expelled from their homeland, homesickness was deemed necessary for personal maturation, an element crucial to finding one's bearings in an increasingly mobile and globalising world.

Social discourses
change emotional
rules

This digression on homesickness discourses over a period of 300 years shows that there was and is no universal feeling of homesickness. Moreover, homesickness started out as an illness, evolved into a feeling of loss and longing in the course of the nineteenth century and then became a sentiment critical of modernity in the last third of the twentieth century. This history makes it plain that emotions are constantly changing through an interplay with medical, educational and philosophical discourses and in response to historical events. We can generalise this finding. Emotions are culturally and historically mutable; they are subject to continual negotiation and must be adapted to a given set of rules governing emotion and to a given community. Our excursus on homesickness underscores how a specific emotion changed over the course of several centuries, how societal ideas and discourses evolved and how these laid down what people were and were not allowed to feel, how a particular emotion could or

³⁰ Martin Sabrow: *Die Zeit der Zeitgeschichte*, Göttingen 2012, 13.

could not be expressed in public and which emotions should be overcome and why.

However, this example also shows that emotions, as a mode of human perception of the world and a mode of human action, are an integral part of history. This means they are always present in historical representations. It stands to reason that they must play a major role in the encounter with history as well.

3.3.2 Subject level: Emotions in the encounter with history

One key institutional framework for encounters with history is school history lessons. To date, then, theories on emotions in relation to people's engagement with history have been developed within the field of history didactics, though very little empirical research has been conducted on this topic. In recent years, the impetus for this theorising has come, first, from the historical study of emotions. Second, researchers have shown a pronounced interest in emotions in teaching and learning contexts.

In light of this, the following reflections on subjective emotions in encounters with history build on ideas developed within history didactics, which are mostly informed by research on history teaching in schools. At the end of this chapter, we will adapt these ideas more specifically to the questions and requirements of public history.

Emotions are always present when people engage with history, regardless of the institutional framework.³¹ Traditionally, historical representations aim to impart knowledge and provide orientation. To accomplish this, they should be able to arouse curiosity, be as engaging as possible, generate interest and, ideally, inspire enthusiasm for historical topics. However, emotions do not have a clearly definable, systematic place in the encounter with history limitable to this level of representation and activation. All those involved in the encounter with history bring their emotions into it. Thus, each individual changes the atmosphere of the classroom, exhibition or memorial site and influences the process of historical appropriation. In these con-

Emotions are always present in the mediation of history

Activating and inhibiting emotions are forms of emotional management

³¹ For a recent empirical study on emotions at memorial sites, see: Matthias Wider: *'Man muss es gesehen haben, um es zu verstehen'. Zur Wirkung von historischen Orten auf Schülerinnen und Schüler*, Hamburg 2018.

texts, the handling of emotions can be subdivided, first, into the conscious activation of positively connotated emotional states such as interest, curiosity or empathy. Second, emotions that are considered troubling, such as boredom or rejection, are studiously inhibited by the history makers, whereas pupils who are compelled to engage with history may deliberately activate negative emotions. Whether activation or inhibition, both are forms of emotion management.

Wilhelm Dilthey and emotions as a method of knowledge acquisition

The realisation that emotions play a role in the engagement with the past and in the production of history is far from new. Wilhelm Dilthey, one of the founding fathers of the modern humanities, characterised the form of understanding proper to that field, in contrast to natural scientific explanation, as the ‘re-feeling of [or: empathising with] others’ states of mind’ (*Nachfühlen fremder Seelenzustände*).³² Dilthey thus attributed an epistemological significance to emotions in the process of understanding. This approach can, therefore, be described as an ‘emotion-based method’ (*Gefühlsmethode*).³³ Dilthey worked with the idea of a fundamental similarity between the person who understands and the one being understood, which makes it possible to ‘put oneself in others’ shoes’ (*Hineinversetzen*) and ‘replicate’ (*Nachbilden*) others’ feelings and thus to relive their experiences.

Fascination with, and fear of, emotions in history lessons of the past

Despite this emphatically humanities-oriented, hermeneutic, ‘emotion-based method’, emotions were virtually banned from history lessons for many decades. The explanation for this lies in the history of the subject itself as taught in schools. According to didactician Bodo von Borries, with their ‘conventional objectives’, history lessons in the Wilhelmine Empire openly pursued ‘affirmative-legitimatory, indeed manipulative-indoctrinating’ intentions. ‘Cognitive learning processes (understanding)’ had become ‘no more than a vehicle for the emo-

³² Wilhelm Dilthey: ‘Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik’, in: Wilhelm Dilthey: *Die geistige Welt. Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens. Erste Hälfte: Abhandlung zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften (Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 5)*, Göttingen 1961 (1900), 317–338, here 317.

³³ Daniel Morat: ‘Verstehen als Gefühlsmethode. Zu Wilhelm Diltheys hermeneutischer Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften’, in: Uffa Jensen and Daniel Morat (eds.): *Rationalisierungen des Gefühls. Zum Verhältnis von Wissenschaft und Emotionen 1880–1930*, Munich 2008, 101–117, here 103.

tional (enthusiasm and love)', particularly with regard to the nation.³⁴ Due to this legacy, which had an impact beyond the Nazi era, emotions were seen as particularly problematic for history lessons. This culminated in a notable surge of rationality in the discourse of history didactics in the 1970s. The fear of the incalculable effects of emotions resulted in the dominance of cognitive learning principles and objectives over an approach that addressed emotions as well,³⁵ ultimately leading to calls for the 'cultivation of affect'.³⁶

In the early 1990s, an initial attempt was made to reintegrate emotions into the learning process in the form of a history didactics conference on emotions in the classroom.³⁷ The motivation to organise an event of this kind arose from the insight that emotions had for many years been neglected in historico-political education. Although the conference was intended to mark a turning point, it initially had only a limited impact on historical didactic concepts, let alone curricula. It was only due to the *emotional turn* in historical scholarship that emotions found their way back into debates on historical learning, especially learning in non-school settings.³⁸

If we look at today's historical didactic approach to emotions, we find contrasting perspectives on – and expectations of – the inclusion of emotions in the learning process. On the one hand, there are formats that focus on reproducing and empathizing with past emotions (as in the Wall panorama) or that are mindful of learners' emotional reactions (especially when it comes to conveying the history of violent events, including mass murder). On the other hand, there are concerns about these practices that intentionally target learners' feelings, precisely because they are overly reminiscent of historical

Rediscovering
emotions in
the history class

34 Bodo von Borries: 'Von gesinnungsbildenden Erlebnissen zur Kultivierung der Affekte? Über Ziele und Wirkungen von Geschichtslernen in Deutschland', in: Bernd Mütter et al. (eds.): *Emotionen und historisches Lernen. Forschung, Vermittlung, Rezeption*, Frankfurt a.M. 1994, 67–92, here 67.

35 Joachim Rohlfes: *Geschichte und ihre Didaktik*, Göttingen 2005, 165: 'While emotional learning consists in part of acting out and becoming aware of feelings, it is centred on their cognitive processing'.

36 Borries: 'Von gesinnungsbildenden Erlebnissen', 67.

37 Bernd Mütter et al. (eds.): *Emotionen und historisches Lernen. Forschung, Vermittlung, Rezeption*, Frankfurt a.M. 1994.

38 Juliane Brauer and Martin Lücke (eds.): *Emotionen, Geschichte und historisches Lernen. Geschichtsdidaktische und geschichtskulturelle Perspektiven*, Göttingen 2013.

instances of calculated emotionalisation. This makes it essential to probe in greater depth how, in encounters with history, emotions at the subject level relate to those at the object level.

The past becomes knowable through mediating agents

As fundamental as Dilthey's definition of *Verstehen* or understanding as an 'emotion-based method' is, it nevertheless points to serious constraints, especially when it comes to historical understanding in particular and thus historical education. To grasp the past, we need mediating agents that make past realities visible and understandable. The 2000-year-old foundations of a building do not tell their story on their own. They need to be marked as historically significant by means of barriers and possibly by careful reconstruction; explanatory texts or videos about everyday life in the ancient city or detailing religious rituals are required in order to place the material foundations in a historical context. The effect of these various interposing media is rooted in their ability to generate mental images of the past and endow them with a special credibility, enabling viewers to develop consistent ideas about the past. But even if 100 visitors see the same foundations and receive the same information and images, it is up to each individual to link them with their own knowledge and existing mental images – and thus forge a narrative (see Chapter 7, 'Historical Imagination').

The appropriation of history as an experience of alterity or identity

These ideas point to the individual aspect of every instance of the reception and reconstruction of the past but also to societal patterns of interpretation that determine what from the past is worth rendering visible – and which story should be told on the basis of what has been made visible. The question is how the visualisation of the past is framed. Are visitors supposed to recognise how different everyday life was in an ancient city, or should they see parallels to their own lives? By the same token, is the encounter with the past an experience of alterity or an experience of identification? This depends crucially on the nature and use of the agents of mediation. To stick with the example of the excavations, the foundations might be minimally restored and furnished with appropriate informational texts. Alternatively, modern technology makes it possible to take visitors on a journey through time using sound, video installations and perhaps even augmented reality, allowing them to 'experience history up close'.

It is impossible to reexperience historical emotions

However, as we have already seen, from the perspective of the history of emotions there is a significant objection to encountering history as an experience of identity. Reliving historical emotions is

impossible, precisely because emotions may change fundamentally over time. An approximation in the sense of analogous feelings is conceivable, but not a journey through time into the hearts and minds of people in times long past. As denizens of the present day, we do not share their ‘experiential space’ (*Erfahrungsraum*) or ‘horizon of expectation’ (*Erwartungshorizont*), to use Reinhart Koselleck’s succinct historical categories.³⁹ To return to the example of homesickness: informed by our current understanding of that condition, our ability to empathise is severely constrained by our struggle to grasp that homesickness was blamed, as an illness, for the deaths of many mercenaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. How might we grasp a senior officer’s decision to send his soldiers home at the first sign of homesickness?

There is a second, distinctly historical didactic objection to the notion of reexperiencing historical emotions. This is that historical learning is the experience of the temporally, culturally and geographically different, of the other: it is an experience of alterity. Yet the invitation to relive something, to reexperience what people thought and felt in the past, is based on the illusion of sameness, the experience of identity. When visitors to the Asisi panorama look over the Wall from an elevated standpoint, in some sense they are adopting the perspective of West Berliners in 1980. Yet their view of the grey blocks of flats in East Berlin today is accompanied to a far lesser extent by anxious questions than in the case of people in the past. Back then, the view over the Wall may have involved concern for loved ones, the hope of catching a glimpse of them, or simply the relief felt at being on the ‘right’ side of the Wall. Visitors today are led to believe that they can see what people saw from such observation posts back then. Superficially, this may be true, but the meanings, thoughts and feelings that underlie or accompany the act of seeing differ between past and present.

Despite such limitations associated with the ‘emotion-based method’ of historical understanding, Wilhelm Dilthey nevertheless left us with an important pointer when it comes to situating emotions within the teaching-learning of the humanities, namely the ‘mental structure’ (*seelische Struktur*) of attention, perception and memory.

Historical learning
as an experience of
alterity

³⁹ Reinhart Koselleck: *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt a.M. 1979, 349.

If we take seriously the fact that, within our lived reality, humanities subjects depend on hermeneutic understanding, emotions must inevitably be recognised as of crucial importance in encounters with history and thus in historical learning.

Emotions inhibit the engagement with history

However, feeling does not automatically ensure an intensive and lasting engagement with history. It may also have an inhibitive effect, as evident in the challenges faced by present-day memorial and remembrance sites. Learners go to these places and attempt to conform to the emotions expected in a given context, to ‘dance according to a choreography of emotions’, as memorial site educators have observed.⁴⁰ This is particularly noticeable with regard to topics in the twentieth-century history of dictatorship and violence. Concern, empathy, compassion and sorrow form part of the emotional *mélange* demanded by the sociopolitical commemoration and remembrance of the victims. Yet this very aspect may be quite alien to learners. They might prefer to approach these topics with curiosity, anger or perhaps even emotional detachment. In the context of emotional learning, it is important in didactic terms to allow for and accommodate these feelings, rather than expecting learners to display socially approved emotions from the outset; such expectations may be emotionally overwhelming for learners and trigger defensive reactions.

3.3.3 Emotionalisation

Emotionalisation occurs due to the blending of emotions at object and subject level

The understanding of emotions at the object and subject levels set out above highlights the differences and boundaries between these two levels. In real-world practice, however, emotions do not remain at the subject or object level and thus distinguishable from each other, as our previous comments on socially standardised feelings have already made clear. History-focused experiential products too promise visitors the chance to share in past feelings.⁴¹ In these cases,

⁴⁰ Matthias Heyl: ‘Mit Überwältigendem überwältigen. Emotionen in KZ-Gedenkstätten’, in: Juliane Brauer and Martin Lücke (eds.): *Emotionen, Geschichte und historisches Lernen. Geschichtsdidaktische und geschichtskulturelle Perspektiven*, Göttingen 2013, 239–260, here 247.

⁴¹ Juliane Brauer: ‘“Heiße Geschichte”? Emotionen und historisches Lernen in Museen und Gedenkstätten’, in: Sarah Willner et al. (eds.): *Doing History. Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur*, Münster 2016, 29–44, here 29.

in which the emotions of people from earlier times are supposed to become relivable through the targeted use of media and the selection of apt narratives and behavioural prompts, we can refer to emotionalisation. What is specific to emotionalisation is that emotions at the object level are mixed with those at the subject level and can no longer be cleanly separated.

The task of critical public history is, first, to recognise the strategies of emotionalisation and to raise awareness of the problematic nature of attempts to generate particular emotional reactions (in the sense of reliving emotions). Second, it is important to consider where emotions can be productive and effective in the encounter with history. This requires a toolkit that enables us to describe the practices and strategies of emotionalisation as comprehensively as possible and to analyse their impact. In particular, it is crucial to examine how the observed blending of emotions at the object and subject levels comes about. The following categories can be used to this end: visualisation, narrativisation, authentication, dramatisation and personalisation.⁴² Each of these individual categories can be probed in relation to emotions at the object and subject level. The goal must then be to bring out how these two levels are interconnected concretely through relevant practices.

With regard to the Asisi panorama, the first obvious step is to examine the vehicles of visualisation more closely. What exactly does the panorama depict, from which perspectives, and which visual means lend support to the pictorial statement? What painting and representational techniques did the artist use, what was his intention in depicting this particular view of the Wall, and what message was it supposed to convey? Further, it always makes sense to ask what cannot be seen, such as the people living in East Berlin in the Wall panorama. What does this representational perspective signify?

In the case of Asisi's historical panorama, narrativisation occurs primarily through the associated promotional efforts. The website extols the emotional experience of this 'perfect illusion'. 'Experience everyday life in the shadow of the Berlin Wall in a unique panorama', it proposes, before promising that: 'You will experience in an impressive and unique way the ordinary yet terrible nature of life in the

Analysing
emotionalisa-
tion strategies

Visualisation

Narrativisation
through
authenticity

⁴² Georg Koch: *Funde und Fiktionen. Urgeschichte im deutschen und britischen Fernsehen seit den 1950er Jahren*, Göttingen 2019, 155 f.

shadow of the Wall'.⁴³ In addition, a room in front of the panorama narrates its creation and relates the story of Yadegar Asisi, while also displaying and commenting on numerous historical photographs of the Berlin Wall. With this information and these historical images in mind, visitors are provided with an interpretation of history with which to view the Wall panorama. Not to be neglected is the entire experiential ensemble at Checkpoint Charlie, the actors in their US Army uniforms in front of the border hut, and the signs marking the former sector border. Here, narrativization is intended to provide the historical encounter with a robust emotional underpinning. The artist himself is quite open about this, making full use of the 'perfect illusion' afforded by the panorama medium. The 'terrible nature of life in the shadow of the Wall' is meant to be empathetically relivable; visitors are supposed to head home with the feeling of having truly stood at the Wall in 1980.⁴⁴ This leaves them little opportunity for their own sense-making or for subjective feelings, which might be less influenced by the intended message of 'terrible life' than by the realisation that the countercultural Western life in the squats situated in the shadow of the Wall was far from vibrant or exciting.

The accompanying exhibition, featuring the life story of the artist, who lived in the Kreuzberg district during the relevant period and processed his own visual memories in the panorama, authenticates the latter. The photos on display substantiate the narrative presented. Further authentication is provided through identification of a specific location: visitors take in the Wall from Sebastianstraße in Berlin-Kreuzberg. The artist also depicts the countercultural life of punks in the well-known club SO 36, a fixture that still exists today.

Dramatisation
through light
and sound

To achieve a fitting form of dramatization, the artist opted for 'diffuse lighting',⁴⁵ which is intended to reinforce the impression of a grey November day. In the dimly lit space, visitors are completely removed from the hustle-and-bustle and street noise at Checkpoint

⁴³ From the presentation of the panorama on the website under 'Die Mauer. Yadegar Asisi Panorama', www.die-mauer.de, last accessed: 15 January 2021.

⁴⁴ 'Sehenswert! // Die Mauer – Asisi Panorama Berlin', in: YouTube channel of TV.Berlin, 4 March 2016 (featuring an interview with the artist of more than ten minutes), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yndYqG4ao6w>, last accessed: 15 January 2021.

⁴⁵ According to his own description on the following website: <https://www.asisi.de/panorama/die-mauer>, last accessed: 15 January 2021.

Charlie. All their attention is focussed on what is made visible: the panorama. Acoustically, too, the artist pursues dramatisation through classically inspired background music composed and arranged by himself and Eric Babak. With its slow, sustained rhythm and the predominance of low-pitched string instruments, the music is reminiscent of a requiem. It is overlaid by the strident and, in contrast to the music, loud playback of original sound recordings from the era of divided Berlin. One can, for example, hear excerpts from speeches by Walter Ulbricht and Erich Honecker. Interestingly, these recordings are not from 1980, which means that the illusion is not realised consistently. Nevertheless, these virtually iconic sound sources fit into the overall ensemble of the staging, as they align with the visitors' presumed historico-cultural expectations and thus convincingly embody a sense of *pastness* (see Chapter 11, 'Reception').

The strategy of personalisation is evident in the highly detailed depiction of people standing on a wooden platform (similar to the one on which the Panorama visitors themselves stand) to look over the Wall. One sees small children with their parents, white-haired pensioners and young people. Visitors are thus offered a number of ways of identifying with their curious counterparts of 1980.

Personalisation

To summarise, what we have learned is that emotions play two key roles when it comes to the promise of experience in public history. First, historical representations offer an apparently low-threshold way of accessing history by thematising the feelings of people in the past. Here, emotions can serve as objects for the presentation and communication of history. Second, recipients undergo a form of positive emotional mobilisation. The emotionalisation strategies used often blur the differences between emotions at the object level and subject level. For example, the representational strategies in the Asisi panorama aim to create an illusion that allows visitors to completely immerse themselves in a November day at the Berlin Wall in 1980, to engage with history using all their senses and thus supposedly experience it (see the info box on 'Immersion' in section 4.3). The question is what opportunities visitors have to return from this illusion to their present, to relate themselves to this experience of history, to probe for themselves what they have taken from it. In other words, what does this encounter with history mean to them?

This ambivalence of emotions is now the subject of numerous conferences and networking events at which public history actors openly discuss the significance of emotions, especially in encounters

Emotional overwhelm
and the Beutelsbach
consensus

with the German history of dictatorship.⁴⁶ The debate often revolves around the question of emotional overwhelm and its permissibility. While there is a great need in museums, memorial sites and other places of historical mediation to arouse interest and attention, the danger of excessive emotionalisation has been repeatedly underscored. In the context of this discussion, the Beutelsbach Consensus, now over forty years old, has come to the fore. The principles of this consensus were originally formulated in 1976 with a view to political education. Though it was regarded as a minimum consensus, the principles of controversy, pupil-orientation and the prohibition of overwhelm were intended to effectively prevent the political indoctrination of learners. Interestingly, in the context of the debate on memorial site work, the ban on overwhelming pupils gained an additional layer of significance. Originally, it meant rejecting those forms or methods of mediation that seemed likely to ‘ambush pupils – by whatever means – in order to impose desirable opinions and thus impede their ability to “form an independent judgement”’.⁴⁷ These days, however, the focus is no longer on the risk of overwhelming them with arguments, but chiefly on the potential for emotional overwhelm.⁴⁸

Boundaries
between
emotionalisa-
tion and
emotional
overwhelm

The above theorising of emotions at the object and subject levels delineates clear boundaries between emotionalisation and emotional overwhelm. Emotionalisation is the mobilisation of the recipients’ subjective emotions; the emotions remain at the object and subject levels respectively, without mixing. This means that while the Asisi panorama depicts the normality of the Wall in all its terribleness, today’s visitors can encounter this ‘horror’ with their own curiosity or scepticism, perhaps with disapproval or even anger that such a thing was possible. However, emotional overwhelm occurs when historical emotions are meant to be re-felt today, in other words, when they depart from the object level and are deployed to influence individual feelings.

⁴⁶ See the special issue of *LaG Magazin* 11 (2012) published by the online portal ‘Lernen aus der Geschichte’: ‘Emotionalität und Kontroversität’.

⁴⁷ Hans-Georg Wehling: ‘Konsens à la Beutelsbach?’, in: Siegfried Schiele and Herbert Schneider (eds.): *Das Konsensproblem in der politischen Bildung*, Stuttgart 1977, 179–180, here 179.

⁴⁸ Elena Demke: ‘Emotionale Harmonisierung oder intellektuelle Provokation? Zur Darstellung von Emotionalität in Besuchervideos von Gedenkstättenbesuchen’, in: *LaG-Magazin* 11 (2012): ‘Sonderheft: Emotionalität und Kontroversität’, 11–14, here 13; Heyl: ‘Mit Überwältigendem überwältigen’.

3.4 A plea for emotions in public history

On the basis of the ideas set out above, there are two key objections to emotional overwhelm. First, historical emotions cannot be re-felt, if only because they change over time. People today are aware that the Wall has not existed for thirty years and that the armed border guards can no longer pose a threat to anyone. Visitors can leave the panorama whenever they wish and immerse themselves in the hustle-and-bustle of the city at Checkpoint Charlie. The second objection stems from history didactic considerations. Encounters with the past can be identity-forming and action-orientated if they address individual memories and personal experiences of time rather than simply attempting to recreate them. This reiterates the fundamental point that engagement with history is more an experience of alterity than identity. Pasts were fundamentally different from our present, even if they are presented as familiar and similar in a given historical experience. This means that an encounter with history mediated by emotions can certainly provide meaningful stimuli, but only if the emotions remain clearly at the object level and it is still possible for people today to have and address their own, highly variable emotions (at the subject level). When it comes to public presentations of history, this suggests that strategies of emotionalisation should be transparent, with several different narratives on offer. These make it possible to terminate the dramatising visual and acoustic effects at the end of the historical experience, releasing visitors into their present with (emotional) impulses for further reflection.

Making emotionalisation strategies transparent

Introductory literature

- Brauer, Juliane: “‘Heiße Geschichte’? Emotionen und historisches Lernen in Museen und Gedenkstätten”, in: Sarah Willner et al. (eds.): *Doing History. Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur*, Münster 2016, 29–44.
- Brauer, Juliane and Lücke, Martin: ‘Emotionen, Geschichte und historisches Lernen. Einführende Überlegungen’, in: Juliane Brauer and Martin Lücke (eds.): *Emotionen, Geschichte und historisches Lernen. Geschichtsdidaktische und geschichtskulturelle Perspektiven*, Göttingen 2013, 11–26.
- Frevert, Ute: ‘Was haben Gefühle in der Geschichte zu suchen?’, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 35/2 (2009), 183–209.
- Plamper, Jan: *Geschichte und Gefühl. Grundlagen der Emotionsgeschichte*, Munich 2012.

4 Experience: *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*

4.1 Introduction

In the early twentieth century, cultural historian Johan Huizinga contributed to the debate on the reorganisation of state museums in the Netherlands and the possible establishment of a national history museum. In a memorandum of 1920, he expressed opposition to the proposal to distinguish between a national art museum, which would privilege aesthetic enjoyment, and a historical museum, which was intended to provide factual information and education. Aesthetic enjoyment and historical education, he contended, could not be separated from each other: they belonged together in every type of museum. The aesthetic experience in particular, Huizinga averred, can produce a special form of access to the past. This he called *historische sensatie*, which can be translated as ‘historical sensation’. Huizinga describes this, drawing on his own encounters, as a direct experience of the past triggered by interaction with historical artefacts:

[. . .] it may well be that [. . .] a historical detail, in an engraving, or in a notarial act for that matter, while it may be indifferent to me, may suddenly give me the conviction of an immediate contact with the past, a sensation as profound as the profoundest enjoyment of art, an (don't laugh) almost ecstatic experience of no longer being myself, of a flowing over into a world outside myself, of a getting in touch with the essence of things, of the experience of Truth by history.¹

It is this sensation of ‘an immediate contact with the past’ and ‘the experience of Truth by history’ that many people still hope to gain from visiting a museum, in search of historical objects’ aura of authenticity (see the info box on ‘aura’ in Chapter 2, ‘Authenticity’).² In the case of historical theme parks and living history sites, the component of sensory and physical experience that we can discern in Huizinga’s statement is even more to the fore. In that context, advertising often promises an unforgettable experience of history, which is presented as immersion in a bygone world. A flyer advertising the

¹ Quoted in Frank Ankersmit: *Sublime Historical Experience*, Stanford 2005, 126.

² See Roman Weindl: *Die ‘Aura’ des Originals im Museum. Über den Zusammenhang von Authentizität und Besucherinteresse*, Bielefeld 2019, 37–40.

Vindonissa Legionary Trail in Switzerland, for example, declares that visitors can immerse themselves in the world of the legionaries of 2,000 years ago in the original setting: ‘Atmospherically staged archaeological sites and reconstructed buildings, participatory tours (*Spiel-Touren*) and themed tours, activity programmes and events all invite you to experience Roman history.’³ Even when visiting historical sites that rely less heavily on (re-)staging the past, such as memorials, the ‘longing for a direct experience of history’ often plays an important role.⁴

In recent years, this ‘experiential orientation’ typical of museum visitors and consumers of other public history offerings has often been described as a characteristic of a late modern or postmodern ‘experience society’. The focus on experience has attracted criticism for propelling the eventisation and commercialisation of cultural sites and services.⁵ Bernd Schönemann, for instance, designates the guiding precept of ‘history as experience’ as a phenomenon of post-modernity, which he distinguishes from the modern guiding principle of ‘history as education’, which, he states, held sway from the early nineteenth to the late twentieth century.⁶ As evident in Huizinga’s work, however, the idea of experiencing history directly is not a result of changes in consumption and leisure habits traceable to the late twentieth century. It is in fact underpinned by a fundamental aspect of our relationship to the past, which comes into play when we approach history not (solely) through texts and narratives, but (also) via sensory interaction with historical artefacts, environments or representations. With this fundamental level in mind, we explore what it means to experience history on the following pages. We begin by introducing different concepts of experience before going on to scrutinise them with regard to specifically historical experience. In

3 Flyer: ‘Legionärspfad Vindonissa, Römerlager Vindonissa’, Museum Aargau, 2019.

4 See Axel Drecollet et al. (eds.): *Authentizität als Kapital historischer Orte? Gedenkstätten, Dokumentationszentren und die Sehnsucht nach dem unmittelbaren Erleben von Geschichte*, Göttingen 2019.

5 See Gerhard Schulze: *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart*, Frankfurt a.M. and New York 1992.

6 Bernd Schönemann: ‘Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtskultur’, in: Bernd Mütter et al. (eds.): *Geschichtskultur. Theorie – Empirie – Pragmatik*, Weinheim 2000, 26–58, here 47–50.

the final section, we allude to examples to demonstrate that public history offerings can stimulate the experience of history in very different ways while also prompting people to engage in historical thinking.

4.2 Definitions

If we wish to probe more deeply into the historical sensation (*historische sensatie*) described by Huizinga, we quickly realise that in German two different but closely related terms are used for this: *Erlebnis* (verb: *erleben*, past participle: *erlebt*, substantivised verb: *Erleben*) and *Erfahrung* (verb: *erfahren*, past participle: *erfahren*, substantivised verb: *Erfahren*). In English, there is only one word for these two terms: ‘experience’. So both levels of meaning are always present when English-language literature talks about ‘historical experience’: historical *Erfahrung* and historical *Erlebnis*.

4.2.1 Philosophy and the humanities

The concept of *Erfahrung* – even more than that of *Erlebnis* – is a ‘basic category of thought in the humanities’.⁷ Hence, its conceptual history (in philosophy and the humanities) is too extensive to be recapitulated in what follows. In order to get to grips with the conceptual content at issue in our context, it makes more sense to start with an everyday distinction: in German as in English, one can either *have an experience* (*eine Erfahrung machen*) or *have experience* (*Erfahrung haben*), in other words be experienced in something. The former, repeated often enough, may lead to the latter. Having experience is, therefore, the result of a learning process that takes place over a lengthy period of time. The concept of *Erlebnis*, however, is not based on these cumulative experiences. It is a matter of having an experience in the present, of the moment in which something happens and in which one participates in this event in a specific way,

⁷ Michael Hampe and Helmut Holzhey: ‘Erfahrung’, in: Petra Kolmer and Armin G. Wildfeuer (eds.): *Neues Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe*, vol. 1, Freiburg and Munich 2011, 652–668, here 662.

namely by experiencing it. In the most basic sense, to cite Hans-Georg Gadamer, ‘*Erleben* means primarily “to be still alive when something happens”’.⁸

Furthermore, as Gadamer elaborates in his attempt to define the word *erleben*, it ‘suggests the immediacy with which something real is grasped – unlike something which one presumes to know but which is unattested by one’s own experience’,⁹ something that one learns about, for example, through third parties or from the media. In contrast, ‘what is experienced is always what one has experienced oneself’.¹⁰ While *erleben* in this sense precedes all interpretation,¹¹ most approaches in philosophy and the humanities associate the concept of *Erfahrung* with the process of interpretation, in other words with ‘acts of meaning attribution’.¹² *Erfahrung*, then, encompasses not only the *Erleben* of an event or a process, but also its mental appropriation and interpretation. In *Erfahrung*, according to Jörn Leonhard, ‘the interpretative appropriation of experienced [as in *erleben*] reality’ finds reflection.¹³

Both concepts are thus concerned with the apprehension of reality, but the particular definitions used point to varying degrees of immediacy. This issue of the apprehension of reality brings out the connection to epistemology, in which the concept of *Erfahrung* has played a crucial role, at least since British empiricism. For example, in his 1748 *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, David Hume distinguished *a priori* truths, which may be discovered ‘by the mere operation of thought’, from *a posteriori* truths, which arise ‘entirely from experience’.¹⁴ Hence, in this case *Erfahrung* primarily refers to the sensory perception of external reality. A few decades later, through his critical engagement with Hume and British empiricism,

Immediacy

Perception of reality

⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer: *Truth and Method*, London 1989 (German orig. 1960), 53.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Konrad Cramer: ‘Erleben, Erlebnis’, in: Joachim Ritter (ed.): *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 2, Basel and Stuttgart 1972, col. 702–711, here col. 703.

¹² Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht: *Production of Presence. What Meaning Cannot Convey*, Stanford 2004, 100.

¹³ Jörn Leonhard: ‘Erfahrung im 20. Jahrhundert. Methodische Perspektiven einer “Neuen Politikgeschichte”’, in: Norbert Frei (ed.): *Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 2006, 156–163, here 157.

¹⁴ David Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Chicago 1900, 23 and 25.

Immanuel Kant developed his transcendental theory of knowledge, which may be understood as a theory of the ‘conditions of possibility for experience [*Erfahrung*]’.¹⁵ Kant too used the term *Erfahrung* chiefly as a synonym for empirical knowledge.¹⁶

Wilhelm Dilthey

Another hundred years later, in the late nineteenth century, it was above all Wilhelm Dilthey who philosophically enriched the notion of *Erfahrung*, making it a core concept of the humanities. He combined it with the concept of *Erlebnis*, whose usage in the humanities owes much to Dilthey. His starting point was Kant’s transcendental philosophy of knowledge. Like Kant, Dilthey assumed that the ‘thing in itself’ was inaccessible to humans and that they could only apprehend the outside world as an ‘inner experience’ (*innere Erfahrung*), as a ‘fact of consciousness’ (*Tatsache des Bewußtseins*).¹⁷ In the first instance, he concluded that this transcendental philosophical position meant that inner experience (*Erfahrung*) took epistemological precedence over external nature. This is because the facts of consciousness, whose analysis he saw as the task of the humanities, were for him directly given to the individual consciousness, while external nature could only be inferred indirectly. As the different academic disciplines took shape around 1900, this juxtaposition served to distinguish the humanities as a common family of disciplines vis-à-vis the natural sciences, which were gaining in importance.

¹⁵ Hampe and Holzhey: ‘Erfahrung’, 660.

¹⁶ See the famous first sentence of the introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*: ‘There is no doubt whatever that all our cognition begins with experience; for how else should the cognitive faculty be awakened into exercise if not through objects that stimulate our senses and in part themselves produce representations, in part bring the activity of our understanding into motion to compare these, to connect or separate them, and thus to work up the raw material of sensible impressions into a cognition of objects that is called experience?’ The transcendental philosophical qualification then comes in the next paragraph: ‘But although all our cognition commences *with* experience, yet it does not on that account all arise *from* experience’. Immanuel Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, transl. and ed. By Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge and New York 1998, 136.

¹⁷ Wilhelm Dilthey: *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften. Versuch einer Grundlegung für das Studium der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte (Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 1)*, 5th edn., Stuttgart 1962 (1883), xvii.

This ‘conflict of the faculties’ cannot be discussed in detail here.¹⁸ What is key for our context is that Dilthey made inner experience (*innere Erfahrung*) the epistemological starting point for the humanities. He was keen to emphasise that this should not be understood as the outcome of purely rational processes. Dilthey wrote in his 1883 *Introduction to the Human Sciences*: ‘No real blood flows in the veins of the knowing subject constructed by Locke, Hume, and Kant, but rather the diluted extract of reason as a mere activity of thought’. However, the ‘historical as well as psychological approach to whole human beings’ led him to make the ‘entire, full-fledged, unadulterated experience [*Erfahrung*], as part of the ‘concrete process of living’ the basis of his research.¹⁹ For Dilthey, ‘life as it encompasses the human race’ (*ein das menschliche Geschlecht umfassender Zusammenhang*) is experienced (in the sense of *erfahren*) as a structured whole.²⁰ This experienced reality is also the prerequisite for understanding (*Verstehen*). For Dilthey, this was the core method of the humanities, hence his status as one of the founders of modern hermeneutics: ‘In understanding [*Verstehen*], we proceed from the nexus of the whole [*Zusammenhang des Ganzen*] that is alive to us [*uns lebendig gegeben ist*], in order to render the individual elements comprehensible in light of it’.²¹

Experience
(*Erfahrung*) and
understanding
(*Verstehen*)

Here we can discern the structure of the hermeneutic circle, in which the understanding of an individual fact is always moulded by a prior understanding of its overall context. Above all, this experienced (*erlebter*) context allows us to understand others, namely through re-experiencing (*Nacherleben*). After all, in the first instance, all that

¹⁸ See, for example, Christoph König and Eberhard Lämmert (eds.): *Konkurrenten in der Fakultät. Kultur, Wissen und Universität um 1900*, Frankfurt a.M. 1999; Herbert Schnädelbach: *Philosophie in Deutschland 1831–1933*, 6th edn., Frankfurt a.M. 1999, 88–117.

¹⁹ Dilthey: *Einleitung*, xviii and 123.

²⁰ Wilhelm Dilthey: ‘The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences’ in: Wilhelm Dilthey: *Selected Works, Vol. III, Part II*, translated by Rudolf A Makkreel and John Scanlon, Princeton 2002, 153; Wilhelm Dilthey: *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, Frankfurt a.M. 1981 (1910), 158; cf. Frithjo Rodi: *Das strukturierte Ganze. Studien zum Werk von Wilhelm Dilthey*, Weilerswist 2003.

²¹ Wilhelm Dilthey: *Die geistige Welt. Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens. Erste Hälfte: Abhandlungen zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften (Gesammelte Schriften, vol. V)*, 2nd edn., Stuttgart 1957, 172.

exists for the individual is their own ‘inner experience’ (*Erfahrung*). The decisive question for the humanities, therefore, is whether, and if so in what way, others’ inner *Erfahrung* may be accessed and reconstructed. For Dilthey, this is possible in principle (although never completely) because the person doing the understanding has a mental life that is structurally similar to the mental life of others. According to Dilthey, the ‘apprehension of other persons’ (*Auffassung fremder Personen*) happens through a ‘mental process equivalent to an analogical inference’, that is, ‘by transference of our own inner life’ (*durch Übertragung unseres eignen Seelenlebens*).²² In his later work, he described this process more specifically as ‘transposing’ (*Hineinversetzen*), ‘re-creating’ (*Nachbilden*) and ‘re-experiencing’ (*Nacherleben*) (see Chapter 3, ‘Emotions’).²³

Understanding
(*Verstehen*) as
a method in
the humanities

The differentiation between these terms cannot and need not detain us here. What is important is that in developing his hermeneutics, Dilthey placed greater emphasis than before on the idea that the object of the humanities is not the facts of consciousness as such, but the ‘objectifications of life’ that have emerged from individual consciousnesses and that, taken as a whole, represent the realm of the ‘objective spirit’. Hence, in contrast to the ‘subjectivity of lived experience’ (*Subjektivität des Erlebnisses*), Dilthey now put more emphasis on the ‘objectivity of life’.²⁴ For him, this gave rise to the triad of ‘lived experience, expression, and understanding’ (*Erlebnis, Ausdruck und Verstehen*) on which the humanities are based.²⁵ As humanities scholars, then, we are not directly concerned with the *Erleben* of other people (dead or alive), but with the respective expression they gave to their *Erleben*, in the form of texts, images or music, for example. For Dilthey, however, understanding expression still ‘methodically [. . .] must presuppose lived experience’.²⁶ This means that for him hermeneutics, as the scholarly art of interpretation, was based on the connection and similarity between one’s own and another’s mental life: ‘On the basis of lived experience [*Erleben*] and self-understanding and their constant interaction, there emerges

²² Ibid., 198.

²³ Dilthey: *Formation*, 234–237; *Aufbau*, 263–267.

²⁴ Ibid., 168; 177 f.

²⁵ Ibid., 153; 157. See also Matthias Jung: *Dilthey zur Einführung*, Hamburg 1996, 161.

²⁶ Dilthey: *Formation*, 245; *Aufbau*, 278.

the understanding of other persons and their manifestations of life [*fremder Lebensäußerungen und Personen*].²⁷

Three insights from this brief examination of Dilthey are important to our context. First, he made *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis* the central categories of the humanities. Second, he was not only concerned with the *Erfahrung* of others as the object of the humanities, but also with the fact that the humanities scholar participates in the process of understanding (*Verstehen*) through their own experience (*Erleben*). For Dilthey, then, *Erleben* is not only the object but also the method of the humanities.²⁸ Third, the connection between one's own *Erleben* and that of others does not take place directly but is mediated through the understanding of expression.

4.2.2 The discipline of history

For a long time, understanding (*Verstehen*) was a basic method in academic history as well.²⁹ But this approach came under criticism in the second half of the twentieth century, chiefly from the perspective of a historical social science geared towards structural history. Its proponents were no longer concerned mainly with understanding (*Verstehen*), but with explaining.³⁰

As early as 1868, a few years before Dilthey, Johann Gustav Droysen wrote in his *Outline of the Principles of History* that the 'essence of historical method is understanding by means of investigation',³¹ which neatly encapsulates historicism's hermeneutic self-image. Although the terms *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* do not play a major role for him, he too assumes that one can make inferences

Johann Gustav
Droysen

²⁷ Ibid., 226; 252.

²⁸ For more detail, see Daniel Morat: 'Verstehen als Gefühlsmethode. Zu Wilhelm Diltheys hermeneutischer Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften', in: Uffa Jensen and Daniel Morat (eds.): *Rationalisierungen des Gefühls. Zum Verhältnis von Wissenschaft und Emotionen 1880–1930*, Munich 2008, 101–117.

²⁹ For an introduction, see Ulrich Muhlack: 'Verstehen', in: Hans-Jürgen Goertz (ed.): *Geschichte. Ein Grundkurs*, 3. edn., Reinbek bei Hamburg 2007, 104–136.

³⁰ See Thomas Welskopp: 'Erklären, begründen, theoretisch begreifen', in: Hans-Jürgen Goertz (ed.): *Geschichte. Ein Grundkurs*, 3. edn., Reinbek bei Hamburg 2007, 137–177.

³¹ Johan Gustav Droysen: *Outline of the Principles of History*, Boston 1897, 12.

about the *Erleben* of others in light of one's own *Erleben* through the understanding of expression, though he uses the term *Äußerung* rather than *Ausdruck*:

The possibility of this understanding arises from the kinship of our nature with that of the utterances lying before us as historical material. A further condition of this possibility is the fact that man's nature, at once sensuous and spiritual, speaks forth every one of its inner processes in some form apprehensible by the senses, mirrors these inner processes, indeed, in every utterance. Thus, on hearing the cry of anguish we have a sense of the anguish felt by him who cries.³²

Robin George
Collingwood

British philosopher of history Robin George Collingwood, meanwhile, uses the term 'experience' explicitly to describe historical thinking. In his 1946 book *The Idea of History*, which includes discussions of Dilthey,³³ he calls history a 're-enactment of past experience'.³⁴ Here he describes historians as putting themselves in the shoes of historical subjects in order to 're-enact' and 're-think' (his words) their actions and ideas. In contrast to Droysen, forms of expression or *Äußerungen* play a subordinate role for Collingwood. According to him, historical thinking presupposes the capacity for historical imagination (see Chapter 9) and also requires a specific experience-based affinity on the part of historians: '[. . .] the historian's thought must spring from the organic unity of his total experience, and be a function of his entire personality with its practical as well as its theoretical interests.'³⁵

History from below

In the above reflections, *Erfahrung* or personal *Erleben* is a prerequisite for historians' process of understanding. In 'history from below', meanwhile, the historical focus is on the *Erleben* of historical subjects. A variety of cultural-historical approaches, such as women's history, the history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*), microhistory and historical anthropology, which have emerged since the 1960s in contrast to social, structural and political history,³⁶ focus primarily

³² Ibid., 12–13.

³³ Robin G. Collingwood: *The Idea of History*, Oxford 1946, 171–176.

³⁴ Ibid., 282.

³⁵ Ibid., 305.

³⁶ See Ute Daniel: *Kompendium Kulturgeschichte. Theorien, Praxis, Schlüsselwörter*, Frankfurt a.M. 2001.

on people previously marginalised within historiography.³⁷ This attempt to get to grips with practices of life that deviate from those of white, middle-class, aristocratic and male historical subjects spurred the emergence of a multitude of new histories in which gender- and class-specific experiences and the lives of ordinary people take centre stage.³⁸

In her critical examination of historical studies that have helped lend visibility to non-privileged groups, historian Joan Wallach Scott problematises the fact that the experience of historical subjects is often attributed a self-evidence that eludes interrogation.³⁹ In contrast, from a post-structuralist perspective, Scott addresses the discursive constructedness of the category of ‘experience’, which is often used in these works to postulate if not essentialise group-specific life practices (of ‘women’, ‘workers’, ‘gays’, and so on),⁴⁰ without taking their diversity into account. She also points out that descriptions of historical experiences constitute situated knowledge: the historians who reconstruct them are always socially situated, while their research is context-dependent and circumscribed by local factors.⁴¹ But rather than dismissing the concept of experience, Scott calls for critical reflection on its usage in historical texts – and thus on the production of historical knowledge as a whole.⁴²

Joan Wallach Scott

Scott’s critique highlights a debate in which exponents of the *linguistic turn*, who assume the discursive construction of all experience, stand opposed to historians who see in the category of experience a historical reality, one that cannot be reduced to the forms of linguistic expression associated with it. We will encounter this juxtaposition again in the next section, albeit with a significant shift in perspective. The positions discussed so far are mainly con-

37 See Martin Jay: *Songs of Experience. Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*, Berkeley etc. 2005, 241–248.

38 See Edward P. Thompson: *The Making of the English Working Class*, London 1963; Carlo Ginzburg: *The Cheese and the Worms. The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, Baltimore 1980 (Italian orig. 1976); Natalie Zemon Davis: *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Cambridge 1983.

39 Joan W. Scott: ‘The Evidence of Experience’, in: *Critical Inquiry*, 17/4 (1991), 773–797.

40 *Ibid.*, 786.

41 *Ibid.*, 795.

42 *Ibid.*, 797.

cerned with how to access others' experience in order to understand history – just as History (*Historie*) as a whole, in the words of Reinhart Koselleck, can be comprehended as a 'collection of instructive alien experiences which [can] be appropriated by learning'.⁴³ So the key issue from this perspective is the history of historical subjects' experiences. However, if we return to Huizinga's 'historical sensation' and the role of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* in public history, it is not the history of experiences that stands centre stage but rather the experience of history. In the next section, we will discover that these two perspectives cannot be kept completely separate.

4.2.3 The experience of history

At the start of his study *Experience and History*, philosopher David Carr states that the call for experience is a recurring phenomenon in the history of philosophy. Usually, he contends, it takes the form of a call to 'return' to experience; it is a response to the sense of too great a distance between us and the world, which is often presented as the result of an excessively rational, abstract approach. 'Experience is called upon to re-establish a contact that has been lost.'⁴⁴ This description fits the two theorists of historical *Erfahrung* and aesthetic *Erleben* to whom we now turn: Frank Ankersmit and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht.

Frank Ankersmit

In his early writings, Dutch philosopher of history Frank Ankersmit was chiefly concerned with linguistic-theoretic ideas about the writing of history.⁴⁵ Later, working with the key concept of historical experience, he sought an approach to history that rejected "the "rationalism" that "theory" took over from transcendentalist philosophy of language".⁴⁶ Here he assails both the *linguistic turn* as well as

⁴³ Reinhart Koselleck: *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Cambridge 1985, 59.

⁴⁴ David Carr: *Experience and History. Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World*, Oxford and New York 2014, 8.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Frank Ankersmit: *Narrative Logic. A Semantic Analysis of the Historian's Language*, The Hague 1983.

⁴⁶ Frank Ankersmit: *Sublime Historical Experience*, Stanford 2005, 10. On what follows, see also Frank Ankersmit: 'Can We Experience the Past?', in: Rolf Torsendahl and Irmeline Veit-Brause (eds.): *History-Making. The Intellectual and*

the older hermeneutic tradition, which he criticises for the fact that they rob experience of directness and immediacy.

In contrast, Ankersmit wishes to uphold the possibility of direct access to the past. In this vein, he not only refers to Johan Huizinga and his concept of ‘historical sensation’, but also draws on the writings of authors as diverse as historians Johann Jakob Bachofen, William Hickling Prescott and Jacob Burckhardt as well as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Johann Gottfried Herder. According to Ankersmit, the sensation of ‘an immediate contact with the past’, as described by Huizinga and others,⁴⁷ should not be understood as a projection in which the historian is ‘giving a form to the past’.⁴⁸ Rather, he contends, in the case of historical experience that ‘comes unannounced and unexpectedly’, the ‘historian’s mind is formed by the past’.⁴⁹ Elsewhere, Ankersmit refers to endurance and submission in this context.⁵⁰

In order to characterise this experience of overwhelming directness and immediacy more closely, Ankersmit distinguishes between subjective and sublime experience.⁵¹ The impression of direct contact with the past presupposes the separation of the categories ‘present’ and ‘past’ and thus always implies an awareness of distance from the past. According to Ankersmit, subjective historical experience consists not only in an ‘Ahnung’ of the past,⁵² but also in the experience of this distance.⁵³ This dovetails with the ‘aura’ theorised

Subjective and
sublime experience

Social Formation of a Discipline, Stockholm 1996, 47–76; Frank Ankersmit: ‘Historical Experience Beyond the Linguistic Turn’, in: Nancy Partner and Sarah Foot (eds.): *The SAGE Handbook of Historical Theory*, Los Angeles etc. 2013, 434–438.

47 See footnote 1.

48 Frank Ankersmit: *Sublime Historical Experience*, Stanford 2005, 128.

49 Ibid.

50 Frank Ankersmit: *Die historische Erfahrung*, Berlin 2012, 18.

51 Ankersmit: *Sublime Historical Experience*, 264. As a further category, Ankersmit mentions the ‘objective historical experience’ as the experience of people in the past – as investigated by historians at least since historicism. However, this distinction between the three categories of historical experience is not clear-cut; see *ibid.*

52 Ankersmit uses the German term ‘Ahnung’, which he adopts from Huizinga. In his discussion of an English equivalent, he contemplates the verbs *to surmise* and *to conjecture*, which he considers overly suggestive of certainty, and *to intimate*, which implies a movement in the opposite direction: *ibid.*, 122.

53 *Ibid.*, 265.

by Walter Benjamin (see the info box in section 2.3); for Huizinga, this subjective historical experience comes into play when looking at paintings, while for Burckhardt it is triggered upon entering the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence.⁵⁴ The sublime historical experience, meanwhile, transcends this perception of historical distance. With reference to the writings of various philosophers, Ankersmit suggests that through dissociation and the dissolution of identity, we may fleetingly become one with the past.⁵⁵

Through the concept of the sublime, which plays a particularly prominent role in aesthetics, Ankersmit emphasises the ‘sensoriness of experience’ (*Sinnlichkeit der Erfahrung*).⁵⁶ For him, the sense of touch functions as a model for historical experience, even ahead of sight and hearing: ‘The historical experience entails being *touched* by the past’ (*Die historische Erfahrung ist ein Berührtwerden von der Vergangenheit*).⁵⁷ Elsewhere, therefore, Ankersmit writes of the ‘intimacy of the encounter between object and subject in historical experience’.⁵⁸

Philosophy
versus science

These reflections in the philosophy of history make it difficult to reconcile Ankersmit’s concept of historical experience with the scholarly aspirations of academic history. Achim Landwehr states that critical questions are inevitably excluded from such an understanding of historical experience or sensation – and with them any kind of methodological control or scientific reflection.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, we are unwilling to simply dismiss Ankersmit’s concept as unscientific. First, with regard to historical knowledge, Ankersmit emphasises that historical experience can complement but never replace other ‘elements in the formation of historical knowledge’.⁶⁰ Second, we agree with his statement that ‘the authentic contact with the past provided in historical experience [*Erfahrung*] is a reality’,⁶¹ insofar as descriptions of such contact reflect a real experience in which a

⁵⁴ On Huizinga, see *ibid.* ch. 3, on Burckhardt ch. 4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, ch. 8.

⁵⁶ Ankersmit: *Die historische Erfahrung*, 63.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁹ Achim Landwehr: *Die anwesende Abwesenheit der Vergangenheit. Essay zur Geschichtstheorie*, Frankfurt a.M. 2016, 14.

⁶⁰ Ankersmit: *Die historische Erfahrung*, 97.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

certain kind of relating to the past has undoubtedly taken place. In the final section, we show that the reality of this experience plays an important role in public history and that Ankersmit's concept of a sensory, extra-discursive historical experience can help us analyse public history offerings.

A similar argument can be made with reference to the work of literary scholar Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht. Like Ankersmit, since the late 1990s he has criticised the 'centrality of interpretation' within the humanities, a focus geared towards language and the understanding of meaning and in this sense hermeneutic.⁶² He seeks to counter this supremacy of hermeneutics with reference to the concept of 'presence'. Gumbrecht does not simply play presence off against meaning, but works on the assumption that the moment we deal with them, the 'things of this world'⁶³ always have meaning *and* presence. Thus, he also refers to the 'simultaneity of presence effects and meaning effects' or, more precisely, the 'tension' between them.⁶⁴ Gumbrecht posits that presence effects have been illegitimately obscured and forgotten due to the humanities' orientation towards meaning, which is based on the 'subject/object paradigm' founded by René Descartes and so characteristic of modern thought.⁶⁵ Gumbrecht would like to place the notion of 'world-observation through the senses' – which valorises presence – alongside the 'world-appropriation by concepts' associated with modern thought.⁶⁶

Hans Ulrich
Gumbrecht

Interestingly, within this juxtaposition, Gumbrecht places experience [*Erfahrung*] on the side of concepts and reflection, as 'most philosophical traditions associate the concept of "experience" with interpretation'.⁶⁷ In contrast, when it comes to the aspect of sensory perception, Gumbrecht speaks of 'moments of aesthetic experience'

62 Gumbrecht: *Production of Presence*, xv.

63 Gumbrecht: *Production of Presence*, xiiiv–xiv.

64 Ibid., 18 and 105. He writes elsewhere that he is not primarily out to criticise, let alone overcome, the humanities' orientation towards meaning, but to complement it and to reclaim presence. He therefore believes in 'doing something in addition to interpretation – without, of course, abandoning interpretation as an elementary and probably inevitable intellectual practice'; *ibid.*, 52.

65 Ibid., 25.

66 Ibid., 39.

67 Ibid., 100.

[*Erleben*].⁶⁸ According to him, aesthetic experience has a number of characteristics similar to those of historical experience as envisaged by Ankersmit. As Gumbrecht sees it, aesthetic experience is characterised equally by ‘insularity’, that is, by distance from the everyday world, and by ‘suddenness’, in other words a focussed temporality.⁶⁹ When dealing with objects of aesthetic experience, he tells us, the goal is to be receptive to the event of being touched by the aesthetic artefact, that is, ‘to make [. . .] *moments of intensity*’ be felt.⁷⁰ In this sense, Huizinga’s ‘historical sensation’ in the presence of a museum object can also be described as a ‘moment of intensity’, while the direct contact with the past invoked by Huizinga equates with the ‘moment of presence’ as described by Gumbrecht.

Presentification

In a section dedicated to historical culture, Gumbrecht refers to a currently prevailing ‘desire for presentification’. In our post-historical present, the focus is no longer on learning from history, but on ‘accumulating different past worlds and their artifacts in a sphere of simultaneity’.⁷¹ Such ‘effects of presentification’⁷² are primarily achieved through historical novels, films and exhibitions and less through academic historiography, as Gumbrecht himself notes. He thus contends that ‘our eagerness to fill up the ever-broadening present with artifacts from the past has little, if anything, to do with the traditional project of history as an academic discipline’.⁷³ In Gumbrecht’s work too, then, we can discern the tension between an academic and a non-academic approach to the past. Against this background, we can now probe more concretely *Erleben* or historical *Erfahrung* in the field of public history.

4.3 *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* in public history

Artefacts in the
museum

Many public history offerings promise to bring history to life. They address visitors’ sensory perception, though – as in the case of museums and reenactments, for example – they emphasise very

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 101, 102.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 97.

⁷¹ Ibid., 121–122.

⁷² Ibid., 123.

⁷³ Ibid., 121. On Gumbrecht’s concept of the ‘broad present’, see also: Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht: *Our Broad Present: Time and Contemporary Culture*, New York 2014.

different modes of experience. Museums that focus primarily on looking at things reinforce the sensory quality of their exhibits chiefly through their staging. For example, specific forms of lighting may highlight the tactility of historical artefacts, while darkened spaces can generate ‘insularity’, as described by Gumbrecht, or enable an intimate encounter with the artefacts on display. Museums also appeal to their visitors’ senses through sounds, smells and music. An exhibition on Nazism that uses lighting to accentuate the rotary knob of a radio while playing the sound made during a frequency search, thus presents the act of listening to an ‘enemy broadcaster’ as a topic that may be experienced haptically or sensorily.

Whether artefacts staged in this way do in fact trigger direct experiences of history depends, among other things, on the extent to which museum visitors are prepared to engage with such ‘presence’. Such sounds and materials, unknown in current media use, trigger a sense of life in a dictatorship or under Nazi occupation for some, and may make people aware of the historical distance from the Second World War, in other words, facilitate a subjective historical experience as discussed by Ankersmit. For others, though, they are simply uninteresting and meaningless.

The present-day emphasis on sensory-physical experiences is understood in museology as due to an increasing focus on visitors. As a result, exhibition and museum design no longer gives sole pride of place to the content to be conveyed, but foregrounds visitors’ potentially holistic experience (*Erfahrung*) in the museum.⁷⁴ The aspiration to create ‘holistic experiences’ in this context often means facilitating ‘experiencing with all the senses’.⁷⁵ Here, the museum visit in itself is conceptualised as immersion in a special world: this is experienced in an active, sensory way as visitors move through the museum in a physical and spatial sense, interacting with the exhibits and other visitors.

The idea of sensory and corporeal immersion in a museal world all its own is linked to the idea of stepping out of the everyday world of the present. This is why the transition between the entrance area

Museum experience

Immersion

⁷⁴ See, for example, John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking: *The Museum Experience Revisited*, Walnut Creek 2013.

⁷⁵ Brigitte Kaiser: *Inszenierung und Erlebnis in kulturhistorischen Ausstellungen. Museale Kommunikation in kunstpädagogischer Perspektive*, Bielefeld 2006, 126 and 119.

of a museum and the exhibition spaces is often designed as a threshold, one that visitors cross over to leave their everyday lives behind. The museum visit thus takes on the character of an experience (*Erlebnis*) in the sense of an event elevated beyond everyday life.⁷⁶

Public history phenomena such as panoramas, films, computer games and virtual reality applications also seek to create an immersive experience (see the info box on immersion below). The aim here is to eliminate, as far as possible, anything that reminds people that there is an outside to the staged historical world. This sense of being transported into another realm is also meant to be experienced as entrance into another time, which is why the term ‘time travel’ is used so often in connection with the offerings of public history.⁷⁷

Time travel

The needs and desires to which the idea of time travel responds have been explored by historian David Lowenthal in his book *The Past is a Foreign Country*.⁷⁸ Despite the title, it is evident that the past is not in fact another country to which one might travel. It no longer exists, is not ‘somewhere else’, but can only be brought into the present in a partial and location-specific way.⁷⁹ In this sense, time travel is impossible, unless one uses the term metaphorically to mean nothing other than the historical (or future) experience discussed here, as in the work of Cornelius Holtorf.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Once again, compare Hans-Georg Gadamer’s definition with this meaning of the word *Erlebnis*, which is probably the most common in everyday usage: ‘something becomes an “experience” not only insofar as it is experienced, but insofar as its being experienced makes a special impression that gives it lasting importance’ (Gadamer: *Truth and Method*, 53).

⁷⁷ An example is provided by TimeRide GmbH, which offers virtual reality city tours in several German cities. These are advertised as follows, here using Cologne as an example: ‘Immerse yourself in the old imperial Cöln, and experience [*erlebe*] the life of the period and all its hustle and bustle up close through virtual reality. Be an eyewitness to this golden era in Cologne’s history!’, TimeRide website, timeride.de/koeln/, last accessed: 1 January 2019.

⁷⁸ David Lowenthal: *The Past is a Foreign Country – Revisited*, Cambridge 2015.

⁷⁹ As early as 1952, Patrick Gardiner described this idea as a ‘time machine fallacy’. See Patrick Gardiner: *The Nature of Historical Explanation*, London 1952, 38. For a critique of the time-travelling metaphor, see also Landwehr: *Anwesende Abwesenheit*, 12–19.

⁸⁰ Holtorf defines time travel as ‘an experience in the present that evokes a past (or future) reality’; Cornelius Holtorf: ‘On the Possibility of Time Travel’, in: *Lund Archaeological Review* 15 (2009), 31–41, here 31.

Immersion

The term ‘immersion’ comes from the Latin *immersio* and is used in a variety of disciplinary contexts. In media studies, it is used to describe media settings that allow viewers to enter a total visual space, in which they are completely surrounded by the medial staging. This applies, for example, to virtual reality applications or certain forms of electronic media art, and the term has been increasingly discussed in relation to these phenomena. In her standard work on immersive seeing, however, Alison Griffiths has shown that older visual media and spaces – medieval cathedrals, nineteenth-century panoramas and planetariums, as well as museums and cinemas – were already geared towards immersive viewing experiences. She has designated this specific mode of seeing as the ‘revered gaze’. However, other authors have pointed out that immersion is not just about visual experiences. Hearing also plays a central role in the feeling of immersion and of being transported into an artificial world, as in the case of surround sound in cinemas. Marie-Laure Ryan, in her comparison of virtual reality and literature, in which she scrutinises the technological conditionality of immersion, highlights the immersive potential of literary narratives as well.

While in many immersive medial settings, such as cinema, people remain in one place, immersion is enhanced in other cases by the ability to move freely in the artificial world. This further reinforces the spatial character of the immersive experience and turns it into a physical and kinetic one. In public history, historical theme parks and open-air museums may, for example, be understood as immersive settings. Other museums too are increasingly putting their faith in the immersive *mise-en-scène* to convey historical experiences. Immersion in the staged historical world is also intended to be experienced as a stepping out of the here and now, to which one then returns.

Recommended reading

Dyson, Frances: *Sounding New Media. Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts and Culture*, Berkeley et al. 2009; Griffiths, Alison: *Shivers Down Your Spine. Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View*, New York 2008; Ryan, Marie-Laure: *Narrative as Virtual Reality. Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, Baltimore and London 2001.

In reenactments, historical experience is generated performatively. These imitative forms can give participants the impression

Reenactments

of actually being in the past, a phenomenon known as a ‘period rush’.⁸¹ Yet even if the sensory experience is real for the reenactors, it remains impossible to relive historical experiences, as sensory perception itself is historically mutable.

Participants in a U.S. Civil War reenactment, for instance, do not feel, smell or taste the same things that people did in 1863. Even if they dress only in untreated cotton, refrain from washing with modern shower gels and try to recreate meals from the period, they can only perceive what people from the early twenty-first century feel in these clothes, what they taste upon consuming this food, and so on. The extreme sensory impressions of the war itself (the stench of the corpses, the thundering of the cannons) and the existential feelings associated with it (disgust, fear) play no role here, let alone violence and death.⁸²

Connection to the past

Although the past cannot be experienced ‘as it really was’, reenactments and time-travel formats do establish a connection to the past. The process of relating oneself to the past that takes place in reenactments, panoramas or virtual reality tours can be described as a historical experience as discussed by Ankersmit or as an experience of presence as envisaged by Gumbrecht.⁸³ These public history products accentuate one’s sensory-aesthetic, non-conceptual perception. Furthermore, the perception of time changes in the moment of historical experience. This moment is not only experienced with heightened intensity, making it stand out from the everyday experience of the present. It also gives rise to a feeling of a ‘fleeting suspension of the temporal dimension’⁸⁴ in relation to the past.

This historical experience is not free of presuppositions: it is ‘shaped by a variety of conceptual and symbolic systems’.⁸⁵ It incor-

⁸¹ Anja Schwarz: ‘Experience’, in: Vanessa Agnew et al. (eds.): *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies. Key Terms in the Field*, London 2019, 63–66, here 63.

⁸² See Mark M. Smith: *The Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege. A Sensory History of the Civil War*, Oxford and New York 2015, 3.

⁸³ Stefanie Samida has already done this with regard to living history using Gumbrecht’s terms. See Stefanie Samida: ‘Aneignung von Vergangenheit durch körperliches Erleben?’, in: *Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 46/2–3 (2013), special issue: ‘Kulturelle Aneignung von Vergangenheit’, 105–122.

⁸⁴ Ankersmit: *Die historische Erfahrung*, 21.

⁸⁵ Hampe and Holzhey: ‘Erfahrung’, 664.

porates prior historical knowledge, images of the past and ideas about the past, which are prefigured by historical culture (see Chapter 6).⁸⁶

At the same time, the sensory, physical experience of history can also stimulate reflection on historical contexts in new ways. This can be seen, for example, in the account of a ‘modern Roman’. In the summer of 2013, together with around twenty-five other people, he travelled through southern Germany, retracing the Germanic campaign of Roman emperor Caracalla in 213 AD in authentic gear.⁸⁷ His physical and emotional experiences supplemented and altered ideas about the past he had gained from other sources (school, museum) and prompted questions (about hygiene among the troops, for example) that set historical thinking in motion. Reality TV formats with a historical setting also enable historical reflection. When participants in the ARD series *Abenteuer 1900 – Leben im Gutshaus* (‘Adventure 1900 – Life in the Manor House’) describe the cold in the unheated bedrooms, the scratchiness of the straw-filled bedding and their longing for a hot shower, they not only articulate the insurmountable distance to the past, but also make this clear to the television viewers. Reenactments are, therefore, not limited to the experience of merging with the past, but can also generate experiences of historical difference.

Many reservations about experiencing history through reenactment and other forms of public history reflect a scepticism, one deeply rooted in German educational thinking, about the merest whiff of enjoyment or entertainment. The historical experience in public history contexts does in fact have many characteristics in common with other forms of experience in popular culture.⁸⁸ The above examples show that historical experience and historical reflection are not mutually exclusive, but can in fact stimulate each

Reflection or historical thinking

Public history and popular culture

⁸⁶ With reference to reenactments, Anja Schwarz therefore speaks of a ‘circular logic according to which the reenactor’s experience of the reconstructed historical setting can never do more than validate already accepted, regimented, and institutionally sanctioned assumptions about the historical past’, Schwarz: ‘Experience’, 65.

⁸⁷ Stefanie Samida conducted interviews with the participants in this reenactment as part of the research project ‘Living History: Reenacted Prehistory between Research and Popular Performance’, see Samida: ‘Aneignung’.

⁸⁸ See Kaspar Maase: *Populärkulturforschung. Eine Einführung*, Bielefeld 2019, 121–139.

other. At the same time, public history offerings that seek to facilitate experience (*Erleben*) and the experiencing of history (*historische Erfahrung*) in the sense described here are not necessarily ‘affirmative’. A multimedia and multisensory *mise-en-scène* in a museum, for example, may serve to unsettle existing historical assumptions and ideas and encourage a more nuanced view.⁸⁹ Hence, historical *Erleben* or historical *Erfahrung* can be understood as a sensory-aesthetic mode of historical appropriation that is complementary to other, more cognitive-reflective forms of historical appropriation. Public history products may address this sensory-aesthetic dimension to varying degrees.

4.4 Conclusion

To summarise, we view the experience of history as a moment of being affected, in a sensory-aesthetic sense, by a historical artefact, a historical place (see Chapter 2, ‘Authenticity’), a representation of history or a historical practice (see Chapter 10, ‘Performativity’) (or a combination of these elements), a moment that gives rise to a feeling of direct contact with the past and a ‘fleeting suspension of the temporal dimension’.⁹⁰ Being ‘touched’ in this way may be a trigger for historical imagination (see Chapter 7) and for the empathetic understanding (see Chapter 3) of historical situations. It is a moment infused with certain presuppositions: it incorporates the historical ideas and images already acquired in the context of historical culture (see Chapter 6) and the reception of history (see Chapter 11).

This sensory-aesthetic experience of history is significant because, in the words of Wilhelm Dilthey, humans are involved in their perception of the world and thus also in their appropriation of history with their ‘entire volitional, emotional, and imaginative being’.⁹¹ Hence, it is reasonable to assume that ‘receptivity’ to historical experience is also a precondition for historical education. At any rate, historical experience enters into the development of historical thinking (see Chapter 8). As Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht proposes,

⁸⁹ See Kaiser: *Inszenierung und Erlebnis*, 222–229.

⁹⁰ Ankersmit: *Die historische Erfahrung*, 21.

⁹¹ Dilthey: *Einleitung*, xviii.

we can conceptualise the relationship between historical experience and historical thinking as a tension between presence effects and meaning effects, in which both elements are involved in the production of historical knowledge. This means that the guiding principles of ‘history as experience’ and ‘history as education’ should not be pitted against each other. Experiencing history in a museum, at a historical site or during a reenactment can contribute to the development of historical thinking as a motivational factor. Above all, it holds intrinsic value as a form of relating to the past that stimulates both the senses and the imagination.

Introductory literature

Ankersmit, Frank: *Die historische Erfahrung*, Berlin 2012 (Dutch orig. 1993).

Carr, David: *Experience and History. Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World*, Oxford and New York 2014.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich: *Diesseits der Hermeneutik. Die Produktion von Präsenz*, Frankfurt a.M. 2004.

Jay, Martin: *Songs of Experience. Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*, Berkeley etc. 2005.

Kaiser, Brigitte: *Inszenierung und Erlebnis in kulturhistorischen Ausstellungen. Museale Kommunikation in kunstpädagogischer Perspektive*, Bielefeld 2006.

5 Heritage

5.1 Introduction

Over the decades, the former settlement of Königsmühle in the Czech Ore Mountains, made up of six residential and farm buildings located in the immediate vicinity of the German border, had increasingly fallen into disrepair. Its residents had been members of Czechoslovakia's German-speaking minority, who were forced to leave the country after 1945 in the wake of the German occupation of the Sudetenland and the Second World War. Virtually invisible to the Czech authorities, these structures were not even recorded in the land register. Only when a cultural scientist from Prague, dedicated to reappraising German history in the region, happened to become aware of them was a process set in motion that culminated in the ruins being recognised as cultural heritage. Since then, an annual international Land Art Festival has been held amidst the dilapidated buildings in an effort to present the history of the border region and of twentieth-century German-Czech relations in all their complexity – while also subjecting this history to a ceaseless process of renegotiation. An attempt to integrate the ruins of Königsmühle into the successful nomination of the Ore Mountains/Krušnohoří mining region as a UNESCO world heritage site failed. Nonetheless, a voluntary association is seeking to turn Königsmühle into a Czech national monument and a cultural heritage site, which would ensure the preservation of the derelict buildings.

This example points to the intertwining of cultural heritage and public history. First, the handling of Königsmühle demonstrates how a cultural heritage site and the associated 'heritage community' come into being, while also shedding light on the practices and techniques used in the process. Second, it brings out how specific interpretations of the past are used by different actors, in pursuit of a particular politics of history or for economic purposes, for example (see Chapter 11, 'Reception'). In what follows, we will present cultural heritage as the outcome of social practices geared towards prevailing values and norms. Cultural heritage is, therefore, a fundamentally normative concept. We identify the theoretical approaches that seem most useful in this context, first by exploring the history of the concept and its developmental phases, and second, by setting out differing

disciplinary perspectives on cultural heritage and demonstrating its significance, as an object of research, in public history. We draw on empirical studies to bring out potentially valuable methodological and analytical approaches to heritage, before concluding with an attempt to pin down how researchers might position themselves in relation to cultural heritage and its normative content. We use the terms ‘cultural heritage’ and ‘heritage’ synonymously, in line with their use in both public and academic discourse (though it should be noted that UNESCO distinguishes between cultural and natural heritage).

5.2 What exactly is (cultural) heritage?

The term ‘heritage’ highlights a fundamental concept in human life: ‘To inherit and to bequeath entail transfer, handing down, assigning’ (*Erben und Vererben heißt Übertragen, Überliefern, Übereignen*).¹ In addition to biological, legal and economic aspects – genes we inherit, legal regulations based on a long tradition, private goods passed on from one generation to the next – the concept of heritage includes cultural aspects as well. These encompass archaeological monuments (such as ramparts), historical documents, art objects, pieces of music, and traditional and practised customs, craft techniques, and so on. The term thus describes something that projects from the past into a specific present; one might say that heritage mediates between past, present and future, but also between the ‘private and the public, the natural and the cultural’.²

Inheriting property is usually linked directly to the caesura of death, and is fairly often accompanied by conflict. In current concepts of cultural heritage as found in cultural policy contexts, however, heritage is ‘mainly optimistic, counterbalancing and geared towards the eradication of every ambivalence entailed in the concept of heritage’.³ The notion of the collective inheritance of culture arose at a

1 Stefan Willer et al.: ‘Erbe, Erbschaft, Vererbung. Eine aktuelle Problemlage und ihr historischer Index’, in: Stefan Willer (ed.): *Erbe. Übertragungskonzepte zwischen Natur und Kultur*, Berlin 2013, 7–36, here 7.

2 *Ibid.*, 8 f.

3 Stefan Willer: ‘Kulturelles Erbe. Tradieren und Konservieren in der Moderne’, in: Stefan Willer et al. (eds.): *Erbe. Übertragungskonzepte zwischen Natur und Kul-*

historical moment characterised by radical upheavals and processes of expropriation and appropriation, namely the period following the French Revolution. This era was crucial to its emergence, as private collections became public property and consequently had to be managed and preserved in institutions. That which is so clearly evident in the case of Königsmühle was already plainly apparent at the time: ‘Cultural heritage enjoys no fixed status: it is always becoming’.⁴

Cultural heritage as
social practice

This view, well established in interdisciplinary heritage studies, leaves us in no doubt that cultural heritage is not a bounded entity but a social practice⁵ in which material and immaterial cultural fragments are detached from their previous context, rearranged, staged and thus valorised. They are charged with meaning; in other words, value is attributed to them. This valorisation is rooted in the intention of preserving things from the past, as well as former practices, techniques, rites and the like, for the community.⁶ These may be culinary specialities and eating habits that are ennobled as ‘regional heritage’⁷ or nineteenth-century factories that are transformed from places of production into a World Heritage Site.

Despite the prevailing logic of preservation, however, cultural heritage is always subject to a dynamic process of constitution. This is apparent, for example, in the Neolithic site of Stonehenge and its (re)interpretation since the seventeenth century, when it was still considered evidence of a decidedly British Druidry. After several

tur, Berlin 2013, 160–201, here 160.

4 Regina Bendix: ‘Kulturelles Erbe zwischen Wirtschaft und Politik. Ein Ausblick’, in: Dorothee Hemme et al. (eds.): *Prädikat ‘Heritage’. Wertschöpfungen aus kulturellen Ressourcen*, Berlin and Münster 2007, 337–356, here 340.

5 See Moritz Csáky and Monika Sommer (eds.): *Kulturerbe als soziokulturelle Praxis*, Innsbruck etc. 2005; Angela M. Labrador and Neil Asher Silberman: ‘Introduction: Public Heritage as Social Practice’, in: Angela M. Labrador and Neil Asher Silberman (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Public Heritage Theory and Practice*, Oxford 2018.

6 Astrid Swenson: “‘Heritage’, “Patrimoine” und “Kulturerbe”: Eine vergleichende historische Semantik’, in: Dorothee Hemme et al. (eds.): *Prädikat ‘Heritage’. Wertschöpfungen aus kulturellen Ressourcen*, Berlin and Münster 2007, 53–74, here 70.

7 Bernhard Tschofen: ‘Vom Geschmack der Regionen. Kulinarische Praxis, europäische Politik und räumliche Kultur – eine Forschungsskizze’, in: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 103 (2007), 169–196.

intermediate stages, it is now listed by UNESCO as the common heritage of humankind.

Cultural heritage is, therefore, not simply there, nor does it stand still. It is the result of discursive practices and can thus be described as fundamentally immaterial: a cultural heritage status does not arise from the materiality involved *per se*, but solely from the attribution of value.⁸ Cultural heritage has a spatial frame of reference, usually of a regional or national character, and may be both an identity-forming yardstick and serve economic (touristic) ends. As a specific form of communicating history by means of practices, performances and representations, cultural heritage is studied by public historians,⁹ who explore every manifestation of historical culture and the culture of remembrance in and aimed at the public sphere, along with all the actors involved.

5.3 Conceptual history

‘Cultural heritage’ is a concept forged in European modernity, though the associated mechanisms and technologies relating to the ‘use of the past’ can be traced back to antiquity.¹⁰ The idea of a collective heritage developed chiefly in the context of the establishment of modern nation states, each of which produced its own semantics for the phenomenon, such as *patrimoine* and *heritage*.¹¹ However, its political significance is not only evident in nation-building processes, but also in the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century.¹² UNESCO has extended the notion of cultural heritage, in all its potency, beyond

Cultural heritage and European modernity

⁸ Laurajane Smith: *All Heritage is Intangible: Critical Heritage Studies and Museums*, Amsterdam 2011.

⁹ Stefanie Samida and Cord Arendes: ‘Public History und Kulturelles Erbe’, in: Katrin Minner (ed.): *Public History und (westfälische) Landesgeschichte*, Münster 2019, 29–51.

¹⁰ David C. Harvey: ‘The History of Heritage’, in: Brian Graham and Peter Howard (eds.): *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, Farnham etc. 2008, 19–36.

¹¹ Swenson: “‘Heritage’, “Patrimoine” und “Kulturerbe””.

¹² Bernhard Tschofen: ‘Antreten, ablehnen, verwalten? Was der Heritage-Boom den Kulturwissenschaften aufträgt’, in: Dorothee Hemme et al. (eds.): *Prädikat ‘Heritage’: Wertschöpfungen aus kulturellen Ressourcen*, Berlin and Münster 2007, 19–32.

its national or regional confines, developing it into a global phenomenon that nevertheless makes clear reference to its European predecessors. This can be seen most clearly in the separation of natural heritage and cultural heritage, which has its origins in the scientific and intellectual traditions of European modernity and underlies the UNESCO World Heritage Convention of 1972.¹³

Developmental phases
of the cultural heritage
concept

Archaeologist and heritage researcher Rodney Harrison refers to three major phases of development that the concept of cultural heritage and the associated practices have undergone to date. In the first phase, new fields of expertise emerged in the aftermath of the French Revolution. These arose in connection with the protection and conservation of objects and buildings of national significance, spawning the emergence of new bureaucracies, professions and techniques. For example, the oldest state inventory of historical sites was compiled in France in 1837.¹⁴

The second phase, according to Harrison the period between the late nineteenth century and the adoption of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in 1972, is characterised by a tremendous increase in legislative and administrative provisions and an expansion of what was considered cultural heritage worthy of protection. Everyday practices and objects – which were transformed into a defined, standardised and categorised cultural heritage or cultural property (see below) – increasingly came under state control and were charged with national significance and value.

The third phase, since 1972, has been typified by the concept's global orientation. UNESCO – a sub-organisation of the United Nations committed to securing global peace – has made the 'heritage of humankind' the responsibility of all people, with a clear focus on future generations. Yet this universalist aspiration clashes with the characteristics of cultural heritage criticised as Eurocentric. This relates both to the nature-culture dichotomy, the focus on material culture, and 'authenticity' as a criterion of selection¹⁵ (see Chapter 2).

¹³ See Rodney Harrison: *Heritage. Critical Approaches*, London and New York 2013, 204 f.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 44 f.

¹⁵ According to the UNESCO regulations, a number of requirements must be met for inclusion in the World Heritage List, including the authenticity (genuinely historical character) and/or integrity (intactness) of an object or site, but above all its 'outstanding universal value'. In order to prove this, UNESCO has established ten

The debates surrounding the criterion of authenticity illustrate in a particularly vivid way how, through UNESCO, the cultural heritage concept has exercised a global impact, while underlining the frictions that have arisen as a result. In the years after the World Heritage Convention came into force, authenticity was understood solely in the sense of the sort of ‘object authenticity’ definable within expert discourse, which is linked to specific modes of conservation. But within UNESCO, non-Western countries in particular increasingly resisted this definition. A number of UNESCO member states rejected this concept of authenticity, which took its lead from philosophical, aesthetic and art-historical discourses of a European-North American hue. They saw this as marginalising alternative ideas about authenticity and different practices of preservation, and thus discerned discrimination at work when it came to decisions on what to include in the World Heritage List.¹⁶ The *Nara Document on Authenticity*, composed by experts and presented to UNESCO in 1994, finally stated that authenticity is not an absolute value, but rather a ‘category of culture’ that may be subject to differing interpretations. This context-related definition clearly aligns with a constructivist understanding of authenticity, although, as Markus Tauschek critically notes, the Nara Document continues to ‘cling to the (valorising [*wertend*]) dichotomy between original and imitation’.¹⁷ Nonetheless, this text, which has also found reflection in UNESCO Guidelines, has been interpreted as evidence of an expanded concept of authenticity, a shift from pure ‘object authenticity’ to authenticity understood as a property of the relationship between object and perceiving subject. Above all, however, it is regarded as having paved the way for the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of 2003, which foregrounded cultural practices

criteria, at least one of which must be fulfilled. Requirements (i)–(vi) are relevant to cultural heritage, and criteria (vii)–(x) to natural heritage. See UNESCO Operational Guidelines 2019, § 77, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>, last accessed 19 January 2021.

16 Criticism was mainly voiced by Japan, which had lobbied in vain for the Ise-*jingū*, one of the most important Shintō shrines, located in the city of Ise, to be recognised as a World Heritage Site. It is one of the last shrines to be traditionally dismantled every twenty years and rebuilt with new materials, which means that the conservation practice involved fails to fulfil the authenticity requirements.

17 Markus Tauschek: *Kulturerbe. Eine Einführung*, Berlin 2013, 112.

and stocks of knowledge while shifting away from the paradigm of authenticity. This was simultaneously a response to the criticism that too much emphasis had been placed on material evidence.

For the study of cultural heritage, the concept of authenticity is important in three respects. First, it serves as a source concept, whose usage must be clarified in historical, history-of-science and transcultural terms. Second, from the perspective of the discipline of history, authenticity marks a transition to a different specialist discourse: that of conservation and thus of monument preservation. This discourse too needs to be acknowledged and must be investigated through a transdisciplinary approach. Third and finally, the concept of authenticity can be an effective analytical tool for analysing and interpreting the relationship between society and object. Hence, it is not limited to the history of the object itself. The latter also applies to the concept of aura (see the info box in section 2.3): the aura is not inherent in the object, but arises through the interplay of person, thing and space, or in situations of reception. The concept of *staged authenticity* put forward by Dean MacCannell must be understood in the same vein.¹⁸ In the field of tourism research, this term refers to staging techniques intended to mark a place as authentic and thus as a tourist attraction.

5.4 Memorials (*Denkmale* or *Denkmäler*), monuments, cultural assets and traditions

Cultural heritage or heritage are related to terms in the German-speaking debate, such as *Denkmal*, monument, cultural property and tradition. It thus makes sense to briefly introduce them below.

Denkmale (memorials)
and monuments

The etymology of the German word *Denkmal* dates back to the sixteenth century. The term first appears in 1523 in a version of the Old Testament translated by Martin Luther. Here the Greek *mnemósynon* (Latin: *monumentum*) is translated as *Denkmal* in the sense of ‘memory aid’ or ‘memory support’ (*Gedächtnisstütze*, *Erinnerungsstütze*). The Latin *monumentum*, which essentially means ‘sign of remembrance’,

¹⁸ Dean MacCannell: ‘Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings’, in: *American Journal of Sociology* 79/3 (1973), 589–603.

‘tomb’ or ‘document’, is in turn derived from the verb *monere* (to remind, admonish, exhort or warn). Until well into the nineteenth century, the Latin and German words were largely used interchangeably, before the term *Denkmal* increasingly took hold. Today, a distinction is generally made between two forms of *Denkmal*. In the broader sense, the term refers to sites of significance to cultural history (such as Iron Age burial mounds, Roman catacombs or nineteenth-century industrial plants) – things that have only become *Denkmale* in the course of their existence. *Denkmale* in the narrower sense are usually monuments erected to commemorate a person or event, such as Schiller monuments, Bismarck towers, war memorials such as the Heroes’ Monument of the Red Army in Vienna or commemorative sites such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe inaugurated in Berlin in 2005.¹⁹

The emergence of the concept of ‘cultural heritage’ in the context of nineteenth-century national movements ushered in a semantic shift. Cultural assets of all kinds were now understood as cultural heritage in a territorial sense, centred on the nation state, and in an identity-forming sense. But the term did not become established in German until much later. Until well into the twentieth century, people used the terms *Monument*, *Denkmal* (as in *Naturdenkmal*, *Kulturdenkmal* and *Kunstdenkmal* or natural, cultural and artistic monuments) and *Kulturgut* or cultural assets. It was only when the idea that certain objects from the past should be preserved grew increasingly popular – partly due to international and political debates on the protection of material cultural assets after the Second World War²⁰ – and UNESCO stepped up its activities in this vein through the World Heritage Convention, that a shift in naming practices occurred. This saw the rise of the terms *kulturelles Erbe*, *Kulturerbe* and, borrowed from English, simply *Heritage* (*kulturelles Erbe* and *Kulturerbe* essentially being synonyms for ‘cultural heritage’).

Cultural heritage, however, refers not only to material phenomena, but also to cultural practices such as customs, festivals, rituals and craft techniques. Hence, what used to be subsumed under the

Cultural heritage and tradition

¹⁹ For more on the *Denkmal*, see also Stefanie Samida: ‘Denkmal’, in: Stefanie Samida et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Materielle Kultur: Bedeutungen, Konzepte, Disziplinen*, Stuttgart and Weimar 2014, 189–192.

²⁰ The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict was adopted in 1954.

term ‘tradition’ is now increasingly considered cultural heritage. We might also say that the two terms have undergone a conceptual interleaving, for which there are several reasons. First, tradition and cultural heritage can be understood as expressions of a practice, that is, they are discursively produced and, from a constructivist perspective, are investigated in terms of their production and usage.²¹ Second, both concepts exhibit a reference to the past; they invoke the idea of an origin or beginning, thus promising a kind of symbolic journey to the roots²² and endowing the past with present-day relevance. In both cases, and this is the third point, meaning and value are ascribed; in the nineteenth century, traditions – like cultural heritage today – were regarded as an ‘anchor’ or haven of peace in an era in which time seemed to have speeded up.²³

Tradition, then, is a concept related to that of cultural heritage. Bernhard Tschofen put it this way: ‘What tradition is to modernity, world heritage seems to be to late modernity’.²⁴ However, today’s styling of everyday cultural and local traditions as cultural heritage marks a further shift in meaning. In earlier times, what we now call tradition was everyday routine; by detaching it from the realm of the ‘taken for granted’, this routine becomes a value.²⁵

5.5 Disciplinary approaches to cultural heritage

The concept of cultural heritage is multifaceted and raises numerous problems. This is reflected in the academic debate, in which a number of disciplines are involved. In line with this, the study of cul-

21 Historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger have brought out the significance of traditions and their invention to the establishment of nation states. See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.): *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 2010 (orig. 1983).

22 Konrad Köstlin: ‘Tradition, Erbe und gesellschaftliches Wissen: Thema mit Variationen’, in: Karl C. Berger et al. (eds.): *Erb.gut? Kulturelles Erbe in Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft*, Vienna 2009, 49–60, here 58.

23 Tauschek: *Kulturerbe*, 82 f.

24 Tschofen: ‘Antreten, ablehnen, verwalten?’, 23.

25 Ingo Schneider: ‘Wiederkehr der Traditionen? Zu einigen Aspekten der gegenwärtigen Konjunktur des kulturellen Erbes’, in: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 59/1 (2005), 1–20, here 19 f.

tural heritage, as an interdisciplinary research field, is guided by a variety of disciplinary approaches and research foci, some of which are outlined below.

Archaeology is primarily concerned with material remnants or the heritage that has come down to us in material form, which it usually brings to light through excavations. Among archaeologists' tasks are the subsequent analysis of excavation-related documentation, the classification and – comparative formal and chronological – characterisation of archaeological features and find complexes, as well as their interpretation. In addition, the protection and conservation of cultural heritage is a core task of archaeological monument preservation.

Archaeology

The discipline of history too is dedicated to cultural heritage. In all such heritage, as Tauschek underscores, history is 'discursively embedded' (*diskursiv eingelagert*), in other words, knowledge about history is produced, conveyed and made visible through cultural heritage.²⁶ However, historians' perspective on cultural heritage is for the most part a genuinely and emphatically historical one: they address issues such as the nineteenth-century emergence of the concept of 'cultural heritage' as a project of the nation state or the history of monument protection. Getting to grips with cultural heritage is also of considerable importance in local and regional historical research, particularly when it comes to cultures of remembrance (see Chapter 9) and questions of identity. In recent years, history didactics too has increasingly tackled aspects of cultural heritage as a dimension of historical culture (see Chapter 6). But history didacticians tend to use a different terminology, less often referring to 'heritage' than to 'historical (learning) environments', 'extracurricular learning sites' and 'historical sites', with intangible cultural heritage often going unacknowledged in this context.²⁷

History

Cultural heritage research is also an important area of anthropological endeavour. Scholars in this field focus primarily on the valorisation of objects or practices as cultural heritage, exploring how and by whom this 'heritage' is used and to what end. Through a praxeological approach to the complex interdependencies of different groups

Anthropology

²⁶ Tauschek: *Kulturerbe*, 74.

²⁷ See for example Christian Kuchler: *Historische Orte im Geschichtsunterricht*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2012; Josef Memminger (ed.): *Überall Geschichte! Der Lernort Welterbe – Facetten der Regensburger Geschichtskultur*, Regensburg 2014.

of actors and entities (such as people, objects and organisations), anthropologists examine how social groups are formed in relation to a cultural heritage and how specific spatial concepts emerge. They are equally focussed on the power relations that become manifest in the selection, interpretation and approach to cultural heritage, as well as competing claims to ownership of that heritage.

Tourism studies

A different perspective on cultural heritage is provided mainly by more applied disciplines such as tourism studies and its various subfields, such as tourism economics. Cultural heritage can be leveraged to promote tourism; central here is the supply of and demand for certain destinations (see the info box on ‘historical tourism’ and *dark tourism* in section 5.7.) Cultural heritage sites, as part of the present-day world in which we live, are popular travel destinations or can be turned into such. Ultimately, they mediate between past, present and future, and in a highly vivid way: not only are they visible, but they can often be experienced and accessed, such as the Egyptian pyramids, the Cambodian temple complex of Angkor Wat and Cologne Cathedral. This frequently makes them a major economic factor for the tourism industry.

Jurisprudence

Heritage research is not limited to analyses from the fields of history, cultural science and economics. It has also been explored by legal scholars, who focus on the development and implementation of national laws on the protection of cultural property as well as international agreements. In the latter case, the key frameworks are the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, along with agreements under international law addressing the restitution of cultural property as spoils of war or from former colonial territories.²⁸ Legal experts also scrutinise the effects of international agreements on national powers and prerogatives, as when the status of a cultural asset as national heritage facilitates state interventions in cultural production, potentially encroaching on artistic freedom.²⁹

²⁸ Alper Tasdelen: ‘Das völkerrechtliche Regime der Kulturgüterrückführung’, in: Stefan Groth et al. (eds.): *Kultur als Eigentum. Instrumente, Querschnitte und Fallstudien*, Göttingen 2015, 225–268.

²⁹ Sven Mißling: ‘Die UNESCO-Konvention zum Schutz des immateriellen (Kultur-)Erbes der Menschheit von 2003. Öffnung des Welterbekonzepts oder Stärkung der kulturellen Hoheit des Staates?’, in: Regina F. Bendix et al. (eds.): *Die*

5.6 Cultural heritage as an object of research in public history

Cultural heritage crops up in diverse and sometimes surprising contexts in the current academic landscape and within public discourse. Scholars in different disciplines address the phenomenon with an applied or more analytical and theorising focus.³⁰ That the boundaries between theory and practice are fluid becomes clear when we consider that archaeologists and anthropologists are often consulted as experts.

Folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is a pioneer in the theorising of cultural heritage. She has identified a number of its core characteristics, the following three being particularly significant: (1) heritage, she contends, is a contemporary cultural technique that makes strong reference to the past; (2) heritage produces value and can be described as a ‘value added industry’ that generates value from historicity, difference or originality; (3) the heritage industry, she adds, is closely linked to tourism – for and through which cultural heritage is exported; heritage is thus a medium through which places can become tourist destinations.³¹

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett introduces the concept of ‘metacultural operations’, by which she means the reflexive act of detaching unquestioned cultural fragments from their contexts and valorising them politically and economically.³² This process extends beyond designating the ‘old’ and ‘beautiful’ as worthy of protection; through ‘temporal compression’ (*zeitliche Verdichtung*),³³ industrial plants and problematic or ‘dark’ heritage, such as the material witnesses to

Metacultural
operations

Konstituierung von Cultural Property: Forschungsperspektiven, Göttingen 2010, 91–113.

³⁰ See Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (eds.): *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research*, New York 2015.

³¹ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett: ‘Theorizing Heritage’, in: *Ethnomusicology* 39/3 (1995), 367–380, here 369 ff.

³² Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett: ‘Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production’, in: *Museum International* 56/1–2 (2004), 52–65.

³³ Bendix: ‘Kulturelles Erbe’, 342.

Nazi rule,³⁴ are given a ‘second life’ as tourist destinations and identificatory benchmarks.³⁵

With regard to processes of valorisation,³⁶ a distinction can be made, with reference to the work of economists Arjo Klamer and Peter-Wim Zuidhof, between *valorisation* and *valuation*.³⁷ Both forms of ascribing value – *valorisation* as the symbolic creation of value centred on a cultural asset and *valuation* as economic value creation – occur through an interplay in which one may trigger the other. This is particularly evident in the relationship between tourism and cultural heritage, which are not separate systems, but are connected in multiple and complex ways.³⁸ In the mid-1990s, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett described this interpenetration as the ‘heritage industry’, which exports its products primarily via tourism, as when heritage sites are transformed into tourist destinations and thus become economically profitable. Tourism, then, can create new

34 See for example Sharon Macdonald: *Difficult Heritage. Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond*, London and New York 2009; William Logan and Keir Reeves (eds.): *Places of Pain and Shame. Dealing with ‘Difficult Heritage’*, London and New York 2009.

35 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett: ‘Intangible Heritage’, 56. Markus Tauschek criticises the concept of metacultural operations. The historical development of the carnival in Binche, Belgium, which he analysed, reveals that metacultural and cultural practices go hand in hand to form a lengthy chain of ‘re-invented traditions’ (Dorothee Hemme). He thus views the concept of metacultural operations essentially as a heuristic tool that helps bring out the processes that generate new meanings. See Markus Tauschek: ‘Reflections on the Metacultural Nature of Intangible Cultural Heritage’, in: *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 5/2 (2011), 49–64. The quote from Dorothee Hemme comes from her essay: “Weltmarke Grimm”. Anmerkungen zum Umgang mit der Ernennung der Grimmschen Kinder- und Hausmärchen zum “Memory of the World”, in: Dorothee Hemme et al. (eds.): *Prädikat ‘Heritage’. Wertschöpfungen aus kulturellen Ressourcen*, Berlin and Münster 2007, 225–251, here 230.

36 See Markus Tauschek: *Wertschöpfung aus Tradition. Der Karneval von Binche und die Konstituierung kulturellen Erbes*, Berlin 2010.

37 Arjo Klamer and Peter-Wim Zuidhof: ‘The Values of Cultural Heritage: Merging Economic and Cultural Appraisals’, in: Marta de la Torre and Randall Mason (eds.): *Economics and Heritage Conservation. A Meeting Organized by the Getty Conservation Institute*, Los Angeles 1999, 23–61.

38 See for example Dorothee Hemme: *Märchenstraße – Lebenswelten. Zur kulturellen Konstruktion einer touristischen Themenstraße*, Münster 2009; Burkhard Schnepel et al. (eds.): *Kultur all inclusive. Identität, Tradition und Kulturerbe im Zeitalter des Massentourismus*, Bielefeld 2013.

destinations, while heritage promotes consumption and experiencing, which is also a hallmark of tourism.³⁹

Studies that emphasise the constructed character of cultural heritage, teasing out both embedded power relations and the ways in which cultural heritage is used, may be subsumed under the term critical heritage studies (CHS). Heritage researchers in the fields of archaeology, anthropology, history, human geography and other disciplines came together in 2012 to form the Association of Critical Heritage Studies, which minced no words in a manifesto setting out its understanding of heritage and its approach:

Heritage is, as much as anything, a political act and we need to ask serious questions about the power relations that ‘heritage’ has all too often been invoked to sustain. Nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, cultural elitism, Western triumphalism, social exclusion based on class and ethnicity, and the fetishising of expert knowledge have all exerted strong influences on how heritage is used, defined and managed.⁴⁰

Here, heritage is understood as a form of political action in a broad sense, one not limited to the activities of political decision-makers, but in which experts too play a major role: ‘Heritage makes politics precisely through expertise.’⁴¹ The importance of experts or heritage professionals in the constitution of a cultural heritage – be they architects, archaeologists, biologists, historians or cultural scientists – has been emphasised by Laurajane Smith, who coined the phrase *authorised heritage discourse* (AHD).⁴² With reference to Michel Foucault and critical discourse analysis, she uses this term to capture the relationship between power, knowledge, and discourse about cultural heritage. Smith conceives of AHD – whose context of origin she discerns in the professional discourses of European archaeology and architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – as a set of ideas about what constitutes

Authorised heritage
discourse

³⁹ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett: ‘World Heritage and Cultural Economics’, in: Ivan Karp et al. (eds.): *Museum Frictions. Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, Durham and London 2006, 161–202.

⁴⁰ Manifesto of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies, available on the website of the Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies, <https://chms.cass.anu.edu.au/research/projects/association-critical-heritage-studies>, last accessed: 1 January 2020.

⁴¹ Chiara De Cesari: ‘Thinking Through Heritage Regimes’, in: Regina F. Bendix (ed.): *Heritage Regimes and the State*, Göttingen 2013, 399–413, here 401.

⁴² Laurajane Smith: *Uses of Heritage*, London and New York 2006.

heritage. This includes descriptors such as ‘aesthetically pleasing’, ‘material’, ‘fragile’, ‘finite’ and ‘non-renewable’, but also entails a clear moral imperative to preserve cultural heritage unchanged for future generations.⁴³ This discourse not only identifies what should be understood as cultural heritage, but also creates new subject positions: in addition to heritage professionals, whose primary responsibility is protection, there is also the group of ‘heirs’. The latter are to be made aware of the value of their collective ‘inheritance’; they must take ownership of it, guided by the values and forms of behaviour extolled by the experts. In heritage research, this process is understood as a form of governance in the Foucauldian sense.⁴⁴ In the UNESCO context, the expertise and knowledge of heritage professionals is clearly privileged, but the guidelines for implementing conventions increasingly place another group of actors alongside them: the *local or indigenous community*. UNESCO is thus following international trends towards bolstering the participation of *communities* (see the info box below) in political processes.

Cultural heritage and
gender

Critical heritage studies – beyond examination of the lattice of (post)colonial relations, the consolidation of social hierarchies or elitist mechanisms of exclusion, and the privileging of specific forms of knowledge – explores the significance of gender in the constitution and handling of heritage:⁴⁵ ‘Heritage is gendered. It is gendered in the way that heritage is defined, understood and talked about and, in turn, in the way it reproduces and legitimizes gender identities

Community

The constitution of a cultural heritage connects a highly heterogeneous group of actors who are quite differently situated in spatial, social and cultural terms, despite forming part of a so-called *community of practice*. This term, borrowed from learning theory, can be used to analyse the formation of a collective orient-

⁴³ Smith: *All Heritage is Intangible*, 11.

⁴⁴ See Regina Bendix and Valdimar Tr. Hafstein: ‘Culture and Property. An Introduction’, in: *Ethnologia Europaea* 39/2 (2009), 5–10, here 7.

⁴⁵ Wera Grahn and Ross J. Wilson (eds.): *Gender and Heritage. Performance, Place and Politics*, London and New York 2018; Laurajane Smith: ‘Heritage, Gender and Identity’, in: Brian Graham and Peter Howard (eds.): *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, Farnham etc. 2008, 159–178.

ed towards a common goal. Within this praxeological framework, *community* is a *doing* word, an action and a process in which boundaries are constantly renegotiated. However, we need to distinguish between the analytical use of the term and its use as a normative political category, for example when it comes to the issue of participation in decision-making processes. For example, UNESCO now demands that potentially affected (*local*) *communities* be involved in the nomination and management of cultural heritage, though without defining these communities in more detail. Researchers focus on how such a collective forms, the boundaries it draws vis-à-vis others – whether ethnic, social or political – and what claims of ownership it makes to a cultural heritage. Critical discussion of the concept of *community* is part for the course in this context: Emma Waterton and Laurajane Smith highlight the ambivalence of a *community's* (self-)staging as the bearer of a 'special' cultural heritage, as such representations often reinforce a group's existing status as social other. Marginalised groups recognised as heritage-based *communities* may be further exoticised and homogenised, obscuring while simultaneously reproducing inequalities of power.

Recommended reading

Adell, Nicolas et al. (eds.): *Between Imagined Communities and Communities of Practice: Participation, Territory and the Making of Heritage*, Göttingen 2015; Noyes, Dorothy: 'The Judgment of Solomon: Global Protections for Tradition and the Problem of Community Ownership', in: *Cultural Analysis* 5 (2006), 27–56; Waterton, Emma and Smith, Laurajane: 'The Recognition and Misrecognition of Community Heritage', in: *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16/1–2 (2010), 4–15.

and the social values that underpin them'.⁴⁶ Hence, according to Laurajane Smith, the context in which AHD emerged as a discourse of *experts* was dominated by the class- and gender-specific experiences of nineteenth-century upper-class English males, who embraced the preservation of historical monuments as their mission. Through the valorisation of relevant objects and monuments, she asserts, the gender relations associated with them were also legitimised and communicated as a positive source of identity; meanwhile, places and sites that were and are relevant to the historical experience of women were neglected in the designation of cultural heritage.⁴⁷ This critical view of the phenomenon of heritage in light of its historical development, its significance to the (re-)production of specific power

⁴⁶ Smith: 'Heritage, Gender and Identity', 161.

⁴⁷ As a pioneering institution in the field of cultural heritage, UNESCO is aware of the problem that asymmetrical gender relations may be cemented through cultural heritage practices, UNESCO: *Gender Equality. Heritage and Creativity*, 2014, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000229418>, last accessed: 13 December 2020.

relations and as an object of differing epistemic cultures guides many research projects in critical heritage studies.

Material cultural
studies

Another important approach within studies of heritage draws on research on material culture. The spotlighting of a specific material state in the biography of an artefact, a state that is used as a starting point for practices of cultural remembrance, is a core feature of heritage and gives us a sense of who is claiming the power to interpret it. Any cogent analysis must therefore include the materiality of cultural heritage. An apt analytical tool for this purpose is actor-network theory (ANT), which developed from the 1970s onwards within the interdisciplinary field of science and technology studies. The initial focus was, therefore, chiefly on topics in the fields of science, medicine and technology. The questions and approaches that typify ANT, which is associated mainly with the names Bruno Latour and John Law, revolve around reconstructing the constitution of, for example, new scientific-technical objects or concepts. This process of constitution is understood as a dynamic network consisting of human and non-human actors. Beyond the boundaries of science and technology research, ANT is now used within both material culture studies and museum and heritage studies.⁴⁸ The understanding that non-human entities – so-called actants – also ‘act’ is based on a concept of action that, rather than presupposing intentionality, understands the presence of effects as *agency*.⁴⁹ Hence, if a museum object elicits a certain behaviour from visitors, who look at it only from a distance and refrain from touching it, this object is attributed agency and the status of actant.

5.7 Cultural heritage as process

We have outlined our theoretical and conceptual understanding of heritage in the previous sections. Heritage, as we see it, is the result of an ongoing process of value attribution by actors, and an associated bundle of practices, ranging from conservation efforts to touristic consumption, which are always in part an expression of specific power relations. The narratives of history negotiated in this context,

⁴⁸ Harrison: *Heritage. Critical Approaches*, 112 f.

⁴⁹ Bruno Latour: *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, Oxford 2007, here 71.

which involve a broad public, place the topic of heritage within the remit of public history.

5.7.1 The genesis of cultural heritage

The aforementioned abandoned settlement of Königsmühle (Králov mlýn) in the Czech Ore Mountains has been the focal point of an international Land Art Festival since 2012. This event is guided by the idea that the participating artists – including professionals, but also many others – can and should appropriate the cultural heritage of Königsmühle, subverting hegemonic historical narratives in the process.

One anthropological study on the constitution of cultural heritage in the Ore Mountains explored the German-Czech nomination of the *Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří* mining region as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.⁵⁰ An ethnographically open approach forgoes *a priori* efforts to pin down the field of study. Instead, this is constituted in the course of the investigation, with the researchers accompanying people, objects, ideas, legal texts and policies – the latter including the protection of cultural heritage – in situations and contexts in which they develop agency or impact. In this case, then, rather than focusing solely on the official nomination process, the researchers were also attentive to other social situations in which the protection of cultural heritage was discussed and interwoven with other topics. The Land Art Festival, which is committed to artistic engagement with the history of the Königsmühle ruins and to promoting their protection as a national heritage site, represents such a situation, as well as a very specific setting.

Ethnographic
approach

Although efforts to integrate the Königsmühle settlement into the official UNESCO nomination for the Ore Mountains failed, this did not change the view held by the festival organiser, and the predominantly German and Czech festival-goers, that Königsmühle is collective heritage worthy of protection. Different forms of *doing heritage* could be observed both in the run-up to and during the festival, with actors drawing upon contrasting knowledge stocks. While the ruins were surveyed and mapped by professional monument

⁵⁰ For a detailed account, see Arnika Peselmann: *Konstituierung einer Kulturlandschaft. Praktiken des Kulturerbens im deutsch-tschechischen Erzgebirge*, Göttingen 2018.

preservationists and the material substance of the buildings was examined with a view to possible protected status, the land artists made profoundly different use of the site. Theatre folk used the ruins as a backdrop for a play based on the narratives of the last surviving contemporary witness, while sculptors created new works using stones from collapsed walls.

An association founded in the wake of the first Land Art Festival in 2012 subsumes the different approaches to this site under the term ‘documentalities’ (Czech: *dokumentality*), which is understood to mean new and individual approaches to ‘earth, landscape, architecture, *genius loci* and cultural heritage in the broad sense of the term’.⁵¹ By means of these subjective approaches, the association members seek to distance themselves from the hegemonic representations of history so characteristic of the Sudetenland, which, they assert, tend to serve as political instruments. This openness to individual interpretations can be understood as the pluralisation of cultures of remembrance and heritage practices. Furthermore, this is a mode of the appropriation as well as sharing of heritage (see the following info box on ‘sharing heritage’). In contrast to the last contemporary witness, who associates a familial legacy with Königsmühle and her grandparents’ dilapidated house, the organiser views the buildings as a collective place of remembrance (see Chapter 9) pertinent to the entire Czech borderland, one that needs to be preserved. Yet the idea here is not to restore the buildings to their pre-1945 state as a kind of open-air museum but instead that, as ruins, they can represent post-war Czechoslovak policy and the resulting development of the landscape. Hence, in the case of Königsmühle, the ruins also possess *agency*, as envisaged in ANT, given that they trigger actions. Only through their integration into a semiotic-material network that fuses ontologically different actors and actants – people, objects, regulations, and so on – do the non-existent buildings (at least as far as the land registry is concerned) become cultural heritage.

The network-based heuristics of ANT allow us to trace the constituting of heritage beyond human actions, and thus to bring out the ideas and interests inscribed in a heritage site. However, the process of establishing such a site is not complete when national status has

⁵¹ Website of the DoKrajín e.V. association, dokrajin.cz/clanek/17-poslani/sess_22b793a337d8a1520b0feae469087f69/, last accessed 12 December 2019.

been conferred or when it has received the UNESCO seal of approval. Cultural heritage is constantly being re-appropriated, and here the tourist experience plays a special role.

Sharing heritage

The debate about and via cultural heritage is dynamic rather than static. Against the backdrop of social changes such as globalisation and migration, but also postcolonial debates, scholars have increasingly asked ‘Whose heritage?’ (Hall 1999/2000) and investigated the various heritage communities. Cultural heritage can undoubtedly strengthen the cohesion of a community and create identity, but it frequently leads to processes of exclusion and boundary-marking and to the formation of *cultural property*. Hence, participation, encounter, intercultural dialogue and the passing on and transmission of (global) cultural heritage are now key topics of debate, and with them a new term: sharing heritage/shared heritage. Both variants of the term foreground heritage that is shared or meant to be shared, with ‘sharing’ making more of the active aspect. If we understand shared heritage as the collective property of a community of nations, as Thomas Thiemeyer suggests, then property rights become collectivised, with an emphasis on the participation of all in cultural heritage. Sharing heritage/shared heritage thus envisages the involvement of broad sections of the population. However, participation does not necessarily mean that interpretations and meanings are shared or ought to be shared. Shared heritage does not inevitably equate with collective heritage.

Recommended reading

Groth, Stefan et al.: *Kultur als Eigentum. Instrumente, Querschnitte und Fallstudien*, Göttingen 2015; Hall, Stuart: ‘Whose Heritage? Un-Settling “The Heritage”, Re-Imagining the Post-Nation’, in: *Third Text* 13/49 (1999/2000), 3–13; Thiemeyer, Thomas: ‘Kulturerbe als “Shared Heritage”? (I). Kolonialzeitliche Sammlungen und die Zukunft einer europäischen Idee’, in: *Merkur* 72/829 (2018), 30–44; Vincken, Gerhard: ‘Sharing Heritage. Das Motto des Europäischen Kulturerbejahres kritisch befragt’, in: *uni.vers. Forschung. Das Magazin der Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg*, May 2018, 16–19

5.7.2 Encountering cultural heritage

As already mentioned, heritage is ascribed value. This is particularly evident in tourism with its diverse options and offerings. The example of the prehistoric site of Stonehenge, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1986, is a good illustration of this. For many visitors, the monumental structure itself and thus the connection to the past is still a major attraction. However, experiences generated during

a visit are becoming increasingly important – and for many today, these occur when posing for or taking photos in front of the object and during the act of visiting the museum shop.⁵² It is no longer the object itself, but the event associated with it that is crucial, constituting the ‘authentic’ experience.

Today, then, the reception and appropriation of cultural heritage increasingly take place in the ‘mode of experience, in the sense of the aesthetically intensified compression of experience’ (*Modus des Erlebens, im Sinne einer ästhetisch gesteigerten Erfahrungsverdichtung*), which often occurs collectively; ‘categories such as well-being, charm and appeal’ (*Wohlgefühl, Anmutung und Reiz*) and thus emotions (see Chapter 3) are coming to the fore, while authenticity (see Chapter 2) is no longer associated with genuineness, but with moods and expectations.⁵³ This mode makes a neat fit with social scientific analyses that posit a shift towards an ‘experience society’, in which the privileging of experience is the core imperative for action, while experience in the sense of *Erleben* is becoming the dominant form of both perception and *Erfahrung* (see Chapter 4).⁵⁴

Photography
as a touristic
practice

Now more than ever, photography has become a performative practice featuring its own unique touristic perspective.⁵⁵ While photographic technology was still largely analogue until the turn of the millennium, digital devices – especially smartphones – have now opened up new possibilities in our interactions with cultural heritage. Today, the perception of places is centred on the smartphone screen, which not only changes the way we move through space and thus how we appropriate it, but also our perspective on space. Char-

52 See for example Amy Gazin-Schwartz: ‘Mementos of the Past: Material Culture of Tourism at Stonehenge and Avebury’, in: Yorke Rowan and Uzi Baram (eds.): *Marketing Heritage. Archaeology and the Consumption of the Past*, Walnut Creek 2004, 93–102; Stefanie Samida: ‘Zwischen An- und Abwesenheit: Denkmäler in geschichtskulturellen Kontexten’, in: Henner von Hesberg et al. (eds.): *Die Bildmacht des Denkmals: Ikonisierung und Erleben archäologischer Denkmäler im Stadtbild*, Regensburg 2020, 195–202, here 198 ff.

53 Gottfried Korff: ‘Denkmalisierung. Zum “Europäischen Denkmalschutzjahr” 1975 und seinen Folgen’, in: *Die Denkmalpflege* 83/2 (2005), 133–144, here 142.

54 See for example Gerhard Schulze: *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart*, 2nd edn., Frankfurt a.M. and New York 2005.

55 Sociologist John Urry refers to the ‘tourist gaze’ – tourism as the consumption of signs and images or the production and reproduction of images. See John Urry and Jonas Larsen: *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, London 2011.

acteristic of contemporary touristic practices is the selfie and the resulting increase in (self-)staging and self-thematisation via social media (such as Instagram and X [formerly Twitter]) – almost in real time thanks to instant uploads and sharing. Like earlier photos, the selfie is seen as confirmation that ‘I was there’ and therefore as proof of the authenticity of an experience.⁵⁶ At the same time, however, it seeks to attract attention and recognition in digital space – in line with the motto ‘Here I am’ – and is becoming a kind of currency (ever more likes, shares, tweets, and so on).⁵⁷ Posted selfies often trigger major social debates when taken in places associated with violence, terror and death or that resonate profoundly within society in other ways.⁵⁸ These include heritage sites such as Nazi concentration camps, but also former labour camps, battlefields or exclusion zones such as that surrounding the ruins of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. These are examples of so-called *dark heritage sites* – heritage that is considered problematic and unsettling (see the following info box on historical tourism and *dark tourism*). Selfie-taking, which is an aspect of everyday life, especially for young people, and forms part of (digital) social practice, thus transcends long-internalised schemas for interacting with such sites, adding new practices of remembrance to existing ones or overwriting them.

56 Yasmin Ibrahim: ‘Self Representation and the Disaster Event: Self-Imaging, Morality and Immortality’, in: *Journal of Media Practice* 16/3 (2015), 211–227, here 212.

57 Magdalena Holdaska: ‘Selfies at Horror Sites: Dark Tourism, Ghoulish Souvenirs and Digital Narcissism’, in: *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* 60/2 (2017), 405–423, here 419.

58 See Holdaska: ‘Selfies at Horror Sites’; Maria Zalewska: ‘Selfies from Auschwitz: Rethinking the Relationship Between Spaces of Memory and Places of Commemoration in the Digital Age’, in: *Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media* 18 (2017), 95–116; Oksana Hinka: ‘Im Fokus: Gedenkstättenfotos in Sozialen Netzwerken’, in: Thomas Thiemeyer et al. (eds.): *Erinnerungspraxis zwischen gestern und morgen. Wie wir uns heute an NS-Zeit und Shoah erinnern. Ein deutsch-israelisches Studienprojekt*, Tübingen 2018, 143–144.

Historical tourism and *dark tourism*

People have long travelled to historical sites or places featuring remnants of the past. As a rule, these journeys were undertaken for a specific purpose, as in the case of pilgrimages, which mainly took place in the Middle Ages for religious reasons. Tourist travel for leisure, recreation and/or *Bildung*, meanwhile, first emerged in the seventeenth century in the form of the Grand Tour, an edifying journey (*Bildungsreise*) through Europe for young aristocrats, which then became particularly popular in the eighteenth century. In addition to France, one of the favoured destinations was Italy, with its famous ancient sites such as Herculaneum and Pompeii. Today, there are many different types of tourism, such as beach tourism, literary tourism, cultural tourism, but also historical tourism or – more narrowly defined – heritage tourism, though the terms cultural, historical and heritage tourism are often used synonymously. These latter terms merely indicate that the destinations visited are associated with culture and history in the broadest sense (historical museums, archaeological sites, historically themed walking routes, and so on).

In a shift away from the ‘classic’ travel destinations, since the 2000s tourists and the tourism industry have increasingly focused on places that may seem quite unappealing at first glance. These are associated with violence, war, murder, disease, and atrocities, and are commonly referred to as *dark sites*. Included here are the locations of genocidal crimes, Nazi concentration camps and Soviet labour camps, bunkers and coastal batteries dating from the Second World War, and former battlefields. To date, it has been almost exclusively tourism studies that has explored these special places, referring in this context to *dark tourism*. The focus of tourism research is primarily on the supply side, that is, the destinations themselves, and on what motivates tourists to visit them. Foregrounding the available offerings and the associated motivations, however, is not the most productive approach, as the reasons for visiting a particular place are typically diverse and, quite often, contradictory.

Recommended reading

Groebner, Valentin: *Retroland. Geschichtstourismus und die Sehnsucht nach dem Authentischen*, Frankfurt a.M. 2018; Hooper, Glenn and Lennon, John J. (eds.): *Dark Tourism. Practice and Interpretation*, London and New York 2017; Samida, Stefanie: ‘Schlachtfelder als touristische Destinationen: Zum Konzept des Thanatourismus aus kulturwissenschaftlicher Sicht’, in: *Zeitschrift für Tourismuswissenschaft* 10/2 (2018), 267–290

This example illustrates that critical questions are increasingly being asked about the ‘correct’ way of dealing with this ‘dark’ heritage. As in other areas, a ‘de-hierarchisation and pluralisation of the “elite

project of remembrance culture” can be discerned.⁵⁹ The snapping of a selfie, but also the increasingly popular practice of making short private videos, influence our perspective on cultural heritage. They unsettle and challenge, and may therefore generate new interpretations, altering discourses or initiating novel ones. These interpretations and trends need to be recognised and analysed – a particularly apt task for research-oriented public history.

5.8 Positioning

Cultural heritage is both ‘made’ and deconstructed. It represents both a field of activity within cultural policy and an area of academic research. That the boundaries are permeable here is evident, apart from anything else, in the overlapping of personnel: when, for example, heritage researchers are also active in nomination processes as academic advisors. Some scholars see this dual role as a dilemma and as a threat to their scholarly integrity, not least in light of numerous disciplines’ political entanglement with authoritarian regimes in the twentieth century. Others see it as an opportunity not only to contribute their expertise on an object, cultural practice or site, thus ongoingly reproducing AHD, but also to critique the selection and utilisation of a heritage site by *doing heritage* in (self-) reflexive fashion. This may include scrutinising one’s own role, but also deconstructing dominant concepts in cultural policy discourse, which are quite often the revenants of outdated terms from one’s own discipline. One example of this is the concept of the *community*, whose involvement in its own cultural heritage is increasingly seen as imperative. Yet the term is typically associated with static, genealogical and homogenising notions of community. Probing issues of representation (who speaks for whom?) or (conflicting) ownership claims (who is allowed to use the cultural heritage and how?) enables us to unpack these under-complex definitions and differentiate or diversify them with reference to a *community of practice* or *community of interest*. Researchers can and should provide critical

⁵⁹ Marketa Spiritova: ‘Performing Memories. Erinnerungspraktiken zwischen Geschichtspolitik und Populärkultur am Beispiel Tschechiens’, in: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 110/1 (2014), 91–111, here 111.

commentary on the phenomenon of heritage in full awareness of its status as something that is always in a process of becoming rather than a static, bounded entity. They must also bear in mind that while heritage may serve as a political instrument of both inclusion and the promotion of cultural diversity, it may also be used to exclusionary and discriminatory ends.

Introductory literature

Harrison, Rodney: *Heritage. Critical Approaches*, London and New York 2013.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara: 'Theorizing Heritage', in: *Ethnomusicology* 39/3 (1995), 367–380.

Tauschek, Markus: *Kulturerbe. Eine Einführung*, Berlin 2013.

Waterton, Emma and Watson, Steve (eds.): *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research*, New York 2015.

6 Historical culture

6.1 Introduction

It is just over two kilometres from Friedrichstraße station to Hallesches Tor – a walk that can be completed in a little less than thirty minutes. Yet, for anyone on the trail of historical culture, hours can easily slip by on this route through the centre of Berlin. The starting point, Berlin Friedrichstraße station, opened in 1882 – with the departure hall of the border crossing between East and West Berlin, the so-called Palace of Tears (*Tränenpalast*), added in 1962. The station alone invites historical explorations in the heart of the metropolis. Heading south, historic buildings dating from Berlin's *Gründerzeit* (the so-called 'Founders' Age', a period of intense economic activity in nineteenth-century Germany and Austria) line the street named after Frederick I, King in Prussia. In addition to historical novels, popular science and academic texts, the Kulturkaufhaus Dussmann department store offers a range of other media such as audio, board and digital games, which also attempt to bring the past into the present. Passing through the historically significant Berlin boulevard Unter den Linden, one reaches quarters 205 to 207, with the latter housing the famous Galeries Lafayette department store. Struck by these contemporary embodiments of consumer society, most people are no doubt unaware that the Department of History at Humboldt University of Berlin is five minutes' walk away in this central district.

Up to this point, the advice one of the countless tourist guides might be needed to draw attention to the historical sites and circumstances. But on the just under 250 meters between Schützenstraße and Rudi-Dutschke-Straße, named after the figurehead of the 1968 student movement, it is near-impossible to evade history. Clustered around the former Checkpoint Charlie border crossing, a coveted motif in the customary tourist selfie, we find a Wall Museum, the Wall panorama by Yadegar Asisi, the BlackBox Cold War and the Trabi Museum.

Countless individuals stroll along these two kilometres for all kinds of reasons. As they do so, they are perhaps akin to the children and teenagers described as follows by history educationalist Klaus Bergmann in 1993: 'They haven't the slightest chance of escaping the

history they encounter all around them, which impresses itself on their consciousness subtly and almost imperceptibly in a range of different ways.¹

The past penetrates and permeates the present, both as legacy and remnant and in the form of medial, architectural and biographical history. In an attempt to come to grips with this phenomenon, the term ‘historical culture’ (*Geschichtskultur*) has taken hold in German-language history didactics, encompassing the ‘various institutions, media and performative practices [that confront] us with historical topics on a daily basis and [. . .] thus shape our ideas about and attitudes towards the past’.²

In the following, we look at what historical culture, as a key concept, can accomplish for public history research by scrutinising the genesis of the term and the leading analytical approaches associated with it. We examine why this notion, which is fundamentally open and compatible with other ideas, is for the most part still received within – and moulded by – the history didactics debate. Yet researchers in the cultural and social sciences have long been interested in exploring the way society deals with history. They have come up with their own concepts, whose relationship to the concept of historical culture we briefly outline. Finally, we discuss selected methodological approaches emanating from anthropology and media studies, which can help public historians make more productive use of existing ideas on historical culture.

6.2 Conceptual history

History of
public history

Long before the technical term ‘historical culture’ took hold, history was public and was subject to social negotiation. In antiquity, myths of origin were crafted and disseminated, historical texts were com-

1 Klaus Bergmann: “‘So viel Geschichte wie heute war nie’ – Historische Bildung angesichts der Allgegenwart von Geschichte”, in: Angela Schwarz (ed.): *Politische Sozialisation und Geschichte. Festschrift für Rolf Schörken zum 65. Geburtstag*, Hagen 1993, 209–228, here 211.

2 Holger Thünemann: ‘Geschichtskultur revisited. Versuch einer Bilanz nach drei Jahrzehnten’, in: Thomas Sandkühler and Horst Walter Blanke (eds.): *Historisierung der Historik. Jörn Rüsen zum 80. Geburtstag*, Cologne and Weimar 2018, 127–150, here 127.

posed and it is recorded that historical battles were re-enacted in the Roman Colosseum. Securing one's past in order to orientate oneself in the present is considered a basic human cultural activity.³ In every era, individuals, groups and institutions of all kinds have produced historical interpretations in a more or less public way in an attempt to legitimise their actions and their rule, to forge identity and ensure support within society.

Historiography informed by scientific criteria, however, became established only with the rise of systematic historical scholarship in the nineteenth century. In its infancy, despite its source criticism and claims of objectivity, the university discipline of history helped forge national myths with reference to historical events. In Germany, grand national narratives, such as the battle of the Teutoburg Forest as the dawn of German civilization and other Germanic myths were enshrined even at universities and continue to reverberate to the present day.⁴ Little distinction was made between academic and public discourse. Historians saw themselves as 'educators of the people' and viewed their involvement in the (national) master narrative as an integral part of their academic discipline.⁵ As a result, they had no need for a term encompassing the entirety of society's engagement with history, as this was already part and parcel of their understanding of academic history. This attitude was called fundamentally into question in the course of the twentieth century. Specific forms of historiography became established in the emerging mass media that reflected their realities rather than scientific desiderata. Furthermore, the discipline of history, which was subdividing into specialised discourses, increasingly withdrew from the public discourse on history. Finally, when it came to prehistory and early history, studies have shown that, after serving the Nazi regime's ideological needs to a greater or lesser extent, scholars in the field dis-

3 See Thomas Fischer: *Geschichte der Geschichtskultur. Über den öffentlichen Gebrauch von Vergangenheit von den antiken Hochkulturen bis zur Gegenwart*, Cologne 2000.

4 See Ingo Wivjorra: *Der Germanenmythos. Konstruktion einer Weltanschauung in der Altertumforschung des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Darmstadt 2006; Jonathan Roth: *2000 Jahre Varusschlacht – Jubiläum eines Mythos? Eine kulturanthropologische Fallstudie zur Erinnerungskultur*, Münster 2012.

5 See Hans-Jürgen Pandel: *Geschichtsunterricht nach PISA. Kompetenzen, Bildungsstandards, Kerncurricula*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2005, 40.

tanced themselves from the public staging of their research findings and largely ceased to engage in the popularisation of science.⁶

The gap between historical research and public interest, along with the inability to engage critically with the Nazi period – and the Holocaust in particular – led the discipline of history into a crisis in the late 1960s. It was confronted with the question ‘What is the point of history?’⁷ In this climate, history didactics finally turned its back on the aspiration to convey binding, historically grounded precepts in history lessons. Instead, it sought to develop from a theory of teaching and methodology into a sub-discipline of history in its own right. Accompanying this shift was the opening up of history didactics to historical representations in the non-school public sphere.⁸ In the 1981 book *Geschichte in der Alltagswelt* (‘History in Everyday Life’), for the first time Rolf Schörken analysed in detail, and on a broad empirical basis, ‘the interest in history in everyday contexts’ (*das lebensweltliche Geschichtsinteresse*).⁹ Examining quite different representations of history, including historical novels, tourist sites, home furnishings and events, he scrutinised both their form and function.

Schörken still described his field of investigation as ‘historische Kultur’.¹⁰ But it was the concept of *Geschichtskultur* (historical culture), coined by history theorist Jörn Rüsen in the early 1990s, which became a so-called ‘fundamental category’ in the field of history didactics. In this capacity, it was increasingly deployed by scholars in the field for the theoretically grounded description – and for the analysis – of public approaches to history. While Rüsen’s seminal work was often cited in didactic discourse, little was done to develop it further. The exception was Bernd Schönemann, who

6 See Georg Koch: *Funde und Fiktionen. Urgeschichte im deutschen und britischen Fernsehen seit den 1950er Jahren*, Göttingen 2019, 62 f.

7 See Jürgen Kocka: ‘Geschichtswissenschaft heute – wozu noch Geschichte?’, in: Karl Filser (ed.): *Theorie und Praxis des Geschichtsunterrichts*, Bad Heilbrunn 1974, 24–35.

8 See Bernd Schönemann: ‘Geschichtsdidaktik, Geschichtskultur, Geschichtswissenschaft’, in: Hilke Günther-Arndt (ed.): *Geschichts-Didaktik. Praxishandbuch für die Sekundarstufe I und II*, Berlin 2003, 11–22, here 11.

9 Rolf Schörken: *Geschichte in der Alltagswelt. Wie uns Geschichte begegnet und was wir mit ihr machen*, Stuttgart 1981, 9.

10 *Ibid.*, 233.

introduced a sociology-of-knowledge dimension to the concept in the early 2000s. He questioned Rösen's approach, which saw historical culture as a 'human cultural achievement of universal depth and significance'.¹¹ Instead, drawing on the social theory of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, he asked to what extent it might be understood as a result of the 'social construction of the past'.¹²

The concept of historical culture has barely moved beyond the discourse among didactics experts into debates in the social and cultural sciences.¹³ This may be connected to the fact that, in history didactics, it ended up as a collective term encompassing all those practices and representations that influence pupils beyond the history classroom. Although Schörken and Rösen defined historical culture in an inclusive way to encompass every type of historiography, including that found in schools and at university, to this day the term 'historical culture' is usually applied only to emphatically mass medial, popular representations. Alternatively, reference may be made to extra-academic or non-academic approaches to history, to 'history in the public sphere' or 'history in everyday life'.¹⁴ What all these terms have in common is that they ascribe a special status to academic historiography and the teaching of history in schools.¹⁵ Hans-Jürgen Pandel, for example, put forward 'historico-cultural competence' (*geschichtskulturelle Kompetenz*) as a goal for skills-orientated history lessons (see the info box on 'competencies' in section 8.4). This competence, he contends, is an expression of the ability to understand the different 'rules' applying to academic history and historical culture.¹⁶ Such a categorical distinction between academic

The impasse
in history
didactics

¹¹ Bernd Schönemann: 'Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtskultur', in: Bernd Mütter et al. (eds.): *Geschichtskultur. Theorie – Empirie – Pragmatik*, Weinheim 2000, 26–58, here 43. Cf. Jörn Rösen: 'Was ist Geschichtskultur? Überlegungen zu einer neuen Art, über Geschichte nachzudenken', in: Klaus Fußmann et al. (eds.): *Historische Faszination. Geschichtskultur heute*, Cologne etc. 1994, 3–26, here 5.

¹² Schönemann: 'Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtskultur', 44.

¹³ One exception is the reception of the term by folklorist Gottfried Korff. See his essay: 'Kulturelle Überlieferung und *mémoire collective*. Bemerkungen zum Rösenschen Konzept der "Geschichtskultur"', in: Klaus Fröhlich et al. (eds.): *Geschichtskultur*, Pfaffenweiler 1992, 51–61.

¹⁴ Schönemann: 'Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtskultur', 36.

¹⁵ Rolf Schörken: *Begegnungen mit Geschichte. Vom außerwissenschaftlichen Umgang mit der Historie in Literatur und Medien*, Stuttgart 1995, 11.

¹⁶ Pandel: *Geschichtsunterricht*, 137.

scholarship, school teaching and ‘the rest’ turned historical culture into a normative concept separating the ‘right’ history from the ‘wrong’ history. Hence, when researching historical culture, the trend within history didactics was towards evaluating learning opportunities outside schools, which were to be addressed or compensated for in the classroom.

6.3 Related terms

History didactics failed to fully exploit the opportunity to turn the academic study of historical culture into an interdisciplinary field of activity and research, or to facilitate fruitful exchanges with other social and cultural scientists interested in the topic.¹⁷ Independently of the notion of historical culture, scholars in other fields had in fact developed alternative concepts and theories concerned with society’s approach to the past.

Related
concepts in
the discipline
of history

Since the 1990s, discourses within the field of contemporary history on the societal processing of Nazi crimes have led to a more nuanced grasp of society’s relationship to its own past under the rubric of memory (see Chapter 9) and culture of remembrance (see the info box in section 9.2).¹⁸ In contrast to historical culture, the term ‘culture of remembrance’ in particular focused more acutely on socially driven and state-led forms of remembrance (see the info box on ‘dealing with the past, coming to terms with the past, and the politics of history’ in section 9.2.3) and on the functional deployment of the past to serve present-day purposes.¹⁹ Although some history didactics scholars pointed out that the concept of culture of remem-

¹⁷ See Simone Rauthe: ‘Geschichtsdidaktik – ein Auslaufmodell? Neue Impulse der amerikanischen Public History’, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 2 (2005), 287–291, online: <https://zeithistorische-forschungen.de/2-2005/4647>, last accessed: 11 January 2021.

¹⁸ Maria Grever and Robbert-Jan Adriaansen: ‘Historical Culture: A Concept Revisited’, in: Mario Carretero et al. (eds.): *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, Basingstoke 2016, 73–89, here 75.

¹⁹ Christoph Cornelißen: ‘Erinnerungskulturen (Version: 2.0)’, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 22 October 2012, https://docupedia.de/zg/Erinnerungskulturen_Version_2.0_Christoph_Corneli%C3%9Fen.

branch ought to be integrated into that of historical culture,²⁰ it gained currency in its own right and was also embraced within the newspapers' culture pages.

In contrast, in the discipline of ancient history, for example, the reception of antiquity (see Chapter 11) has developed into a distinct field of research, which analyses the tradition and transformation of historical representations. Under the rubric of 'archaeology and the public sphere', popular representations of archaeological eras are also examined with varying degrees of systematicity.²¹ What both approaches have in common is that they identify historical culture as their field of research and draw on approaches within historical didactics. However, neither has consistently developed the concept of historical culture, mostly regarding it as a collective term for mass medial representations of history.

Research on the culture of remembrance has also drawn on the findings of the cultural sciences, which have been working on theories of memory since the 1990s (see Chapter 9). Although Rüsen too has written about 'historical remembering' (*historisches Erinnern*) as the production of meaning beyond the horizon of one's own life,²² and Schörken has explored 'presentification' (*Vergegenwärtigung*) as a process of bringing the irretrievable past back to life in the present,²³ these approaches were unable to satisfactorily explain, for example, Germans' unease with their past. Here, concepts such as cultural and communicative memory, as set out by Jan and Aleida Assmann, have been widely embraced.

Another term at large in this thematic field is that of 'heritage' (see Chapter 5). International scholars concerned with heritage do not view it as a research-guiding concept, but as a normatively

Cultural sciences
(*Kulturwissenschaft*)

20 Marko Demantowsky: 'Geschichtskultur und Erinnerungskultur. Zwei Konzeptionen des einen Gegenstands', in: *Geschichte, Politik und ihre Didaktik* 33/1–2 (2005), 11–20; Marko Demantowsky (ed.): *Public History and School. International Perspectives*, Berlin and Boston 2018; Wolfgang Hasberg: 'Erinnerungs- oder Geschichtskultur? Überlegungen zu zwei (un)vereinbaren Konzeptionen zum Umgang mit Gedächtnis und Geschichte', in: Olaf Hartung (ed.): *Museum und Geschichtskultur. Ästhetik – Politik – Wissenschaft*, Bielefeld 2006, 32–59.

21 Stefanie Samida: 'Archäologie und Öffentlichkeit. Zum Stand der Reflexion', in: Manfred K. H. Eggert and Ulrich Veit (eds.): *Theorie in der Archäologie. Zur jüngeren Diskussion in Deutschland*, Münster 2013, 337–374.

22 Rüsen: 'Geschichtskultur', 38.

23 Schörken: *Begegnungen*, 11–14.

endorsed attribution of value that is negotiated through the politics of history. Yet, as outlined below, there are clear parallels²⁴ here with historical culture as broadly conceived, particularly in terms of its significance as a form of modern entertainment culture and the associated economic value.

Historical
culture at the
international
level

Beyond German-language discourse, there has been very little reception of the concept of historical culture,²⁵ though historico-cultural phenomena have been discussed internationally, with historians doing most of the relevant research. In French, the concept of *lieux de mémoire* (see Chapter 9, 'Memory') has taken hold, with its clear focus on the reception history of events, people and places and their historico-cultural processing. In the United States, the terms 'heritage' and 'public history' have become established. The latter emerged from citizens' movements committed to researching local history. Today, it also describes the training and activities of historians who explore fields beyond the university and school.

6.4 Approaches to the concept of historical culture

Historical
consciousness
and historical
culture

In history didactics, historical culture is understood as a concept defined in relation to individual historical consciousness. Thus, in order to approach the concept of historical culture, it is helpful to describe historical consciousness and its connection to historical culture in more detail. Historical consciousness forms the basis for all individual ideas about and attitudes towards the past. At the same time, the awareness of the historicity of one's own existence is the basis for forging a 'connection between interpreting the past, understanding the present and perspectives on the future'.²⁶ It enables people to 'establish a relationship to the "past" (as a reality that has

²⁴ Markus Tauschek: 'Kulturerbe und Geschichtskultur: Erinnern, Tradieren, Archivieren', in: Markus Tauschek: *Kulturerbe. Eine Einführung*, Berlin 2013, 73–93.

²⁵ One exception here is the *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, in which the concept is explored and expanded. See Mario Carretero et al. (eds.): *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, Basingstoke 2016.

²⁶ Karl-Ernst Jeismann: 'Geschichtsbewußtsein – Theorie', in: Klaus Bergmann et al. (eds.): *Handbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik*, Seelze-Velber 1997, 42–44, here 42.

been) and to “history” (as the interpreted, reconstructed past).²⁷ Hence, historical consciousness must be understood as individual, subjective and bound to the present.²⁸

Against this background, Rüsen understands historical culture as a ‘practically potent articulation of historical consciousness in the life of a society’²⁹ and as the ‘epitome of the meaning-making achievements of human historical consciousness’ (*Inbegriff der Sinbildungsleistungen des menschlichen Geschichtsbewusstseins*).³⁰ Building on this, Schönemann describes historical consciousness as an individual construct ‘that is erected from the outside in, through internalisation and socialisation processes’, in contrast to historical culture ‘as a collective construct that arises through the countervailing process of externalisation and assumes an objective form’.³¹

The translating of historical consciousness into historical culture is referred to in history didactics as ‘historical narration’.³² This is a mental operation that leads from historical consciousness to a representation of history accessible in words, writing, objects or (moving) images.³³

Yet historical narration is by no means inevitably geared towards third parties. Instead, it consists in actors’ (de- and re)construction of history as they seek to get to grips with it. The performative practices of living history, for example, can be understood as historical representations, even if actors only engage with the past to their own ends, without an audience, or disavow any educational intentions. Historical representations thus correspond to the ‘objects of historical culture’ described by Hans-Jürgen Pandel.³⁴ These he views as

Historical
representations

27 Waltraut Schreiber: ‘Reflektiertes und (selbst-)reflexives Geschichtsbewusstsein durch Geschichtsunterricht fördern – ein vielschichtiges Forschungsfeld der Geschichtsdidaktik’, in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtsdidaktik* 1 (2002), 18–43, here 18.

28 See *ibid.*, 19.

29 Rüsen: ‘Geschichtskultur’, 5.

30 Jörn Rüsen: *Historik. Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Cologne etc. 2013, 221.

31 Schönemann: ‘Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtskultur’, 44.

32 See Michele Barricelli: *Schüler erzählen Geschichte. Narrative Kompetenz im Geschichtsunterricht*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2005.

33 See Schreiber: ‘Geschichtsbewusstsein’, 19; Meik Zülsdorf-Kersting: ‘Zwei Seiten einer Medaille – oder: Wie konstruieren Individuen Geschichte?’, in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtsdidaktik* 8 (2009), 184–197, here 193.

34 Hans-Jürgen Pandel: ‘Geschichtskultur als Aufgabe der Geschichtsdidaktik. Viel zu wissen ist zu wenig’, in: Vadim Oswalt et al. (eds.): *Geschichtskultur: Die*

‘cultural facts’ defined as ‘contemporary rhetorical, aesthetic, simulative and literary productions that refer to events and occurrences of the past’.³⁵ On this view, historical culture is based on the production, reception and interaction of historical representations and the actors who generate them.

Encounters
with history

The route from historical consciousness to historical culture is by no means a one-way street. In fact, historical culture forms part of the underpinning of the individual’s ideas and attitudes. Furthermore, the individual’s ideas change even as they engage with history, as they produce and receive representations, and through the associated actions: they interpret the past within the frame of the present moment, continuously determining their identity, as well as their position in space and within the flow of time, while grappling with history.

Encounters with history are not necessarily intentional or guided. More often, they happen quite by chance and often unconsciously. On a walk along Friedrichstraße, the architecture of the historic buildings alone constantly stimulates historical consciousness, even if the passers-by spare them little more than casual glances. Prior knowledge is activated and compared with what is seen, such that even the unconscious perception of buildings and streets constructs a mental image and helps form attitudes.³⁶ This state of affairs prompted Pandel to conclude that ‘living in historical culture means engaging with the products of others, in which their historical consciousness finds reflection’.³⁷ This reinforces the supposition that historical consciousness is a constantly changing construct: it is ‘formed through the adoption and modification of, and engagement with, other relevant images of history’³⁸ Simply put, this means that

Anwesenheit von Vergangenheit in der Gegenwart, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2009, 19–33, here 27.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ See Aleida Assmann: ‘Das Gedächtnis der Orte’, in: *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 68/1 (1994), 17–35; Christoph Bernhardt et al: *Gebaute Geschichte. Historische Authentizität im Stadtraum*, Göttingen 2017.

³⁷ Pandel: ‘Geschichtskultur’, 28.

³⁸ Marko Demantowsky: ‘Geschichtsbild’, in: Ulrich Mayer et al. (eds.): *Wörterbuch Geschichtsdidaktik*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2006, 70–71, here 71.

historical culture shapes historical consciousness, which in turn produces historical culture.

Historical culture constantly makes ‘sense-making offers (*Sinnbildungsangebote*) to readers or listeners’.³⁹ These co-exist with a demand for meaning in the form of individuals’ need for identification and orientation. Consequently, historical culture can be described as a market in which the supply of meaning and the demand for meaning converge.⁴⁰

Historical culture as a market

In this market, contrary to the intentions of a fair number of historians, the communication of history rarely occurs as a directed, top-down process. Instead, historical representations are merely an impulse for individual appropriation processes (see the info box on ‘appropriation’ in section 8.2). In the course of reception, historical representations are never integrated into ideas about the past with perfect precision in their existing form. Instead, they are appropriated by the individual and transformed in the process: they are deconstructed to a greater or lesser extent, stimulate the imagination (see Chapter 7) and only then are they reflected in the individual’s preconceptions and attitudes.⁴¹ Historical representations, then, continuously foster the development of the individual’s historical consciousness and the formation of ideas about the past.⁴²

Appropriation of history

39 Hans-Jürgen Pandel: *Historisches Erzählen. Narrativität im Geschichtsunterricht*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2010, 135. Against the background of the diverse multimedia approaches and representations, one must of course consider visitors, players, gamers, and so on as well.

40 Jörn Rüsen, meanwhile, attributes the need for orientation to unsettling experiences arising in a given time, viewing this need as the impetus for and driving force of historical learning. See Jörn Rüsen: ‘Historisches Lernen’, in: Klaus Bergmann et al. (eds.): *Handbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik*, Seelze-Velber 1997, 261–265, here 262.

41 See Rolf Schörken: ‘Historische Imagination – Wort’, in: Klaus Bergmann et al.: *Handbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik*, Seelze-Velber 1997, 64–66, here 65 f., and Schreiber: ‘Geschichtsbewusstsein’, 28.

42 See Heinrich T. Grütter: ‘Warum fasziniert die Vergangenheit. Perspektiven einer neuen Geschichtskultur’, in: Jörn Rüsen et al. (eds.): *Historische Faszination. Geschichtskultur heute*, Cologne 1994, 45–57, here 54. Zülsdorf-Kersting refers to historico-cultural socialisation, which he views as the ‘process of the emergence and development of historical identity as mutually dependent on patterns of transmission mediated by historical culture’. See Zülsdorf-Kersting: ‘Zwei Seiten’, 188 f.

Doing
historical
culture

The individual's ceaseless engagement with representations of history alerts us to the fact that the doing of history, in other words, the performative production and appropriation of history, is a cultural practice occurring within a social system. Within this system, according to Schönemann, a form of 'culturally moulded communication (*kulturell durchformte Kommunikation*) [takes place] that produces history as meaning in a specific way'.⁴³ Historical culture is thus constituted by historical representations, through which the individual who engages with them develops their own historical consciousness. This in turn forms the basis for their own representations of history. A variety of productive appropriation strategies of a purposeful, wilful nature coexist, affecting each other as well as the practices of production. These processes of performative production and appropriation (see Chapter 10, 'Performativity') also form part of scholarly attempts to get to grips with historical culture and its objectivations. Here, historical culture must be regarded as mutable and in a constant state of flux, as it is perpetually reconstituting itself out of its own practice.

Historicisation
of historical
culture

The observation and investigation of historical culture is not limited to present-day phenomena and practices, but may also relate to historical actors and their representations of history.⁴⁴ The objects of past historical culture, as medialised and thus fixed knowledge stocks, then serve as an expression of that which emerged – within the discursive negotiation processes of a given era – as so relevant, worthy of communication and 'true' that it was ultimately presented in a publicly impactful way.⁴⁵ Studies on historical culture at different points in time thus stand in close proximity to the history of knowledge, which is dedicated to analysing the 'social production

⁴³ Schönemann: 'Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtskultur', 46.

⁴⁴ Bernd Schönemann: 'Erinnerungskultur oder Geschichtskultur?', in: Eugen Kotte (ed.): *Kulturwissenschaften und Geschichtsdidaktik*, Munich 2011, 53–72, here 58. Hans-Jürgen Pandel believes history didactics should be dedicated exclusively to grappling with contemporary historical culture, while research into the historical culture of the past ought to come under the remit of cultural history. See Pandel: *Geschichtsunterricht*, 131.

⁴⁵ See Veronika Lipphardt and David Ludwig: 'Wissens- und Wissenschaftstransfer', in: *EGO – Europäische Geschichte Online*, 28 September 2011, <https://ieg-ego.eu/lipphardtvludwigd-2011-de>, last accessed: 19 October 2020; Philipp Sarasin: 'Was ist Wissensgeschichte?', in: *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 36/1 (2011), 159–172, here 167.

and circulation of knowledge'.⁴⁶ Historical representations of history can be understood as media of storage, transportation and presentation of the historical knowledge of their era. Analysis then provides information about what was designated as knowledge by contemporaries and through which discourses.⁴⁷ This in turn means foregrounding performative, era-specific and society-dependent interpretations of the past.

When examining historical culture in the past, the question arises as to whether we can really conceive of 'historical culture' in the singular. Should we not be thinking in terms of different historical *cultures* (in the plural)? Such pluralisation may emerge from a diachronic perspective, as historical cultures differ in both present and the past. But it may also arise from a synchronic perspective on the diversification of historico-cultural phenomena, a process that goes hand in hand with the formation of collective identities beyond the nation state. Furthermore, with the growing dissemination of historical content in the 'media society', it is clear that media of representation, representations themselves, and the actors involved are undergoing pluralisation. Thus, Eva Ulrike Pirker and Mark Rüdiger too believe it makes sense to refer to 'historical *cultures*' given the 'diversity of conceptions of history and the media forms in which these are produced, transported and received, as well as [the] diversity of contexts in which the historical dimension plays a key role'.⁴⁸

To what extent can a pluralised concept of historical culture enrich our analyses and what pitfalls inherent in the concept of culture should we be alert to in this context? The concept of culture is used in both public-political and academic contexts. Yet its content often diverges. In public-political discourses (but also in academic disciplines that couch their arguments in positivist terms), it is not uncommon to assume that people possess a certain culture or belong

Historical
cultures, plural

Concept of
culture

⁴⁶ Sarasin: 'Wissensgeschichte', 164.

⁴⁷ See Carsten Kretschmann: 'Wissenschaftspopularisierung – Ansätze und Konzepte', in: Bernd Hüppauf and Peter Weingart (eds.): *Frosch und Frankenstein. Bilder als Medium der Popularisierung von Wissenschaft*, Bielefeld 2009, 79–89, here 84; Lipphardt and Ludwig: 'Wissens- und Wissenschaftstransfer', 5.

⁴⁸ Eva Ulrike Pirker and Mark Rüdiger: 'Authentizitätsfiktionen in populären Geschichtskulturen: Annäherungen', in: Eva Ulrike Pirker et al. (eds.): *Echte Geschichte. Authentizitätsfiktionen in populären Geschichtskulturen*, Bielefeld 2010, 11–30, here 12 (original emphasis).

to a specific culture; this is understood as static, geographically and/or socially localisable and internally homogeneous. Conversely, a constructivist understanding of culture, chiefly to be found in social scientific and humanities disciplines, works on the assumption that culture is created through practices and must be (re)produced over and over again. This *doing culture*, conceived in praxeological terms, is shaped in substantial part by the temporal and spatial specifics of the society under consideration, along with its particular power constellations. This is why current discourses in the cultural sciences tend to refer to cultures in the plural – in explicit opposition to earlier scholarly concepts that imagined culture as an ahistorical, coherent and singular entity,⁴⁹ while also positing a nature-culture dichotomy. In the course of the so-called *writing culture* debate, in the 1980s the anthropological disciplines intensively scrutinised their own concept of culture.⁵⁰ Within this framework, the tendency of some scholars in the field to construct and reify clearly defined and homogenised cultures came in for critique. The exponents of approaches to cultural analysis that developed subsequent to the debate thus assailed the idea of a series of ‘isolable and systematically sealed units’ and instead called for a relational perspective. Through this lens, ‘the meaning of cultural phenomena can be deciphered only by examining the network of relations to which they owe their form’.⁵¹

When it comes to historico-cultural contexts, we can discern within objectivations, performances and narratives relevant self-descriptions, boundary-markings and orientational offerings without imposing fixed attributions from the outside – be they national, social, ethnic, or of any other kind. It is in fact potential ambiguities as well as historical (dis)continuities and transformations that are of primary interest. Thinking and describing historical cultures in the plural can thus serve as a heuristic for analysing the complex relationships between historico-cultural practices, media, content

49 Rolf Lindner: “Zwei oder drei Dinge, die ich über Kultur weiß ...”. Eine Reprise’, in: Reinhard Johler et al. (eds.): *Kultur_Kultur: Denken. Forschen. Darstellen*, Münster etc. 2013, 16–27, here 16.

50 Lila Abu-Lughod: ‘Writing Against Culture’, in: Richard G. Fox (ed.): *Recapturing Anthropology. Working in the Present*, Santa Fe 1991, 137–162.

51 Rolf Lindner: ‘Vom Wesen der Kulturanalyse’, in: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 99/2 (2003), 177–188, here 177 and 179.

and actors, and for challenging the assumption of the singularity and coherence of an – often nationally delineated – (historical) culture.

6.5 Operationalising historical culture

Historico-cultural practices and representations are not only objects of research in the historical disciplines. Due to their significance in everyday life, their multimodality and their relevance to the formation of collective identities, they are just as interesting to scholars in the social and cultural sciences and media studies. Through interdisciplinary approaches, the concept of ‘historical culture’ as found in history didactics can be rendered more nuanced and can also be expanded, turning it into a key concept for public history research. To bring out the concept’s potential for public history, below we present a range of analytical approaches and theoretical models originating mainly in history didactics. We then outline the methodology adopted in anthropological contexts. This points up the contrast between the generally more normative approach of history didactics and the principle of ‘openness’ that typifies inductive research, which can be used to augment existing categories of analysis. Our methodological-analytical survey concludes with the presentation of a media analysis.

As both an analytical and applied field, public history conducts basic research but can also stage interventions. In line with this, its interest in historico-cultural phenomena applies both to ways of analysing them and to how they might be enriched. Critically documenting and reflecting on the production of such phenomena is, therefore, a key aspect of research. The historico-cultural sources and products to be investigated may be associated with media of any kind – written, material, virtual – and may involve any sort of sensory input, from oral to olfactory. The concept of historical culture, which highlights the constructed character of history, also includes the social conditions against whose background interpretations of the past arise.

Historico-cultural
sources of
public history

6.5.1 Analysing historical culture: Theories and models

6.5.1.1 Dimensions of historical culture

Three
dimensions

Jörn Rüsen describes historical culture as a complex, multidimensional structure. He begins by distinguishing between the aesthetic, the political and the cognitive as the three dimensions of historical culture he considers crucial to contemporary society.⁵² According to Rüsen, these are constituted via determining mental factors that he calls criteria of meaning. Rüsen associates the three primary dimensions with feeling, volition and thinking, which are in turn assigned to the principles of beauty, power and truth.⁵³ On the walk along Friedrichstraße described earlier, the Department of History would probably be associated most closely with the cognitive dimension of historical culture: there the past is researched with a claim to truthfulness. The naming of the street, on the other hand, falls within the remit of politics, which has the power to commemorate certain people, locations or events. Finally, Yadegar Asisi's Wall panorama – representing the principle of beauty as an artistic installation – fits most neatly with the realm of the aesthetic. When we consider these examples, we soon realise that no phenomenon can be assigned to one dimension alone. For example, both political statements and aesthetic claims may appear in the publications of the Friedrichstraße historians. In the same way, the Wall panorama, with its claim to truth, attempts to depict the past with as much historical accuracy as possible. In other words, what we can discern here is a process of ideal-typical assignment to the three primary dimensions, associated with a claim to generalisability rather than completeness. Against this background, Rüsen suggests that we might contemplate an ideological or even psychological dimension, while also speculating about a religious and moral dimension.⁵⁴

Ideal normative
constellation

In his conceptual explorations of historical culture, Rüsen is emphatically concerned with historico-political education as a means of fostering critical participation in a democratic society. His observations point to the conclusion that the 'historical institution

⁵² See Jörn Rüsen: 'Die fünf Dimensionen der Geschichtskultur', in: Jacqueline Nießer and Juliane Tomann: *Angewandte Geschichte. Neue Perspektiven auf Geschichte und Öffentlichkeit*, Paderborn etc. 2014, 46–57, here 47.

⁵³ See Rüsen: *Historik*, 234 ff.

⁵⁴ Rüsen: 'Die fünf Dimensionen der Geschichtskultur', 46 f.

that best [fulfils] its function of providing historical orientation is the one that grants its three dimensions relative autonomy while at the same time relating them to each other in a critical way'.⁵⁵ This ideal normative constellation may be understood as a case of history didactics making certain demands of historico-cultural practices. However, the dimensions of historical culture identified by Rösen are not only prescriptive but can also be analytically useful.

An analysis based on Rösen's concept of historical culture, one that enquires into the characteristics and configuration of different, interwoven, meaning-based dimensions, is an apt tool for critically questioning the content of historico-cultural objectivations. Such an analysis can locate a specific representation of history within the wickerwork of dimensions. For example, a political stance can be examined in terms of its aesthetic representation and with a view to whether, and if so to what extent, it is scientifically justified. With regard to a media representation of history, this would mean looking at what message it contains. For example, is the story told based on a narrative schema of victory or defeat? What aesthetic means of representation are used to tell this story? Do they support the narrative model? Are they designed to appeal to the audience's emotions? Are arguments made on a scientific basis? Are sources and expert testimonies used? If so, which ones and why?

Following on from this, it may be helpful to scrutinise which goals a historical representation is committed to or which intentions and motivations prompt actors to embrace a particular view of the past. Are these goals, motivations and intentions derived from the historico-cultural dimensions? In this context, do we find entertainment (aesthetic), legitimisation (political), knowledge (cognitive), conviction (religious), attitude (moral) and profit (economic)? These goals and motivations would have to be precisely defined and critically scrutinised. With regard to the assessment and interpretation of historical representations, overlaps inevitably seem particularly interesting. An explicit primary objective, such as the educational mission of public service broadcasting, for example, is accompanied by implicit secondary objectives. The most obvious secondary goal in this context is entertainment value, which has a significant influence on viewing figures and thus on reach. Insights of this kind can give us

Applying the dimensions theory

Dimensional goals and motivations

⁵⁵ Rösen: 'Geschichtskultur', 21.

a more detailed understanding of historical representations and help us scrutinise their production in more concrete terms.

If we foreground the aesthetic dimension of historico-cultural objectivations, we soon realise that concepts such as emotions (see Chapter 3), memory (see Chapter 9) and experience (*Erlebnis*) (see Chapter 4) are also relevant to the ways we approach the past. Furthermore, especially when it comes to the commercially marketed products of historical culture, it makes sense to probe its economic dimension.⁵⁶ This applies not only to perspectives on the past centred on popular culture but to every approach that invites us to enquire into aesthetic, rhetorical, imaginative and discursive processes.⁵⁷ Even if, at first glance, these are solely focused on entertainment and pleasure, that is, the key motives of popular culture.⁵⁸

6.5.1.2 Core paradigms of historical culture

Another approach to examining historical culture has been put forward by history educationalist Bernd Schönemann. He conceptualizes historical culture as culturally moulded communication that ‘produces, temporarily stores and transports history as meaning in a specific way’.⁵⁹ This is based on a heuristic approach that closely examines historico-cultural institutions, professions, media and audiences from a historical perspective.⁶⁰ Schönemann views historical culture as a social system, an approach grounded in the social theory of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Applying their model of the social construction of reality to the past, he presents history as the product of a collective process of construction.

In light of the four structural features of historical culture (institutions, professions, media and audiences), Schönemann identifies key paradigms in the history of ideas that inform the way the past is dealt with in different social and historical contexts in specific ways.

⁵⁶ See Stefanie Samida: ‘Leute machen Kleider oder Über das Selbermachen in der Populärkultur’, in: *Kieler Blätter zur Volkskunde* 52 (2020), 35–53.

⁵⁷ Pandel: *Geschichtsunterricht*, 40.

⁵⁸ See Christoph Bareither and Ingrid Tomkowiak: ‘Mediated Pasts – Popular Pleasures. Zur Einführung’, in: Christoph Bareither and Ingrid Tomkowiak (eds.): *Mediated Pasts. Medien und Praktiken populärkulturellen Erinnerns*, Würzburg 2020, 7–16, here 10.

⁵⁹ Schönemann: ‘Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtskultur’, 46.

⁶⁰ See Thünemann: ‘Geschichtskultur’, 136.

With respect to Western societies, Schönemann describes three successive paradigms, which are layered on top of each other rather than superseding each other.⁶¹ In the pre-modern era, for example, this was 'history as utility'. This paradigm corresponded with the idea that looking into the past and recounting history could serve, in quite specific ways, to produce warnings or role models to guide present-day action. This template was closely linked to the idea of the exemplary function of history, a notion that is still often propagated with reference to Cicero's phrase *historia magistra vitae* (*De oratore* 2.36). Reinhart Koselleck demonstrated that this template – or topos, to use his term – dominated the premodern form of time perception and temporality until it disappeared around 1900. According to Koselleck, it was only then that the plural 'histories' were replaced by the one singular history in the German-speaking world. Conversely, Schönemann dates this transition 100 years earlier, to the Age of Enlightenment. According to him, the second key paradigm, 'history as education' (*Bildung*), was established around 1800. This was linked to the claim that one could gain knowledge and wisdom, in the form of an intellectual possession, by engaging with the past. Finally, with respect to postmodern consumer society, Schönemann makes the sceptical and culturally pessimistic diagnosis of a 'surge of trivialisation', which he links with the paradigm of 'history as experience' (*Erlebnis*). Since the 1960s, he believes, institutions, professions, media and audiences have undergone only 'modest' processes of renewal.⁶² Above all, he contends, this ongoing phase is characterised by the incorporation of historical culture into an experiential market that no longer attaches much importance to utility or education, instead adhering to the capitalist principles of supply and demand, consumption and advertising, and making promises of experience to this end.

61 Schönemann: 'Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtskultur', 47.

62 Reinhart Koselleck: *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt a.M. 1989. Koselleck states, for example, of texts from the late eighteenth century: 'What they all had in common, however, was that they shattered the notion of the past event as a model, replacing it with the attempt to uncover the uniqueness of historical processes and their potential to progress' ('Allen gemeinsam aber war, daß sie die Modellhaftigkeit vergangener Ereignisse zertrümmerten, um an deren Stelle die Einmaligkeit geschichtlicher Abläufe und die Möglichkeit ihres Fortschritts aufzuspüren', *ibid.*, 56).

‘History
as play’

In his critique, however, Schönemann overlooks significant facts associated with the establishment of history within the experiential market that he views with such scepticism, facts that invite critical consideration. First, addressing a broader public when engaging with history can be understood as a democratisation process that gives historical knowledge an unprecedented reach. Second, a new mode of engaging with history is gaining ground. Contrary to the linear reception characteristic of the sender-receiver model so central to classical knowledge transmission, this focuses on interaction between history and the present as well as between narrators and recipients. Cultural anthropologist Bernhard Tschofen refers here to the ‘experience-orientated production of knowledge within historical culture’.⁶³ Schönemann’s idealized historico-cultural paradigm of ‘history as education’ envisages academic experts as the ‘professional trustees’⁶⁴ of historical culture. By way of contrast, the history found within the popular culture of contemporary ‘experience society’ (Schulze) actively invites us to approach it through practical action and thus self-experienced engagement – even without ‘strictly regulated examinations’.⁶⁵ In performative settings, wilful, pertinacious consumers become proactive prosumers,⁶⁶ who consume and produce at the same time. We no longer encounter history only as a source of admonition, or as something to marvel at and ponder. In contemporary representations, history is opened up as an interactive space for experience and creation. As a result, shifting away from its status as elitist object of knowledge, history has expanded through a wide variety of media, rendering it accessible to ever broader circles of society in the form of play. Examples include the trend towards creating more opportunities for interaction in museum exhibitions through hands-on areas and the use of historical settings in digital games and TV series. Given that, amid advancing digitization, history is increasingly to be found in participatory

63 Bernhard Tschofen: “Eingeatmete Geschichtsträchtigkeit”: Konzepte des Erlebens in der Geschichtskultur”, in: Sarah Willner et al. (eds.): *Doing History. Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur*, Münster 2016, 137–148, here 145.

64 Schönemann: ‘Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtskultur’, 52.

65 Ibid.

66 Birgit Blättel-Mink and Kai-Uwe Hellmann (eds.): *Prosumer Revisited. Zur Aktualität einer Debatte*, Wiesbaden 2010.

media cultures, we might consider the possibility that ‘history as play’ is now emerging as a key paradigm of historical culture.

In this context, it is also important to redefine the spheres of professions and audiences. Ever more offerings are inviting people to narrate history collaboratively, rather than merely receiving authorial narratives.⁶⁷ The Corona Archive (coronarchiv.de) at the universities of Hamburg and Bochum, and the blog ‘Alltag in der Krise’ (‘Everyday Life amid Crisis’, alltaginderkrise.org), maintained by the Freiburg Institute of Cultural Analysis/European Ethnology, are examples of this. From spring 2020, these online platforms allowed people to write about their own experiences or upload media relating to the period of everyday restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, thus creating a collaborative archive that invites users both to browse and to conduct research.

6.5.1.3 Levels of analysis according to Grever and Adriaansen

Above we reflected on the paradigm of ‘history as play’ and an approach centred on experience-orientated knowledge production. Both provide opportunities to interface with the three superordinate levels of analysis proposed by historians Maria Grever and Robert-Jan Adriaansen for the investigation of historico-cultural formations.⁶⁸ In contrast to Rösen’s dimensions theory, based on criteria of meaning, and Schönemann’s paradigms, which are derived from the study of manifest structural traits, Grever and Adriaansen enquire into processes and networks within historical culture.

In order to describe these, they identify three levels of analysis. The first level relates to historical narratives and performances. Grever and Adriaansen not only ask what is remembered, but above all how (‘the act of performing memory comprises a set of acts, which may be partly embodied in speech, but also in gestures, art or the body’),⁶⁹ who the actors involved in remembrance are, and in which contexts this takes place. Hence, the starting point of their analysis is *participatory historical culture*, which engenders the individual’s *participatory belonging* in a collective.

Narrative and
performance

⁶⁷ Thünemann: ‘Geschichtskultur’, 148.

⁶⁸ Grever and Adriaansen: ‘Historical Culture’, 78.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

Mnemonic
infrastructures

This participatory belonging or collective participation is also relevant to the second level of analysis, namely mnemonic infrastructures, such as anniversaries, museums and archives or landscapes of remembrance. Grever and Adriaansen view collective participation as the individual's engagement with the goals, roles and institutional rules of mnemonic infrastructures, which are essentially laid down by a nation state. Individual action and reflection do not necessarily take place in accordance with these rules, as the authors do not view the establishment of mnemonic infrastructures solely as a top-down process. They also classify resistant conduct as a form of collective participation, thus ascribing significance to alternative ways of appropriating the past.

Concepts of
history

As the third level, Grever and Adriaansen identify the analysis of underlying concepts of history. Here they problematise universalist conceptions of history against the background of alternative approaches to the past – be they premodern, non-Western or postcolonial. The limitations of the concept of historical culture, as typically discussed, come to the fore here, as it tends to presuppose the nineteenth-century Western concept of history while failing to thematise alternative perspectives.

6.5.2 Researching historical culture: Methodological approaches

In the following, we present methodologies that can be used to explore historical culture. The discipline of history, for example, provides a broad spectrum of established methods, to which Martin Lücke and Irmgard Zündorf refer in their introductory volume on public history. These include approaches revolving around material culture, visual history, sound history, oral history and living history.⁷⁰ In addition, participant observation provides special insights into the performative elements of historical culture. This is a core method of ethnographic research and can be described as reflective participation in social interactions, which is usually carried out over a lengthy period.⁷¹ It potentially provides a close-up view of historico-cultural meaning-making, facilitates the understanding of its embedding in everyday life and,

⁷⁰ Martin Lücke and Irmgard Zündorf: *Einführung in die Public History*, Göttingen 2018, 61–88.

⁷¹ Miriam Cohn: 'Teilnehmende Beobachtung', in: Christine Bischoff et al.: *Methoden der Kulturanthropologie*, Bern 2014, 71–84.

above all, conveys the diversity of the actors involved and their relationships. Doing things with people enables researchers to take a sensory and physical approach to historico-cultural practices that goes beyond the purely discursive level at which document analyses or interviews operate.⁷² From the material collected, they can inductively identify relevant themes and processes such as the appropriation of mnemonic infrastructures, the (re-)production of collective affiliations, and alternative concepts of history or references to the past.

6.5.2.1 The economic dimension of historical culture

In disciplines deploying ethnographic techniques, the methodological-theoretical approach differs from those operating with *a priori* levels of analysis and ideal normative types. The ethnographic study is guided by the principle of openness.⁷³ In this inductive method, data collection and data analysis alternate in a cyclical process, allowing researchers to adapt and modify their investigative foci and data collection in line with their (shifting) research object.⁷⁴ The principle of openness makes it possible to address the specific logics and structurally relevant aspects of a given field of research, which are sometimes marginalised due to a more normative-didactic understanding of historical culture. These aspects include, for example, the economic significance of historico-cultural practices. In her study on the conflicting interpretations and uses of Checkpoint Charlie, sociologist Sybille Frank, for example, brought out the potential significance of economic interests to the shaping of historical culture. For her, economic value creation is a core aspect of the ‘heritage industry’ at Checkpoint Charlie.⁷⁵ Drawing on Anglo-American research, she views this as a

Principle of
openness

72 Lydia Maria Arantes: ‘Kulturanthropologie und Wahrnehmung. Zur Sinnlichkeit in Feld und Forschung’, in: Lydia Maria Arantes and Elisa Rieger (eds.): *Ethnographien der Sinne. Wahrnehmung und Methode in empirisch-kulturwissenschaftlichen Forschungen*, Bielefeld 2014, 23–38.

73 Christa Hoffmann-Riem: ‘Die Sozialforschung einer interpretativen Soziologie. Der Datengewinn’, in: *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 32/2 (1980), 339–372, here 343.

74 Georg Breidenstein et al: ‘Zur Herstellung des Feldes’, in: Georg Breidenstein et al. (eds.): *Ethnografie. Die Praxis der Feldforschung*, Munich and Konstanz 2015, 45–70.

75 Sybille Frank: ‘Grenzwerte. Zur Formation der “Heritage Industry” am Berliner Checkpoint Charlie’, in: Dorothee Hemme et al. (eds.): *Prädikat ‘Heritage Industry’. Wertschöpfungen aus kulturellen Ressourcen*, Berlin 2007, 297–322, here 298.

‘(history) industry that emerged in the course of post-Fordism, one in which a variety of public and private actors compete for interpretive sovereignty over history; in this context, the number and influence of private actors have increased in line with the withdrawal of state and local authorities from the cultivation of public history and to the extent that historical culture has diversified, while also becoming intertwined with a globalising leisure and tourism industry’.⁷⁶

The diversification of historical culture and its links with the leisure and tourism industry become particularly evident in light of the conflict, which Frank investigated, over the interpretation and utilisation of Checkpoint Charlie in 2004. Berlin drama students were posing for photographs for tourists in front of a replica Allied checkpoint booth, initially dressed as East German police officers and later as US soldiers. This incurred the displeasure of the director of the privately run Haus am Checkpoint Charlie museum. Along with some Stasi victims’ associations, she criticised not just the ‘degradation’ of the historic site through the actors’ performance. According to Frank, she also tried to exclude unwelcome competitors in the struggle for tourist attention and consumption by having the checkpoint booth covered up without further ado. Due to the international popularity of this site of remembrance, this in turn not only attracted the attention of the press from all over the world, but also sparked renewed criticism from some victims’ associations and Berlin politicians, who saw this as a private and therefore illegitimate appropriation of the checkpoint. The dispute was finally settled by the Berlin Senate, which ordered the uncovering of the checkpoint hut and introduced new traffic regulations to make it more difficult for the students to perform. What this conflict shows is the heterogeneity of the actors who have risen to prominence due to state agencies’ withdrawal from the public preservation of history and its opening up to private agents. It also points up the associated economic value creation. This diversification of actors and interests underlines the need for methodological openness, irrespective of normative ideas, as this allows us to analyse historical culture as the result of complex negotiation processes.

Rüsen’s dimensions of historical culture would, therefore, have to be supplemented by the economic dimension, as the assumption

76 Ibid.

that history is constituted solely by emotion, will and understanding clearly falls short. It soon becomes clear how limiting it is to describe the privately run Haus am Checkpoint Charlie museum solely with reference to the aesthetic, political and cognitive dimensions, as proposed by Rösen. These scarcely capture how firms' efforts to cover running costs, such as rent and staff wages, affect representations.

6.5.2.2 Media analysis, or: Knowledge circulation within historical culture

To explore mass media representations of history, including those in the past, media studies can provide us with useful methodological tools. Two basic approaches can be distinguished. First, some scholars focus on the product that represents history, examining phenomena such as radio broadcasts, exhibitions, (digital) games, films and books. Others foreground production itself, that is, the creating of a product. In both cases, the question arises as to how the past was or is received, negotiated and ultimately represented by contemporaries at a given time.

Objects of investigation may be any mass media representation that, as a 'mirror of the present',⁷⁷ provides less information about the era depicted than about how it was imagined at a certain time.⁷⁸ Such productions take the form of subjective discursive acts, intentional constructions of past reality designed to convey a specific idea about the past in order to appeal to as large an audience as possible. The main aim of analysis in this context is to reconstruct the ideas and motivations of the producers, in other words the editors, directors of films or plays, journalists, academics who may be involved, and so on. Such analysis enquires into the guiding precepts, norms and values implicitly or explicitly expressed in these productions.⁷⁹

Objects of
investigation

77 Miriam Sénécheau: 'Neues vom Neandertaler? Ur- und Frühgeschichte in Unterrichtsfilmen', in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 63/3–4 (2012), 187–213, here 189; Patricia Rahemipour: 'Faszinierend Fremd. Einige Aspekte zum Bild des Fremden im Archäologiefilm', in: Kurt Denzer (ed.): *Funde, Filme, falsche Freunde. Der Archäologiefilm im Dienst von Profit und Propaganda*, Kiel 2003, 191–200, here 198.

78 See Günter Riederer: 'Den Bilderschatz heben – Vom schwierigen Verhältnis zwischen Geschichtswissenschaft und Film', in: Moshe Zuckermann (ed.): *Medien – Politik – Geschichte*, Göttingen 2003, 15–39, here 21.

79 See Tobias Ebbrecht: *Geschichtsbilder im medialen Gedächtnis. Filmische Narrationen des Holocaust*, Bielefeld 2011, 10; Nora Hilgert: *Unterhaltung, aber sicher!*

This history-of-knowledge approach helps tease out the actions and thoughts of contemporaries under ever-changing conditions of space, time and society.

Analysing the
visual, auditory
and narrative
spheres

We now trace how such media analysis might be configured with reference to television documentaries. An apt analytical tool in this context is a hermeneutic-interpretative approach,⁸⁰ which can ‘bring to light hidden meanings within polysemic audiovisual works and highlight the structures of the act of creating’.⁸¹ This hermeneutic endeavour is rooted in an analysis of the visual, auditory and narrative dimensions as three levels that ‘elaborately intertwine and [weave] a dense web of meanings’ within productions.⁸² This close examination of the three levels, in which, according to Günter Riederer, ‘particles of information [. . .] can be precisely combined in such a way that they convey a single meaning’,⁸³ goes beyond the investigation of content alone to probe this meaning, which is intended to appeal to the audience.⁸⁴

Television and
emotions

In addition to images, in television documentaries an important role is played by the soundscape of music, sounds, voices and commentary. The combination of ‘music and images, it is commonly assumed, is ideally suited to evoking emotions in the listener and viewer – emotions that in turn guide or obstruct historical insight and reflection’.⁸⁵ These emotions appear to be particularly attractive in the television context.⁸⁶ Audiovisual representations, after all, not only reach the intellect, but are, above all, ‘a highly effective medium

Populäre Repräsentationen von Recht und Ordnung in den Fernsehkrimis ‘Stahl-netz’ und ‘Blaulicht’, 1958/59–1968, Bielefeld 2013, 43.

⁸⁰ See Knut Hieckethier: *Film- und Fernsehanalyse*, 5th expanded and updated edn., Stuttgart and Weimar 2012, 32.

⁸¹ Olaf Jacobs and Theresa Lorenz: *Wissenschaft fürs Fernsehen. Dramaturgie – Gestaltung – Darstellungsformen*, Wiesbaden 2014, 172.

⁸² Riederer: ‘Bilderschatz’, 26; cf. Hilgert: *Unterhaltung*, 48.

⁸³ Riederer: ‘Bilderschatz’, 29.

⁸⁴ See Lothar Mikos: ‘Qualitative Verfahren’, in: Wolfgang Schweiger and Andreas Fahr (eds.): *Handbuch Medienwirkungsforschung*, Wiesbaden 2013, 627–640, here 635.

⁸⁵ Ute Frevert and Anne Schmidt: ‘Geschichte, Emotionen und die Macht der Bilder’, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 37/1 (2011), 5–25, here 14.

⁸⁶ See Joan K. Bleicher: *Fernsehen als Mythos. Poetik eines narrativen Erkenntnis-systems*, Opladen and Wiesbaden 1999, 287.

for the creation of tension and arousing of emotions'.⁸⁷ It is this mechanism that underpins television's potential to appeal to a mass audience. History documentaries with educational aspirations also draw on this potential inherent in the medium, making it essential for researchers to get to grips with their emotional quality.⁸⁸

It should be noted that the interweaving of information and emotion is crucial to documentaries' narrative structure. This fits with the point made by rhetoricians Anne Ulrich and Joachim Knappe that the interplay of image and sound opens up a special rhetorical potential.⁸⁹ Historian Anke Hilgert is also convinced that what is heard and what is seen interweave to form a narrative – or that the assemblage of auditory and visual elements is underpinned by a narrative structure constructed by those involved in the production,⁹⁰ a structure that can be extracted from TV programmes. This involves teasing out their era-specific references to prevailing discourses, which go a long way to explaining the medium's appeal.⁹¹

This form of television analysis ultimately allows us to make inferences about contemporary norms, attitudes and values.⁹² Riederer takes the view that academic historiography, as well as popular historical films, engage in a politics of history, with both aspiring to organise the discourse on the past.⁹³ We might also ask how knowledge about the past is negotiated between academia and television. How is such knowledge fit into a contemporary context and ultimately incorporated into documentaries?

Examination of television documentaries aims to probe the interweaving of image, sound and narration in order to tease out the causalities and interdependencies they convey. What explicit or even implicit conclusion is drawn in documentaries? What 'morality' do they present and which value judgements do they transmit to viewers? Television documentaries must be seen as the result of a preceding transfer of knowledge, and as the starting point for subse-

Television
does a lot of
persuading

Media as
historico-political
actors

⁸⁷ Riederer: 'Bilderschatz', 27.

⁸⁸ See Frevert and Schmidt: 'Geschichte', 24.

⁸⁹ See Anne Ulrich and Joachim Knappe: *Medienrhetorik des Fernsehens. Begriff und Konzepte*, Bielefeld 2014, 20.

⁹⁰ Hilgert: *Unterhaltung*, 51.

⁹¹ See *ibid.*, 53.

⁹² See Riederer: 'Bilderschatz', 21.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 26.

quent discussions and productions. The analyst will ideally explain the narrative models inherent in them in light of their period of origin, while also placing them in a social context.

6.6 Historical culture as a key concept in public history

The notion of historical culture, originating in history didactics, has established itself in German-speaking research as an umbrella term for society's approach to history. If it is to serve as a useful tool for public history, it is vital to overcome the dichotomy (sometimes implicit) in its use to date between scholarship on the one hand and popular and entertainment culture on the other. This can be achieved chiefly through a more open and interdisciplinary methodological-theoretical approach that encompasses reflection on historico-cultural reality in all its breadth and complexity, including its economic and entertainment-related aspects. A concept of historical culture developed in this way could serve as a key concept in public history, facilitating examination of the construction of history in past and present societies. The existing theoretical models presented here can both stimulate the ongoing conceptual development of historical culture and expand the study of historical culture itself, while also establishing it as a major concept in interdisciplinary and international academic discourse.

Introductory literature

- Grever, Maria and Adriaansen, Robbert-Jan: 'Historical Culture: A Concept Revisited', in: Mario Carretero et al. (eds.): *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, Basingstoke 2016, 73–89.
- Rüsen, Jörn: 'Was ist Geschichtskultur? Überlegungen zu einer neuen Art, über Geschichte nachzudenken', in: Klaus Füßmann et al. (eds.): *Historische Faszination. Geschichtskultur heute*, Cologne 1994, 3–26.
- Thünemann, Holger: 'Geschichtskultur revisited. Versuch einer Bilanz nach drei Jahrzehnten', in: Thomas Sandkühler and Horst Walter Blanke (eds.): *Historisierung der Historik. Jörn Rüsen zum 80. Geburtstag*, Cologne and Weimar 2018, 127–150.

7 Historical imagination

7.1 Introduction

In December 1964, Peter Weiss, a German author of Jewish descent living in Sweden, travelled to Oświęcim for the first time, deeply affected by the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials. His destination was the Auschwitz memorial and museum. The author processed the impressions arising from this encounter, which also confronted him with a painful aspect of his own family history, in an impressive literary essay.¹ Here, Weiss describes his attempt to use all his senses at the historical site to form a picture of the countless murders perpetrated there. The image in his mind, which he seeks to put into words, is quite different from the one conveyed to the German public in the Frankfurt courtroom at the same time. Far from an objective stock-taking or an exact description of the magnitude of the crimes, his essay is testimony to his struggle to get as close as possible to the victims' experience. Weiss tries to empathise with those who suffered and died in this place. For this empathetic imagining, he draws on his own knowledge, his own associations, as well as the historical traces marked on site. At Auschwitz railway station, Weiss 'hears' the arriving goods trains and the whistles of the locomotives, he 'smells' the 'lumbering smoke', he 'feels' the 'watery fog' in the barracks and 'sinks' repeatedly into the 'marshy earth'.² His imaginings derive their vividness in part from the photographs of the camp taken by the SS in 1944. In large-format reproductions, these accompany present-day visitors to the memorial site on their journey through the former Birkenau camp, such as 'the image of the women and children encamped there, a woman is carrying an infant at her breast, and in the background a group is moving to the subterranean chambers'.³ In addition to these well-known pictorial icons, the author taps into his own mental images, linking them to his present: 'This is where

1 Peter Weiss: 'My Place.' In: *German Writing Today*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967, 20–28.

2 *Ibid.*, 22 and 25.

3 *Ibid.*, 26.

they went, in slow procession, coming from all parts of Europe, this is the horizon they could still see'.⁴

Limits of the
imagination

However, while the photographs, as historico-cultural representations, blend with the author's own mental images to form this imaginary of past suffering, he remains aware that the gap between the past and his own present is ultimately insurmountable. This realisation points to the experience of alterity as the core of the encounter with history, underscoring the limits of the individual's imagination as they engage with the past. The author's conclusion, which emphasises the tension between imagination and reality, is sobering:

A living person came, and what happened is closed off from this living person. The living person who comes here, from another world, possesses nothing but his knowledge of figures, of written reports, of testimonies, they are a part of his life, he grapples with them, but can only comprehend what happens to himself.⁵

Although the history of the annihilation of European Jewry has a special biographical relevance to Peter Weiss as the son of an assimilated German Jew (he calls Auschwitz 'a place for which I was destined and which I evaded'),⁶ his essay describes the limits of his historical imagination in a particularly powerful way. Just as the Holocaust makes the limits of representation clear,⁷ grappling with this history provides unique insights into the limits of understanding. The author can vividly imagine what people suffered in Auschwitz. In view of the scale of the mass murder, however, he can never fully understand.

The history of the Holocaust places particularly tight constraints on the imagination. In principle, our imaginative faculty allows us to come closer to past events – but not to relive them or to feel what was once felt. This insight is underlined by the observations of scholars dedicated to the history of emotions (see Chapter 3). The limits of empathy as well as the boundaries of imagination are rooted in historical change. People today do not have the same (nor even necessarily a similar) 'space of experience and horizon of expectations'

4 Ibid., 27.

5 Ibid., 28.

6 Ibid., 20.

7 See Saul Friedlaender (ed.): *Probing the Limits of Representation. Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*, Cambridge (MA) and London 1992.

as people in the past.⁸ Historical imaginaries, that is, those arising through the encounter with history, allow us to draw near to the past only in a limited sense.

7.2 Historical imagination and historical sense-making

In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant initially defines the faculty of imagination in very basic terms as ‘the faculty for representing an object in intuition even without its presence’.⁹ Since the past is by its very nature absent and history is the product of attempts to represent the past in the present, the imagination has always played a central role in the engagement with history. The question remains as to how precisely historical sense-making occurs through the process of historical imagining. For a close-up analytical view, it seems useful to conceptualize the process of imagination as an interplay between subjective and socially pre-structured conditions and products.

Fundamentally, the process of imagination requires sympathy and interest. Peter Weiss’s struggle with mental images brings out the subjective and intuitive contribution to the imagination, which draws on individual memories, emotions and perceptions of the world, that is, on the mental baggage – metaphorically speaking – that everyone brings along when they encounter history. This pre-structures one’s view of the past. It is also evident that the imagination is socially preconditioned. Not only is our mental baggage replete with everyday notions of history, that is, prior concepts,¹⁰ but

Imagination
as a conception
of the absent

Individual ideas and
historico-cultural
products as
preconditions
of imagination

⁸ Reinhart Koselleck: *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Cambridge 1985, 267.

⁹ Quoted in Andrew Stephenson: Kant on the Object-Dependence of Intuition and Hallucination, in: *Philosophical Quarterly*, 260/65 (2025), 486–508, here 498. Jochen Schulte-Sasse: ‘Einbildungskraft/Imagination’, in: Karlheinz Barck (ed.): *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, vol. 2: *Dekadent-Grotesk*, Stuttgart etc. 2010, 88–120, here 114.

¹⁰ See Monika Fenn: ‘Conceptual Change von Vorstellungen über epistemologische Basiskonzepte bei Grundschülerinnen und -schülern fördern? Ergebnisse einer explorativen Interventionsstudie’, in: Monika Fenn (ed.): *Frühes Historisches Lernen. Projekte und Perspektiven empirischer Forschung*, Frankfurt a. M. 2018, 146–199, here 146.

the process of imagination also requires stimuli capable of igniting it. In the following, all historico-cultural forms, that is, products of public history, are considered as potential triggers. In such contexts, we can both scrutinise individual ideas and reconstruct socially specific patterns of reception. With respect to Peter Weiss, for example, readers learn that he himself comes from a Jewish family, while the title 'My Place' in itself indicates just how much he sees Auschwitz-Birkenau as a personal 'place of destiny'.

Imaginative processes take place in a black box

While we can describe the preconditions for imagination, the mental process of imagination itself defies straightforward reconstruction. Currently, there are few empirical instruments that allow us to fathom imaginations in the encounter with historical representations, because the associated processes cannot be rendered visible; they essentially occur within a 'black box'.

Images of history are the result of historical imagination

But just like the preconditions for individual imagination, its results may well be discernible, especially when articulated as expressively as in Peter Weiss's essay. In the following, we refer to these results as images of history, which find articulation in various media formats. Images of history must be understood as an assemblage of ideas and interpretations of past reality to which a person or a group of people ascribe validity. They are thus snapshots of subjective interpretations of past reality based on historical ideas and informed by supposedly secure historical knowledge that is communicated and shared by groups. Seen in this light, 'My Place' is an example of the image of history held by German-Swedish author Peter Weiss in 1964, drawn from his own family history and public narratives surrounding the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial and thus reliant on era-specific communicative memory. Here, then, we can discern the core elements of images of history, elements that are simultaneously preconditions for historical imagination: personal historical ideas (moulded by family narratives, among other things) and publicly communicated and represented conceptions of history.

The productive and pertinacious aspect of historical meaning-making

This perspective on imagination allows us to focus on the individual, productive and pertinacious aspects of historical sense-making. Imagination has to be seen as a hybrid process of appropriation. It is a process that draws on individual emotions and experiences and is influenced by socially and culturally specific patterns of reception and products of reception. The result is historical meaning-making that is both individually wilful and socially structured. In addition, historical imagination is a productive feat of sense-making,

because it is only in its outcomes, that is, particular images of history (in whatever medial form), that the imagination comes into play as a process of appropriation. In this respect, while imagination may be difficult to depict, it is nevertheless a key process that occurs in the field of tension between the perception of publicly available history and personal appropriation and processing. Imagination stands in proximity with the key concepts of experience (see Chapter 4), reception (see Chapter 11), emotions (see Chapter 3), historical thinking (see Chapter 8) and performativity (see Chapter 10).

The productive power of the concept of imagination for public history arises from the fact that public history products can serve as triggers for the imaginative process, while images of history, as the outcome of the imaginative process, can feed into public history formats or influence their construction.

In the following, the first goal is to tease out what is meant by imagination and how imagination has been conceptualised across disciplines in the past. In a second step, we bring together existing ideas produced by history didactics and historical theory. Building on this, we describe historical imagination as a tool of knowledge generation within public history.

7.3 Imagination in historical theory

Until the late eighteenth century, the term imagination (Latin: *imaginatio*, Greek: *phantasia*) was used to characterise a ‘low ability’ within the mental faculty.¹¹ It was considered ‘low’ because it appeared to be dependent on the senses and thus limited in comparison to pure reason (Latin: *ratio*).¹² At the same time, a conceptual-historical connection to the senses and emotions was forged within this early conception of imagination, a link that still exists today. This was underscored in *Grimm’s dictionary* (*Grimmsches Wörterbuch*):

Fichte, Schelling and others use the word in a broad sense, to encompass every instance of the generation of notions, even those that are involuntary or excited by the senses. We state that *he has a vivid power of imagination*

Imagination was epistemologically dubious until around 1800

¹¹ Schulte-Sasse: ‘Einbildungskraft/Imagination’, 94.

¹² *Ibid.*

(*einbildungskraft*) in cases where mere *imagination* (*einbildung*) or *fancy* (*phantasie*) would suffice. Fancy is a power or faculty of the mind.¹³

On this view, imagination was epistemologically and morally questionable. This changed around 1800.

The valorisation
of imagination
as the capacity
for creative
conceptualisation

With the emergence of the modern philosophy of consciousness and the accompanying subject-orientation, the concept of imagination was reevaluated as various thinkers sought to emancipate sensibility from reason and emphasised the creative element involved in human beings' efforts to orient themselves within the world. Aesthetic and sensory perception thus became an independent, equally important way of perceiving the world. Imagination took on a special significance as a capacity for conceptualisation, an ability to think the past and future. According to Jochen Schulte-Sasse, this corresponded to a fundamental shift in 'human orientation in space and time'.¹⁴ Imagination was ascribed the potential to 'bridge the gap between reality and imagined possibility'. It could 'imbue the real with content' and thus 'bring together past, present and future'.¹⁵ With this new dimension, imagination not only became the 'flip side of a chronological concept of time', but – taken to its logical conclusion – also a key heuristic method of historiography.¹⁶ For what would historical understanding be without the possibility of approaching past lifeworlds through the imagination? Without the capacity for imaginative visualisation, history and historiography are inconceivable.

Historical
Verstehen or
understanding
in the work of
Wilhelm Dilthey

Hence, the crucial theoretical prerequisites for a concept of historical imagination go back to historicism. Though Wilhelm Dilthey uses the concept of imagination only in passing,¹⁷ it is worth recalling his humanistic methodology and his concept of *Verstehen* ('understanding' as a holistic, reflective mode of enquiry). According to Dilthey, *Verstehen*, much like imagination, can build a bridge between

¹³ Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm: *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 3, col. 153, Munich 1984.

¹⁴ Schulte-Sasse: 'Einbildungskraft/Imagination', 98.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ All quotes *ibid.*, 101.

¹⁷ See Wilhelm Dilthey: 'Die Einbildungskraft des Dichters. Bausteine für eine Poetik', in: *Philosophische Aufsätze. Eduard Zeller zu seinem fünfzigjährigen Doctor-Jubiläum gewidmet*, Leipzig 1887, 303–482.

present and past in order to approach the past as other. Dilthey views the process of *Verstehen* as based on a fundamental similarity between the inquirer and what is understood. This similarity allows us to transpose (*Hineinversetzen*) and reconstruct (*Nachbilden*) (Dilthey) other people's feelings, so that we can relive their experiences. Dilthey thus assigned feelings an epistemological significance in the process of *Verstehen*.¹⁸

In light of these ideas, it is no great leap to grasp the importance of imagination to historical knowledge – an insight formulated with particular force in twentieth-century reflections in the philosophy of history. French philosopher Paul Ricœur described three different ways of thinking the past: as 're-enactment' (under the sign of the same), as 'negative ontology' (under the sign of the other) and as a 'tropological approach' (under the sign of the analogous).¹⁹ What all three have in common, Ricœur tells us, is that they focus on 'representing something to oneself in the sense of giving oneself a mental image of some absent external thing (*sich vorstellen*):'²⁰

'Re-enactment', Ricœur tells us, 'dull[s] the sting of [...] temporal distance' from the past. This, then, is a form of 'de-distanciation' and thus 'identification with what once was'.²¹ Ricœur states that Robin George Collingwood was his source with respect to the process of 'reenactment'. The main argument in Collingwood's philosophy of history is that historiography is anything but objective and neutral: in reality, it is composed in language and is thus shaped by the writer's ways of seeing the world and view of history. In Collingwood's work, the historical imagination appears as the crucial starting point for all historical knowledge. It has the 'special task to imagine the past: not an object of possible perception, since it does not now exist,

Paul Ricœur
and the
imagination
as the basis of
historical
knowledge

¹⁸ See Daniel Morat: 'Verstehen als Gefühlsmethode. Zu Wilhelm Diltheys hermeneutischer Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften', in: Uffa Jensen and Daniel Morat (eds.): *Rationalisierungen des Gefühls. Zum Verhältnis von Wissenschaft und Emotionen 1880–1930*, Munich 2008, 101–117.

¹⁹ Paul Ricœur: *Time and Narrative, Vol 3*, Chicago 1988, 142–156.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 144.

but able through this activity to become an object of our thought'.²² It is on these ideas that his concept of reenactment is based.²³

The historian's picture of his subject, whether that subject be a sequence of events or a past state of things, thus appears as a web of imaginative construction stretched between certain fixed points provided by the statements of his authorities.²⁴

According to Ricœur, in Collingwood's work the reenactment of the past is the result 'aimed at through the interpretation of the documents and the constructions of imagination'.²⁵

Imagination as
distancing
from the past

In the case of 'negative ontology', which Ricœur places under the 'sign of the "other"', the imaginative capacity centres on difference, experience of the other and 'affirmation of otherness'.²⁶ In this case, the feat of imagination consists of perceiving the past as the unfamiliar, as the other. Ricœur sees this form of imagination as an act of 'taking a distance'; the past is understood in its entirety as the other, which stands in contrast to the self. Taken to a radical conclusion, this form of knowing the past would disregard the fact that traces of the past remain in our present. 'This is why, paradoxically, the enigma of temporal distance seems more opaque at the end of this cleansing labor.'²⁷

Imagination
as analogical
understanding

As a mediating element between identification with the past and complete distancing from it, Ricœur introduced a third modus operandi, namely imagination as a 'topological approach' under the 'sign of the analogous'.²⁸ In order to make the past imaginable, in other words to represent it, he contends, one requires narrative structures and models. The paradox 'that we can only designate what happened prior to any narrative by first prefiguring it' ultimately

²² Robin G. Collingwood: *The Idea of History. Revised Edition*, Oxford 2005 [1946], 242.

²³ See William H. Dray: *History as Re-Enactment. R. G. Collingwood's Idea of History*, Oxford 1995, 191.

²⁴ Collingwood: *The Idea of History*, 242.

²⁵ Ricœur: *Time and Narrative, Vol 3*, 144.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

leaves no other option than to represent history under the sign of the analogous.²⁹

These fundamental ideas about historical imagination expounded by Ricœur give rise to two key challenges for historical thinking. The first is the ambivalent field of tension between identification and distancing in which one's grappling with the past takes place. The second is the fact that the products of historical imagination are composed in linguistic form, tell a story (or stories), and are therefore *per se* interpretations and instances of meaning formation. These two insights are central to operationalising historical imagination for use in history didactics.

7.4 Historical imagination as a concept in history didactics

In the example with which we began, Peter Weiss sought to achieve this active recreation and reliving: he drew on signals and sensations familiar to him, such as the whistling of a locomotive or freezing in the bitter cold, as stimuli for the process of empathising. These sensory stimuli were rooted in his own lifeworld, recalling Dilthey's reference to 'the inherent vitality' (*der eigenen Lebendigkeit*) of the person engaged in understanding (*Verstehen*).³⁰ But in contrast to historical understanding (*Verstehen*), through which Dilthey believed the distance between self and other could be overcome by common ground, Weiss became painfully aware of the impossibility of bridging this gap.

The failure of the emotional method in Weiss's case clearly marks the limits of understanding and familiarisation as presented in Dilthey's hermeneutic method. From what reservoir of subjective experiences and feelings should the present-day person seeking

The tension between familiarisation and the experience of distance

²⁹ Ibid., 152. Here, Ricœur argues with reference to Hayden White and the linguistic constitution of history through rhetorical figures; see Hayden White: *Tropics of Discourses. Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Baltimore 1978.

³⁰ Wilhelm Dilthey: 'Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik', in: Wilhelm Dilthey: *Die geistige Welt. Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens. Erste Hälfte: Abhandlung zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften (Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 5)*, Göttingen 1961 (1900), 317–338, here 318.

understanding draw in order to visualise the incomprehensibly alien history of mass murder? Those in search of understanding would have a hard time gaining empathetic access to such extermination in light of their ‘inherent vitality’. Thus historical understanding (*Verstehen*) according to Dilthey is only a starting point, one that highlights the way in which the encounter with history activates subjective imaginaries. With their help, actors can make meaning in a way that relies less on empathy and more on the imagination as a power that ‘imbues the real with content’, as a capacity for conceptualisation, as a form of ‘disciplined fancy’³¹ that factors in the experience of alterity as always inherent in the historical imagination, an experience that does not necessarily have to be overcome.

Constructs of history are narrative means of sense-making

In light of Collingwood’s reflections, it is clear that historians must fill in the gaps or interstices left by ‘the statements of [their] authorities’ with their own imagination. Here they are propelled by their own *a priori* feats of imagination, to which Collingwood ascribes a particularly artistic and creative role.³² Logically, this means that all presentations of the past are constructs of history and thus products of specific historical imaginaries. This applies just as much to academic historiography as it does to historical novels or films. These products differ fundamentally in their empirical grounding, but both are the results of historical imaginaries. ‘At times, a silence in the sources compels historians to use their imagination,’ states Natalie Zemon Davis. At the same time, historians clearly ought to make this imaginative content of their accounts discernible. ‘To make the truth content of our statements apparent to others, we use words such as “presumably” and “we can imagine”, or qualify our verbs with the likes of “could” and “possibly”’.³³ Here, Davis underlines the conscious act of rendering imaginable as a means of filling gaps in the source material with reasonable deductions from parallel sources. But it can also be argued more broadly that imagination is the core cognitive mode through which the past becomes history.

Rolf Schörken and imagination as a ‘historical method’

In view of this elementary importance of imagination to the writing of history, it is surprising that history didactics pays it so little

³¹ Schulte-Sasse: ‘Einbildungskraft/Imagination’, 101.

³² See also Dray: *History as Re-Enactment*.

³³ Natalie Zemon Davis: ‘Imagination’, in: Mario Wimmer and Anne Kwaschik (eds.): *Von der Arbeit des Historikers. Ein Wörterbuch zu Theorie und Praxis der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Bielefeld 2010, 107–110, here 109.

attention. One important exception to this is history didactician Rolf Schörken, who has put forward relevant ideas about the topic and tried to establish ‘historical imagination’ as a key category in history didactics from the mid-1990s onward.³⁴ For Schörken, imagination is an ‘interpretative act of cognition’ and therefore a ‘historical method’.³⁵

Schörken views the imagination as a ‘mental faculty’³⁶ that is always already involved in every cognitive act of interpretation, reception and reconstruction of the past. He thus locates it not only at the start but at the ‘hallowed core of strict historiographical methods’.³⁷ In the process of historical imagination, ‘internal mental images [arise] that are linked to the reception of history. They are a basic element – albeit one that is difficult to grasp – in the comprehension of history’.³⁸ Historical visualisation means making something in the past ‘imaginable’.³⁹ The aim of this visualisation is to familiarise oneself with the past, to ‘give the past the quality of a new reality of consciousness and turn it into an experiential space that one can visit, and in which one can conduct oneself as if in another present’⁴⁰ (see Chapter 4, ‘Experience’).

To summarise, the historical imagination is the engine of historical knowledge. This means that the visualisation of history – whether as a means of bringing it closer to us and taking the ‘sting out of its otherness’ (*Stachel des Fremden nehmen*) or as a tool for constructing history as other – is the central epistemic mode through which the appropriation and representation of pasts takes place. This is the mental process of ‘meaning-making through temporal experience’ (Jörn Rüsen) so characteristic of historical consciousness.

³⁴ See Rolf Schörken: *Historische Imagination und Geschichtsdidaktik*, Paderborn etc. 1994; Rolf Schörken: *Begegnungen mit Geschichte. Vom außerwissenschaftlichen Umgang mit der Historie in Literatur und Medien*, Stuttgart 1995; Rolf Schörken: ‘Imagination und geschichtliches Verstehen’, in: *Neue Sammlung. Vierteljahres-Zeitschrift für Erziehung und Gesellschaft* 38/2 (1998), 203–212.

³⁵ Schörken: *Historische Imagination*, 13 and 16.

³⁶ Schörken: ‘Imagination und geschichtliches Verstehen’, 207.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

³⁸ Schörken: *Historische Imagination*, 34.

³⁹ Schörken: *Begegnungen mit Geschichte*, 12.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

Traces of the
past as a
starting point
for the
imagination

The task and challenge that arises when encountering history, as in the case of Peter Weiss, is the imaginative visualisation of a time that one has not experienced oneself, whether it was two thousand or just seventy years ago, whether it involves everyday experience or that of war and mass murder. At issue here are past events. Yet the past itself is not perceptible; historical sites typically feature no more than sparse material remains and indications of what once happened there. In this context, Schörken uses Paul Ricœur's concept of the 'trace', which leads us to a 'reality that is no longer present' and with the help of which it is supposedly possible to gain access to the past.⁴¹ On this view, the trace refers to something past that has literally gone by (*vorübergegangen ist*) and has taken on more or less visible material form.⁴² The trace 'exercises a function of "taking the place of [*lieutenance*], of "standing-for" [*représentance*] or *Vertretung*'.⁴³

For Schörken, all forms of remains and sources are traces that reference something in the past. Only when a trace is emphasised or marked as such does it invite us to draw conclusions, enquire into its meaning and thus stimulate the sense-making process. The viewer's imagination is ignited by the trace. It is the starting point for the imagination, from which historical mental images emerge as 'imagined life contexts'. According to Schörken, the historical visualisation undergirded by the imagination consists of the constructive act of 'filling an imagined world with life, that is, populating it with figures, furnishing it with localities, stocking it with events and actions, contexts, meanings, problems and their solutions'.⁴⁴ Schörken's concept of the imagined life context points to the intuitive, emotional and constructive dimension of every instance of reception and reconstruction of the past. In contrast to Dilthey's ideas, here the mental images available for this purpose in any given case are not based solely on subjective experience, but also on medial representations, cultural imprints and historical interpretations, with which the lived reality of those engaged in understanding (*Verstehen*) is always already interwoven.

⁴¹ Schörken: *Historische Imagination*, 16.

⁴² Ricœur: *Time and Narrative*, vol 3, 119.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁴⁴ All quotes from Schörken: *Begegnungen mit Geschichte*, 14.

7.5 Imagination in public history

Such medial representations and cultural interpretations bring us to the field of public history. Based on the theoretical considerations presented so far, we will therefore conclude by enquiring into the potential of the concept of historical imagination for a theory of public history. To this end, we return to the concept of the trace. The historical trace that triggers the historical imagination may be faint: a coin indicating a past culture or fragments of ancient columns marking the presence of a temple. For many an expert, these traces may be enough to trigger the historical imagination. In most cases, however, hints, interpretations, additional explanations and interpretive services are needed if people are to pay attention to and develop an interest in the trace. Traces thus become historico-cultural representations, products of public history, into which socially and culturally specific interpretations are then woven. The nature of historical traces and the commentary upon them determine what sort of imaginative feat is required. It makes a big difference whether visitors to an ancient archaeological site are invited to imagine life in a Roman city based solely on the remains of columns, whether explanatory panels describe what the site may have looked like in earlier times, and whether viewers can, as it were, stroll through the ancient streets themselves with the help of a virtual reality application, observing everyday life as digitally reproduced. The column remnant requires a different kind of historical imagination, as it leaves more room for creative, wilful historical sense-making. The virtual reality app is more of an invitation to consume; it presents prefabricated images of history. The less clearly traces are marked and contextualised, the greater the demand on the individual imagination to fill in historical contexts with people, actions and meanings.

Rolf Schörken's reflections within the framework of history didactics entail a clear value judgement about the degree of this prefabrication of the imagination by imagery. He clearly favours linguistic representations of the past over pictorial ones. Texts, for him, are sufficiently open to allow images to arise in the mind, while visual representations, and especially films, severely restrict the imagination: 'Watching a film nips in the bud one's own potential to generate

The nature of a trace determines the intensity of the imagination

Imagination and language

internal images.⁴⁵ Schörken's privileging of texts and language in connection with imagination is chiefly due to the influence of the literary reception theory of Wolfgang Iser, which conceptualises reading as an active and constructive process. The debate on the narrativity of history also plays a role here. It is no coincidence that the subtitle of Hayden White's book *Metahistory*, so central to this debate, is 'The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe'.⁴⁶ When writing and narrativising history, historians always add something. For White, this additional element is the result of historical imagination. For Schörken, however, even such narrative representations of history leave enough room for readers' own imagination.

Public history products as result of and trigger for imagination

We endorse this interpretation of ways of writing and reading historical representations. But this interpretation does not mean that very similar mechanisms cannot be at work when people create and view historical images or, conversely, that historical imagination must always be put into language.⁴⁷ Pictorial or filmic representations of history must also be seen as the result of historical imagination and in turn trigger historical mental images in the viewer that go beyond what is shown. Once again, it is important to emphasise the aforementioned dual character of public history products as both starting point for and result of historical imagination. The outcome of the historical imagination of person *a* – for example, a painting by a nineteenth-century historical painter or the historical computer game created by a programmer in 2020 – may trigger the historical imagination of person *b*, namely the person looking at the painting or the gamer. The products of public history, which are themselves the result of historical imaginaries, thus represent a kind of raw material and, taken as a whole, a repertoire on which their recipients' historical imagination can draw (see Chapter 11, 'Reception').

⁴⁵ Schörken: 'Imagination und geschichtliches Verstehen', 211.

⁴⁶ See Hayden White: *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe*, Baltimore and London 1973. In this influential work, however, White hardly develops the concept of historical imagination in theoretical terms. For him, it stands more generally for the poetic dimension in historiography in contrast to the rational and scientific aspects; see Herman Paul: *Hayden White. The Historical Imagination*, Cambridge 2011.

⁴⁷ See also Lars Deile: 'Historische Imagination', in: Sebastian Barsch et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Diversität im Geschichtsunterricht*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2020, 223–235, here 225.

Hence, the products of public history must be analysed with regard to the mechanisms of historical imagination at work in them: what is depicted here and how? In the case of the aforementioned nineteenth-century historical painting, for example, we might ask what is based on historical knowledge, what has been invented and how? It is also crucial to explore the ways in which public history products can stimulate the historical imagination and become the starting point for new imaginaries for recipients. As mentioned earlier, it should be noted that even images and films are not entirely closed systems but leave plenty of gaps and starting points for the viewers' imagination. In particular, images that depict only a moment in time – or, in the case of photography, capture it – may prompt viewers to imagine the depicted situation as it unfolds, to bring it to life in their imagination, as it were. But even films are by no means so hermetic that they shut down viewers' imagination completely, as Schörken assumes. In fact, they invite us to imagine what is not shown or what is skipped over during a cut. Once they have ended, filmic narratives can be spun further in the imagination. Above all, though, they provide images and ambiances that may be reactivated and developed further on other occasions, constituting the kind of repertoire mentioned above, for example, when one reads a book about the era depicted in a film one has seen. Films and images live on in our imagination, shaping the way we imagine the past.

The 'gap theory' of historical imagination derived from reading research, according to which gaps in a representation are filled by one's own imaginative activity, can be applied to other forms of historical representation and historical appropriation. In the museum, historical artefacts may be triggers for historical imagination, precisely because they have been detached from their original context and now stand isolated in the display case. As spatial arrangements of objects, images, texts and sounds, exhibitions are *per se* open to interpretation; they do not specify their interpretation as clearly as a linear written text. They subsist on the opening up of spaces of association, thus enabling modes of reception that were perhaps not planned or could not have been foreseen by the curators. This makes exhibitions an 'open and sensory form of knowledge mediation', as Annemarie Hürlimann states. 'With their sensory appeal, they aim to

Images and films as triggers for the historical imagination

Historical imagination in the museum

encourage the fascinated gaze, stimulating historical curiosity and imagination.⁴⁸

Visitors' need to imagine the historical context and use of an object on display in a museum may be stimulated by the way it is staged. To take one example, in its last permanent exhibition the German Historical Museum in Berlin presented a bicorne worn by Napoleon in an extremely minimalist display case. The hat sits on a pole that is roughly Napoleon's height, while a sabre hangs at about hip height. Two spurs lie on the floor of the display case, roughly where the feet would have been. This simple arrangement triggers the involuntary generation of an image in the visitor's mind of the person framed by the hat, sabre and spurs. This is further facilitated by the fact that the majority of visitors are already familiar with images of Napoleon and are aware of his short stature. Here too, then, the mental image supplements what is missing, what is not present.

Historical
imagination in
living history

This kind of bare-bones museal presentation is not, however, a prerequisite for the operation of the historical imagination. Even when historical contexts are reconstructed in great detail, as in open-air museums or historical theme parks, an act of imagination is still required in order to immerse oneself in the staged past. After all, visitors know they are not really in the year 1774 when they enter Colonial Williamsburg in the US state of Virginia, which simulates life on the eve of the American Revolution.⁴⁹ But they are supposed to imagine they are. Raphael Samuel thus calls visits to such living history sites 'exercises in historical make-believe'.⁵⁰ Yet the reenactment of historical events or experiential realms typical of such sites may be highly stimulating to viewers' imagination. After a theme day on the English Civil War, one English pupil stated: 'I thought the best part of the day was the re-enactors because they helped me imagine

48 Annemarie Hürlimann: 'Zum Umgang mit Dingwelten in der aktuellen Ausstellungspraxis. Ein Plädoyer für die Schaulust, den geduldigen Blick und die Phantasie', in: Olaf Hartung (ed.): *Museum und Geschichtskultur. Ästhetik – Politik – Wissenschaft*, Bielefeld 2006, 60–71, here 60.

49 See <https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org>, last accessed: 25 September 2020.

50 Raphael Samuel: *Theatres of Memory, Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, 2nd edn., London and New York 2012, 177.

what people would have been like during the civil war.⁵¹ The reenactors themselves also use their imagination when they recreate a historical battle or everyday life in a military camp. Even if historical artefacts are often used and the reenactments take place in historical locations, here the historical imagination is chiefly linked to their own actions (see Chapter 10, ‘Performativity’).

When visiting historical sites, meanwhile, it is usually what is absent that has the potential to trigger the historical imagination, at least when the historical knowledge of what once happened there comes together with these locations’ present-day emptiness and, often, silence, as typical of memorials. This brings us back to Peter Weiss, who tries to visualise the suffering of prisoners in Auschwitz. Yet the same mechanism comes into play not just at memorial sites, but also in other historical places. What is perceived as the site’s authenticity (see Chapter 2) is usually what stimulates the imagination as well. Let’s take the example of a person visiting the Museum Berlin-Karlshorst. Standing in the large hall in the Pioneer School that used to be the officers’ mess, where the High Command of the German Wehrmacht signed the unconditional surrender before representatives of the four Allies on 8 May 1945, the visitor is likely to involuntarily imagine this historical event in its spatial surroundings. The same goes for those visiting old castles or fortresses, who tend to imagine how people went about their daily lives there hundreds of years ago.

Historical
imagination
at authentic
locations

7.6 Conclusion

Imagination is, ultimately, an essential component of every form of historical appropriation and a key prerequisite for subjective participation in the events of the past. Imagination allows individuals to approach the past through visualisation without necessarily having to be absorbed in reliving it or empathising with it (see Chapters 3 and 4). Imagination, that is, is not the merging of present and past, but entails establishing a personal relationship to the past, which

⁵¹ Quoted in Berit Pleitner: ‘Kundschafter in einer anderen Welt? Überlegungen zur Funktion der Emotionen in Living-History-Darstellungen’, in: Juliane Brauer and Martin Lücke (eds.): *Emotionen, Geschichte und historisches Lernen. Geschichtsdidaktische und geschichtskulturelle Perspektiven*, Göttingen 2013, 223–238, here 234.

includes the perception of otherness. Imagination, then, always has a pertinaciously creative component, as it is moulded by both pre-existing cultural concepts and the very personal mental and emotional baggage of those engaging with a past event.

Our opening example of Peter Weiss is relevant here once again. It not only symbolises the individuality of the imagination, but also illustrates its limits. Even if, unlike Weiss, one does not directly experience these limits as a failure of one's attempt to get near the past, the imaginative visualisation of history through a mental representation should not be confused with an actual reliving of the past. This is because the historical imagination entails mental and emotional images of the past that are not necessarily empirically grounded, which also means that they can be corrected by historical research. In other words, these mental constructs reveal much more about the significance of history to one's present than about factual, scrutinisable historical knowledge.

When it comes to the operationalisation of the concept of historical imagination for the analysis of the practices and products of public history, we have argued that the process of imagination, as it unfolds in the individual, is difficult to grasp but may be approached through its socially and historically moulded preconditions and outcomes. Public history products are both these things. From the perspective of producers, they are a result of their imagination, while for recipients they are the starting point for their imaginative activity. Taken as a whole, the material and performative manifestations of the historical imagination represent a stock of images of and ideas about history. This repertoire is further embellished through social processes (see Chapter 11, 'Reception') and thus becomes an expression of historical culture (see Chapter 6).

Introductory literature

- Davis, Natalie Zemon: 'Imagination', in: Mario Wimmer and Anne Kwaschik (eds.): *Von der Arbeit des Historikers. Ein Wörterbuch zu Theorie und Praxis der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Bielefeld 2010, 107–110.
- Deile, Lars: 'Historische Imagination', in: Sebastian Barsch et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Diversität im Geschichtsunterricht*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2020, 223–235.
- David J. Staley: *Historical Imagination*, London 2020.

8 Historical thinking

8.1 Introduction

Artist Elisabeth Daynès is a specialist in the creation of life-size reproductions of early humans. Her figures are now a feature of many museums, illustrate publications on human prehistory and can be viewed online in the form of photographs. Before each new reconstruction the artist creates, she painstakingly familiarises herself with the current state of knowledge about the species and the specific find involved, working closely with scientists. By using elaborate techniques¹ to recreate facial features, muscles and skin, she produces lifelike figures that seem to look the observer straight in the eye. Two things are particularly important to Daynès: to ‘convey science’s best guess about how these human relatives looked’, while also generating an emotional closeness to Palaeolithic people among present-day viewers:

When people see my sculptures in a museum, they’re often meeting these Neanderthal relatives of ours – whom we lived alongside for thousands of years – for the first time. If one in five people leave the exhibit with an emotional connection, then I’m happy.²

The artist is also keen to convey new images:

My favorites are Neanderthals because people once thought they were stupid, ugly, and brutal. But we now know they made stone tools and were the first to bury their dead. I look at a man I reconstructed and I know he was compassionate, not stupid. So I compose facial expressions to make my reconstructions look charismatic. Their eyes should sparkle with life and intelligence.³

Indeed, the reproduction created by Daynès, based on the fossil remains of a male Neanderthal found in La-Chapelle-aux-Saints, reveals few differences from modern humans at first glance. This stands in clear contrast to earlier representations. Particularly note-

¹ See Bärbel Auffermann and Jörg Orschiedt: *Die Neandertaler. Eine Spurensuche*, Stuttgart 2002, 45.

² Elisabeth Daynès and Rachel Feltman: ‘How I Reconstruct the Faces of Early Ancestors’, in: *Popular Science* 290/3 (2018), 128.

³ *Ibid.*

worthy is the reconstruction drawing by Czech painter František Kupka, published in a London newspaper in 1909,⁴ which accompanied the announcement of that find and illustrated the associated research (Fig. 1). His picture shows an ape-like creature with an almost fierce countenance standing unclothed in front of a cave, a stone in one hand and a wooden club in the other.



Fig. 1: Reconstruction of the Neanderthal of La-Chapelle-aux-Saints, illustration by František Kupka, 1909.

The figure created by Daynès (Fig. 2) symbolises the aspiration of many contemporary museums to impart knowledge based on the latest research, while also appealing to visitors on an emotional level. Public history offerings based on history didactics concepts go even further, providing opportunities for historical learning in the sense of historical thinking. In light of this example, we seek to open up new perspectives on a field encompassing the various interconnected concepts explored in this book. Central here are the media-

⁴ *The Illustrated London News*, 27 February 1909, 313.



Fig. 2: Reconstruction of the Neanderthal of La-Chapelle-aux-Saints, figure by Elisabeth Daynès, 2009, with kind permission © Figure: Elisabeth Daynès / Photo: S. Entressangle.

tion of history and the educational aspirations of a variety of public history institutions; equally crucial are the concepts of historical consciousness, historical learning and historical thinking, which are found most often in a history didactics context.

‘Mediation of history’ (*Geschichtsvermittlung*) is an omnipresent term in public history. As enigmatic as it is ambiguous, this concept oscillates between the idea of a mission and a promise of respectability, one that apparently makes for good advertising. Many museums, such as the German Historical Museum, have their own departments of ‘education and mediation’; the same applies to memorial sites committed to ‘mediation work’.⁵ Consonant with this, Irmgard Zündorf and Martin Lücke place the concept of mediation centre stage in their handbook on public history, identifying the ‘teaching and analysis of the mediation of historians’ findings vis-à-vis a broad

Mediating history

5 Deutscher Bundestag: *Unterrichtung durch den Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien. Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes. Verantwortung wahrnehmen, Aufarbeitung verstärken, Gedenken vertiefen*, Drucksache 16/9875, 19 June 2008, 3, <https://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/16/098/1609875.pdf>, last accessed: 26 December 2020; cf. for example Habbo Knoch: ‘Gedenkstätten (Version: 1.0)’, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 11 September 2018, DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.2.1221.v1>.

public' as their primary focus.⁶ In general terms, mediation is a key task of educational institutions and public historians, but this is a task understood in very different ways. Numerous actors explicitly claim to provide historical or historical and political education; many services are presented as 'places of learning' or 'learning offers' and have to deal with corresponding expectations.

What is actually meant by mediation of history? The German term 'Vermittlung' (of history), oscillating between education, communication and vaguer notions, can only be roughly translated as 'mediation'. As a rule, we find no entry on the German term in specialised lexicons in the academic field of education or in history didactics; it is essentially an everyday term that is difficult to translate into other languages. Lücke and Zündorf define it as 'the provision of academically grounded offerings that enable individuals to appropriate the past as history within their everyday lives'.⁷ Here, they consciously distance themselves from a one-sided, complexity-reducing view of mediation as a process of transferring scholarly findings from the academic to the non-academic world. Yet 'mediation' is in fact often used in the sense of a mere conveyance of knowledge by teachers or means instruction,⁸ 'translation' or even the popularisation of science within a top-down model.⁹ As we see it, this conception makes a poor fit with many areas of public history.

Mediating history to
foster historical
thinking

Ultimately, mediation entails the passing on of historical knowledge in learning settings that are structured to varying degrees. We thus propose to draw on the theories and concepts of historical didactics in such a way that they become fruitful for public history. History didactics sees itself as an academic field focused on *historische Bildung* (of

6 Martin Lücke and Irmgard Zündorf: *Einführung in die Public History*, Göttingen 2018, here 37; also Irmgard Zündorf: 'Zeitgeschichte und Public History (Version: 2.0)', in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 6 September 2016, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.2.699.v2>.

7 Lücke and Zündorf: *Einführung*, 38.

8 See Hans-Jürgen Pandel: *Geschichtsdidaktik. Eine Theorie für die Praxis*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2013, 42–46.

9 See Astrid Schwabe: 'Geschichtskulturelle Prozesse – Beobachtungen zum Verhältnis von historischer Fachwissenschaft und "Public History"', in: Uwe Danker and Astrid Schwabe (eds.): *Die NS-Volksgemeinschaft. Zeitgenössische Verheißung, analytisches Konzept und ein Schlüssel zum historischen Lernen?*, Göttingen 2017, 49–67, esp. 50 f. and 65 f.

which more below) and its particular structures and intentions¹⁰ as ‘the theory and practice of historical learning’.¹¹ If public history offerings seek to initiate historical learning processes, the mental operations involved must be examined in a theory-informed manner and preferably on an empirical basis. It is only when the providers of such offerings have an adequate grasp of the notion of historical and political education and the idea of promoting historical thinking that they will be in a position to develop concepts incorporating these crucial dimensions.

The popularisation of knowledge and science

The popularisation of knowledge and science has long been studied by sociologists of science. They have focused on the ways in which scientific knowledge is presented in popular forms, which actors shape the related communication processes and how they do so, while also exploring which media strategies are particularly likely to succeed. This has been accompanied by debates on underlying conceptions of the popularisation of knowledge. Carsten Kretschmann describes two dominant approaches to capturing processes of knowledge popularisation: the diffusionist approach, found primarily in older research, and that of *expository science*. The former assumes that knowledge transfer occurs within hierarchies, that is, through a top-down process in which expert knowledge is made accessible to a lay audience. From the late 1970s onwards, this approach was contrasted with expository science. This foregrounds processes of knowledge production and transfer as interactionist, reciprocal events spanning the public sphere, communicators and experts. Hence, although of little use to scientific categorisation, this is a productive perspective for public history: as historical research on public history has shown, representations of history and public ideas about them are often not shaped (solely) by experts.

Recommended reading

Ash, Mitchell G.: ‘Literaturbericht: Wissenschaftspopularisierung und bürgerliche Kultur im 19. Jahrhundert’, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002), 322–334 (for an overview of early historical research).

Kretschmann, Carsten: ‘Einleitung: Wissenspopularisierung – ein altes, neues Forschungsfeld?’, in: Kretschmann, Carsten (ed.): *Wissenspopularisierung. Konzepte der Wissensverbreitung im Wandel*, Berlin 2003, 7–22.

¹⁰ See for example Ulrich Mayer: ‘Qualitätsmerkmale historischer Bildung. Geschichtsdidaktische Kategorien als Kriterien zur Bestimmung und Sicherung der fachdidaktischen Qualität des historischen Lernens’, in: Wilfried Hansmann and Timo Hoyer (eds.): *Zeitgeschichte und historische Bildung. Festschrift für Dietfrid Krause-Vilmar*, Kassel 2005, 223–243, here 225.

¹¹ Ulrich Baumgärtner: *Wegweiser Geschichtsdidaktik. Historisches Lernen in der Schule*, Paderborn 2015, 28.

In the following, we outline the concept of historical learning as part of a larger theoretical framework centred on historical consciousness, elucidating the productivity and value of historical learning for public history in both an analytical and applied sense. With a view to how society deals with history, our theoretical reflections on historical learning or, as we interpret the concept, on the promotion of historical thinking, are intended to help develop criteria for evaluating historical representations. We also try to identify the requirements for ‘good’ representations both in general terms and in specific (learning) contexts. The concept of historical thinking opens up opportunities to disseminate practices that lay bare the character of history as a reconstruction of the past, thus fostering a critical and reflexive historical consciousness. This lends structure to the pragmatic and normative dimension of public history addressed in the introduction to this book.

The concept
of historical
thinking

The concept of historical thinking also provides instruments for empirical research into public history. On the basis of its explicit – and thus transparent – normativity, it has the potential to concretise and operationalise the mediation of history. The focus here is on what might ideally happen when we learn (to think) about history or educate ourselves historically. The notion of historical thinking, then, shapes the general concept of education (*Bildung*) in a domain-specific way, that is, with a focus on a specific field, in this case history. This puts it in a strong position to enrich research on the impact of public history offerings.¹²

The complex mental operations that occur within individuals when they engage with history can neither be directly influenced nor directly recorded, given that learning is ‘invisible in its true

¹² For an introduction, see for example Hermann Schäfer’s investigation of the permanent exhibition at the Haus der Geschichte Bonn. While this study certainly pursues visitor research as an analysis of the space in which history is exhibited, it does not grapple with the specific ways in which it is received; Hermann Schäfer: ‘Besucherforschung und Psychologie’, in: Martin Schuster and Hildegard Ameln-Haffke (eds.): *Museumspsychologie. Erleben im Kunstmuseum*, Göttingen 2006, 49–60.

form'.¹³ Generally, even complex research settings only allow us to derive possible mental processes of appropriation and effects from the data collected. Nevertheless, history didactics furnishes us with models that do allow us to make well-founded and plausible statements about how individuals deal with history, partly because it takes into account the (admittedly limited) empirical findings available on this topic.

German-language history didacticians view their field explicitly as a sub-discipline of history, and the theories they work with are mostly based on a constructivist concept of history. This is anchored in an understanding of history as the (re)construction of past human practice from today's perspective and in light of present-day motivations. Historians thus select and interpret historical sources and present their reflections in meaningful narratives. In this respect, history represents a specific form of thinking, and a specific way of observing reality.¹⁴ History didactics' close connection with the discipline of history and historical theory has prompted it to develop its own, so-called domain-specific terms and concepts. Often, these are not widespread in other educational or pedagogical disciplines and lack equivalents in other language areas and cultural spaces.¹⁵

In the following, we first outline the general German term *Bildung*, as it appears chiefly in non-university and non-school spheres, before presenting, in compact form, the core history didactic concepts relating to historical consciousness and historical thinking. In a final step, we operationalise these concepts for use in public history.

History as a
re-construction
of past human
practice

¹³ Ute Clement and Bernd Martens: 'Effizienter Lernen durch Multimedia? Probleme der empirischen Feststellung von Ursachen des Lernerfolgs', in: *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 46/1 (2000), 97–112, here 102.

¹⁴ See for example Klaus Bergmann: "So viel Geschichte wie heute war nie" – historische Bildung angesichts der Allgegenwart von Geschichte' (1993), in: Klaus Bergmann: *Geschichtsdidaktik. Beiträge zu einer Theorie historischen Lernens*, 3. edn., Schwalbach i. Ts. 2008, 13–31, here 26 f.

¹⁵ See also Jörg van Norden: *Geschichte ist Bewusstsein. Historie einer geschichtsdidaktischen Fundamentalkategorie*, Frankfurt a.M. 2018, 343.

8.2 *Historische Bildung* – a conceptual approach

For many years, history didacticians barely used the term *Bildung*, once the preserve of pedagogy and the academic field of education more generally, as it seemed to offer little to their particular subfield. Nevertheless, *Bildung*, especially in the sense of historical and political education, was and is a key field of activity and communication in public history, for example in the context of museums, memorial sites and foundations. The following approach to the complex and multi-layered German concept of *Bildung* is thus intended to help build a bridge to the practice of history mediation beyond schools and universities, and to shed light on the relationship between historical and political education and the concept of historical learning.

The concept
of *Bildung*

Bildung is, unquestionably, a basic or key pedagogical concept in German. Despite all the controversies and occasional attempts to write its obituary, it has retained most of its significance over time. The term, which stems from a strong tradition in intellectual history, is difficult to translate.¹⁶ The most varied range of academic disciplines utilise or have utilised the concept of *Bildung* in quite different ways over the course of history. This is why, according to Yvonne Ehrenspeck, no clear definition is possible: *Bildung* is ‘always, in the first instance, something indeterminate’.¹⁷ This openness, Ehrenspeck suggests, also underlies the concept’s strength: in contrast to precise scientific terms, its ‘semantic surplus’ allows for insights in keeping with the times, insights we interpret in this book as the result of negotiation processes, without losing its stable core. Ehrenspeck describes the concept ‘as an interpretive schema’ that seeks to get to grips with ‘subject-world relations’.¹⁸ *Bildung* describes the

¹⁶ In most languages, unlike German, no distinction is made between *Bildung* and *Erziehung*, both of which were and are discussed as important aspects of the development of the subject’s individual personality. See for example Werner Wiater: ‘Bildung und Erziehung’, in: Uwe Sandfuchs (ed.): *Handbuch Erziehung*, Bad Heilbrunn 2012, 18–21, here 20.

¹⁷ Yvonne Ehrenspeck: ‘Bildung’, in: Heinz-Hermann Krüger and Cathleen Grunert (eds.): *Wörterbuch Erziehungswissenschaft*, Opladen 2006, 64–70, here 67.

¹⁸ Ibid., 64. Heinz-Elmar Tenorth refers to a ‘placeholder for the unsayable’ (quoted in ibid., 65). See also Heinz-Elmar Tenorth: ‘Bildung’, in: Heinz-Elmar Tenorth and Rudolf Tippelt (eds.): *Beltz Lexikon Pädagogik*, Weinheim and Basel 2012, 92–95; Benno Hafener: ‘Bildung und Lernen in der Gesellschaft des 21. Jahrhunderts’, in:

individual's lifelong critical engagement with themselves and the world, which goes beyond learnt adaptation to the current environment, while also conveying the objective of this engagement.

This conception of *Bildung* as a process of intellectual engagement is based on the influence of neo-humanism around 1800, which is still significant today, and combines *formale Bildung* (the unfolding of people's inherent, inner strengths) with *materiale Bildung* (general knowledge). *Bildung* thus encompasses the development of values and attitudes that guide the free individual towards independent, mature and socially responsible conduct. *Bildung* also implies the hope that the individual will question existing social (power) structures and norms, into which, however, it also aims in a sense to induct them. Further, it seeks to endow people with the capacity to deal with as yet unknown challenges.¹⁹ This idealistic understanding of *Bildung* was subject to repeated criticism in the twentieth century.²⁰ Yet current contributions to the discourse on *Bildung* still grapple with normative questions regarding 'self-determination and judgement, emancipation and critical faculties, autonomy and responsibility'.²¹

Bildung as process and goal is both an overarching and indeterminate concept, making it near-impossible to operationalise. As a result, scholars have attempted to concretise all active, individual processes entailed in *Bildung* through the concept of learning, among other things. In general didactics, learning is usually defined with reference to the way individuals change their behaviour – consciously or unconsciously – on the basis of experience as they adapt to environmental conditions. The prerequisite for this is the storage of successful adaptations in memory and their subsequent retrieval.

Operationalising
the concept of
Bildung

Michele Barricelli and Martin Lücke (eds.): *Handbuch Praxis des Geschichtsunterrichts*, vol. 1, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2012, 25–41.

¹⁹ See for example Ursula Frost: 'Bildung als pädagogischer Grundbegriff', in: Gerhard Mertens (ed.): *Handbuch der Erziehungswissenschaft 1. Allgemeine Erziehungswissenschaft I, Studienausgabe*, Paderborn 2011, 303–317, here 303.

²⁰ Current debates engage with the concept of *Bildung* against the background of the postcolonial turn, for instance. See, for example, Maria do Mar Castro Varela: 'Von der Notwendigkeit eines epistemischen Wandels. Postkoloniale Betrachtungen auf Bildungsprozesse', in: Thomas Geier and Katrin U. Zaborowski (eds): *Migration: Auflösungen und Grenzziehungen*, Wiesbaden 2015, 43–49.

²¹ Franz-Josef Wehnes: 'Theorie der Bildung – Bildung als historisches und aktuelles Problem', in: Leo Roth (ed.): *Pädagogik. Handbuch für Studium und Praxis*, Munich 2012, 277–292, here 277; see also 282–285.

al.²² Various learning theories model these internal processes as, for instance, the organisation and reorganisation of knowledge stocks, as the ‘totality of all information’ or ideas ‘stored in the memory’.²³ These learning theories sometimes differentiate between declarative knowledge (knowing that . . .) and procedural knowledge (knowing how to . . .). In addition, meta-cognitive knowledge (knowledge about one’s own knowledge) and, above all, specific knowledge (knowledge about a certain area of the environment) are often distinguished.²⁴ The term ‘learning’ thus allows us to home in on domain-specific cognitive operations as a prerequisite for *Bildung*.

What does it mean to learn to think historically?

To learn (to think) *historically*, then, means gaining the capacity to understand and apply the mental operations entailed in the specifically historical mode of world appropriation. The subject can then engage with the human past and its interpretations as history (or histories) in a self-aware and reflective manner. Ideally, this enables individuals to attain autonomy in the present and future or, as Uwe Danker writes, ‘historical maturity’ (*historische Mündigkeit*).²⁵ According to the conception outlined above, this objective is constitutive of history education, which for Peter Gautschi also encompasses ‘differentiated personal and social identities’.²⁶ According to Johannes Meyer-Hamme, *historische Bildung* is ‘the form taken by the [transformation] process in which, through historical thinking, one reflects upon and fundamentally modifies one’s relationship to

22 See Alfred K. Tremml: ‘Lernen’, in: Heinz-Hermann Krüger and Cathleen Grunert (eds.): *Wörterbuch Erziehungswissenschaft*, 2nd edn., Opladen 2006, 288–292, here 288.

23 Hilke Günther-Arndt: ‘Historisches Lernen und Wissenserwerb’, in: Hilke Günther-Arndt and Meik Zülsdorf-Kersting (eds.): *Geschichtsdidaktik. Praxishandbuch für die Sekundarstufe I und II*, Berlin 2014, 24–49, here 40 f.

24 See *ibid.*

25 Uwe Danker: ‘Das Flensburger Modell des Lehramtsstudiums im Fach Geschichte: Schulischer Geschichtsunterricht als Sonderfall historischen Lernens’, in: Uwe Danker (ed.): *Geschichtsunterricht – Geschichtsschulbücher – Geschichtskultur. Aktuelle geschichtsdidaktische Forschungen des wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchses*, Göttingen 2017, 15–27, here 18.

26 See Peter Gautschi: ‘What Influences Public History the Most? / ‘Was Public History am meisten beeinflusst’, in: *Public History Weekly* 7/19 (2019), DOI: dx.doi.org/10.1515/phw-2019-13911; see also Peter Gautschi: ‘Integrationsmodelle – zur Einführung in das Schwerpunktthema’, in: *Zeitschrift für Didaktik der Gesellschaftswissenschaft* 10/1 (2019), 9–19, here 10 ff.

world and self'.²⁷ *Historical and political education*, meanwhile, places greater emphasis on the aspect of responsible participation in democratic societies in the sense of 'educating people to become mature citizens'.²⁸

We could apply this to the depiction of Neanderthals discussed earlier. In a museum, filmic documentary or teaching situation, we might avoid communicating the current state of knowledge about Neanderthals' life in the form of a hermetically sealed historical narrative or through a top-down process. Instead, we might encourage people to thoughtfully probe the constructed nature of history. A comparison of older and newer Neanderthal reconstructions, for example, might prompt them to ask questions such as the following. Which image of Neanderthals comes closest to past 'reality' given the current state of research? How might we explain the differences between the two representations? What social changes do these reconstructions reflect? Why are Neanderthals – in contrast to the past – now portrayed as similar to us? What does this have to do with identity formation, with prejudices about other or not so other cultures and ways of life?

Appropriation

The term 'appropriation' (*Aneignung*) is difficult to grasp semantically and is always rooted in a particular artistic, historical, anthropological or philosophical perspective. It should not be confused with what we have presented elsewhere as *uses of the past* (see section 11.3). While the latter concept focuses essentially on the use and utility of the past, appropriation always entails some kind of transformation. Appropriation is a constructive process and a practice in which both the appropriated and the appropriators change as the latter endow the appropriated with their own purposes and definitions (Jaeggi 2002, 62). Things, institutions, norms, and so on enter new contexts through appropriation; in the process, they are reshaped, reworked and reinterpreted or transformed. When

²⁷ Johannes Meyer-Hamme: 'Subjektorientierte historische Bildung. Geschichtslernen in der Auseinandersetzung mit widersprüchlichen Deutungsangeboten zur DDR-Geschichte', in: *Deutschland Archiv* 6 (2012), <https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/deutschlandarchiv/139259/subjektorientierte-historische-bildung>, last accessed: 2 June 2019.

²⁸ Gerhard Henke-Bockschatz et al.: 'Historische Bildung als Dimension eines Kerncurriculums moderner Allgemeinbildung', in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 56/12 (2005), 703–710, here 706.

we refer to appropriation, we do not mean a linear process that runs exclusively in one direction and is thus one-sided. Appropriation is in fact a reciprocal and creative process in which a tension arises between ‘the pre-existing and the modifiable’ (ibid., 63). Hence, appropriation of the past entails adoption or imitation as well as creative innovations, such as the use of archaeological or reconstructed objects in new contexts, which in turn trigger new interpretations of the past.

On this view, then, cultural appropriation is not a problem *per se*. Culture is an open and dynamic concept and cannot be reduced to specific characteristics such as language, artefacts or values. In a perpetual state of flux, culture is ceaselessly being remade. Cultural appropriation also happens constantly – when one learns a language, for example. It is when unequal power relations come into play that appropriation becomes problematic.

Recommended reading

Blume, Judith et al.: ‘Aneignung | Appropriation 1960–1990 – Materialien, Programme, Verfahren’, in: Johler and Reinhard et al. (eds.): *Kultur_Kultur: Denken. Forschen. Darstellen*, Münster etc. 2013, 152–159; Jaeggi, Rahel: ‘Aneignung braucht Fremdheit’, in: *Texte zur Kunst* 12/46 (2002), 61–69; Moller, Sabine and Bauer, Matthias (eds.): ‘Thema: Kulturelle Aneignung von Vergangenheit’, in: *Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 46/2–3 (2013), 89–103

8.3 Historical consciousness as a key concept in history didactics

Historical
consciousness

To understand historical learning from a history didactics perspective, the concept of (individual) historical consciousness is crucial. The idea of historical consciousness in Germany took hold in the 1970s through the work of Rolf Schörken and Karl-Ernst Jeismann,²⁹ and at least since the 1980s many authors have regarded it as one of the discipline’s fundamental categories.³⁰ ‘Historical consciousness’

²⁹ Rolf Schörken: ‘Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtsbewusstsein’, in: Hans Süssmuth (ed.): *Geschichtsunterricht ohne Zukunft? Zum Diskussionsstand der Geschichtsdidaktik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, vol. 1, Stuttgart 1972, 87–101; Karl-Ernst Jeismann: ‘Geschichtsbewußtsein’, in: Hans Süssmuth (ed.): *Geschichtsdidaktische Positionen*, Paderborn 1980, 179–222.

³⁰ Critics of the term describe it as ‘empty’ (“Leerformel”) (Joachim Rohlfes: ‘Geschichtsbewußtsein: Leerformel oder Fundamentalkategorie?’, in: Ursula Becher and Klaus Bergmann (eds.): *Geschichte – Nutzen oder Nachteil für das Leben?*, Düsseldorf 1986, 92–95) or, as exemplified most recently by Jörg van Norden in his comprehensive historical analysis, as a ‘container concept’ that is ‘both theo-

captures the goal of all efforts to mediate history in a reflective and conscious way. More precisely, it is the objective of teaching-learning processes in the field of history, while also being the prerequisite for such processes. Historical consciousness is rooted in the human endeavour to understand the present and shape the future in light of knowledge of the past.³¹ When depicted as an individual mental structure, it includes not only insights into the past – in other words, knowledge – but also interpretations, evaluations, opinions and processes of identification. As a normative concept, historical consciousness presupposes the ‘knowledge that the reconstruction of the past is necessarily tied to the epistemic possibilities, interpretive desires and questions arising in people’s lives in any given present’.³² Jörn Rüsen has underscored this context-dependency in his definition of historical consciousness as a mental process of narrative ‘meaning-making through temporal experience’ (*Sinnbildung über Zeiterfahrung*), which manifests itself through emplotment and contributes to the practices of living in such a way as to guide action.³³

We can identify several models that present the complex category of historical consciousness in a more differentiated way, such as

Models of
historical
consciousness

retically and normatively underdeveloped’, that is, too imprecise. As yet, however, they have not managed to put forward convincing alternatives. See van Norden: *Geschichte ist Bewusstsein*, here 12 f. and 342. For a concise conceptual history, see most recently Sebastian Bracke et al: *Theorie des Geschichtsunterrichts*, Frankfurt a.M. 2018, 79–93; Bernd Schönemann: ‘Geschichtsbewusstsein – Theorie’, in: Michele Barricelli and Martin Lücke (eds.): *Handbuch Praxis des Geschichtsunterrichts*, vol. 1, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2012, 98–111; and Pandel’s trenchant account: Pandel: *Geschichtsdidaktik*, 129–136.

31 See Jörn Rüsen: *Historisches Lernen. Grundlagen und Paradigmen*, 2nd edn., Schwalbach i. Ts. 2008, 132.

32 Karl-Ernst Jeismann: ‘Geschichtsbewußtsein – Theorie’, in: Klaus Bergmann et al. (eds.): *Handbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik*, 5th edn., Seelze-Velber 1997, 42–44, here 42.

33 See for example Rüsen: *Historisches Lernen*, 132. Also relevant to this point and the following sections is the summary in Astrid Schwabe: *Historisches Lernen im World Wide Web: Suchen, flanieren oder forschen? Fachdidaktisch-mediale Konzeption, praktische Umsetzung und empirische Evaluation der regionalhistorischen Website Vimu.info*, Göttingen 2012, here 44–47.

those put forward by Bodo von Borries and Bernd Schönemann.³⁴ All these models conceive of historical consciousness as a ‘mode of meaning-making’³⁵ and, as von Borries writes, as a mutable ‘mental phenomenon’ or as a ‘present and relevant past in the form of a narrative that provides explanations and creates meaning’.³⁶ In addition, each of these approaches allows us to identify modes of stimulation and thus to describe learning processes as impetus for the development of a reflective historical consciousness. Hence, they provide us with the tools to pursue history education.

Hans-Jürgen
Pandel's model
of historical
consciousness

We will trace the critical discourse surrounding these models with reference to the example of Hans-Jürgen Pandel's structural analysis, which has proved fruitful for the practice of history education and for empirical research.³⁷ Historical consciousness, for Pandel, is a mutable mental structure central to our understanding of time and society.³⁸ It comprises seven interlinked ‘forms of consciousness’,³⁹ which influence each other. The three basic categories are temporal consciousness, reality consciousness and historicity consciousness. These enable us to distinguish between ‘past – today/tomorrow’, ‘real/historical – imaginary’ and ‘static – mutable’. The

³⁴ See Bodo von Borries: ‘Geschichtsbewusstsein’, in: Stefan Jordan (ed.): *Lexikon Geschichtswissenschaft. 100 Grundbegriffe*, Stuttgart 2002, 104–108, 104 f.; Schönemann: ‘Geschichtsbewusstsein – Theorie’, 102–111. While von Borries highlights the difference between an epistemological, normative and empirically saturated understanding of the term, Schönemann later categorises the various approaches that have been developed as structural-analytical (Jeismann and Pandel), functional-typological (Rüsen) and genetic (von Borries).

³⁵ Hans-Jürgen Pandel: ‘Geschichtsbewusstsein’, in: Ulrich Mayer et al. (eds.): *Wörterbuch Geschichtsdidaktik*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2014, 80–81, here 81.

³⁶ Borries: ‘Geschichtsbewusstsein’, 104.

³⁷ For a recent critical appraisal, see Barbara Hanke: ‘Dimensionen des Geschichtsbewusstseins 2.0 – ein Vorschlag’, in: *Zeitschrift für Didaktik der Gesellschaftswissenschaften* 10/1 (2019), 126–136, here 128 f.

³⁸ On the following account of the model, cf. Hans-Jürgen Pandel: ‘Dimensionen des Geschichtsbewusstseins. Ein Versuch, seine Struktur für Empirie und Pragmatik diskutierbar zu machen’, in: *Geschichtsdidaktik. Probleme, Projekte, Perspektiven* 12/2 (1987), 130–142; Hans-Jürgen Pandel: ‘Geschichtlichkeit und Gesellschaftlichkeit im Geschichtsbewusstsein. Zusammenfassendes Resümee empirischer Untersuchungen’, in: Bodo von Borries et al. (eds.): *Geschichtsbewusstsein empirisch*, Pfaffenweiler 1991, 1–23; last revised in Pandel: *Geschichtsdidaktik*, 137–160.

³⁹ Hanke: ‘Dimensionen’, 127.

four social categories of identity consciousness, political consciousness, economic-social consciousness and moral consciousness can be assigned to the contrastive pairs ‘us – you/them’, ‘above – below’, ‘poor – rich’ and ‘right – wrong’. Through the complex combination of these seven dimensions, historical consciousness enables the individual to perceive and evaluate the structures of a changing society and to locate themselves within it. Applying this to our initial example, by visiting an exhibition about Neanderthals learners can recognise – in line with the basic categories of historical consciousness – that these hominins lived in the past (the Palaeolithic period) but are now extinct; that as well as scientific foundations, reconstructions include imagined elements (and what these are) and that much has changed in human cultural history since the Neanderthals lived, but that there are also certain constants. Hence, public historians who (among other things) intentionally reveal the reconstructive character of history in their offerings help foster the recipients’ historical consciousness.

Pandel’s model has been widely received, but it has also been criticised and added to over time. One criticism concerns the deliberately open description of the four social dimensions in contrastive pairs that are not fleshed out epistemologically. This critique begins with the question of whether social inequality is sufficiently described in terms of financial and political influence, but also touches on the issue of whether the moral categories ‘right – wrong’ (rather than, for example, ‘good – bad’) already indicate the presence of a guiding ethics, which would then be elevated to the status of anthropological standard in an unquestioned way. Martin Lücke and later Barbara Hanke have suggested that we might develop categories more in keeping with the times. Lücke highlights a concept of diversity that takes account of intersectionalities at the micro, meso and macro levels of societies,⁴⁰ while Hanke champions the categories of difference consciousness, identity consciousness and value consciousness.⁴¹ These modifications adapt Pandel’s model to the current state of research and to practical experience. However, it remains problematic that empirical research based on this model is

Criticism of
Pandel’s
model

⁴⁰ See Martin Lücke: ‘Diversität und Intersektionalität als Konzepte der Geschichtsdidaktik’, in: Michele Barricelli and Martin Lücke (eds.): *Handbuch Praxis des Geschichtsunterrichts*, vol. 1, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2012, 136–146.

⁴¹ See Hanke: ‘Dimensionen’, 130–135.

possible only to a limited extent without gradating its categories. At the same time, these new schemas draw attention to a significant form of momentum. This and other ways of framing historical consciousness emerged in Western societies in the 1980s and 1990s. Hence, they not only represent the state of historical and, in a broader sense, educational scholarship more or less transparently, but also reveal the values of that era and the regions involved. Historical consciousness should not, therefore, be understood as an anthropological constant, as there is insufficient empirical evidence for this.

To summarise, the form taken by historical consciousness regulates how an individual perceives and processes historical matters. The word ‘consciousness’ is slightly misleading. Everyone develops historical consciousness, no doubt from childhood onwards, even without realising it. But historical consciousness can be nurtured, as the phrase ‘reflective historical consciousness’ underlines.⁴² In principle, historical consciousness is dynamic and subject to constant change from early childhood to late adulthood. Its genesis is subject to a wide variety of individual psychological and sociocultural factors. It arises through an intellectual approach, namely through the conscious, cognitive engagement with history at school and university. At the same time, historical consciousness is generated through experiences within one’s living environment; these may be personal experiences, others’ narratives or historical references of an entirely different hue encountered by subjects in everyday life.

The diverse representations of history within society are captured by the concept of historical culture (see Chapter 6), the second fundamental category of German-speaking history didactics. Historical culture and historical consciousness influence each other, forming ‘two sides of the same coin’.⁴³

In the English-speaking world, the term ‘historical consciousness’ has become established in recent years as an equivalent to the German *Geschichtsbewusstsein*, although it has yet to be fleshed out conceptually.

Historical
consciousness
and historical
thinking

⁴² See Waltraud Schreiber: ‘Reflektiertes und (selbst-)reflexives Geschichtsbewusstsein durch Geschichtsunterricht fördern – ein vielschichtiges Forschungsfeld der Geschichtsdidaktik’, in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtsdidaktik* 1 (2002), 18–43.

⁴³ Bernd Schönemann: ‘Geschichtskultur als Forschungskonzept der Geschichtsdidaktik’, in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtsdidaktik* 1 (2002), 78–86, here 79.

ally to the same extent.⁴⁴ The German term *Historisches Denken*, meanwhile, makes a neat fit with international discourse, being directly translatable, as we see here, as ‘historical thinking’.⁴⁵ This term reflects the traditional emphasis on cognition. In recent years, scholars have repeatedly challenged this, underlining the need to leave room for emotions (see Chapter 3) and experiences (see Chapter 4).⁴⁶

8.4 Promoting historical thinking

History education in the sense discussed here aims to stimulate learners’ individual historical consciousness in a way that enables them to engage thoughtfully with the history presented to them, in other words to learn to think historically. As outlined above, concepts of historical thinking are highly normative. They presuppose that in Western democratic societies the objective of historical teaching and learning processes is to help develop enlightened, autonomous subjects. There are various models in this vein in history didactics, which differ in the detail depending on the underlying understanding of historical consciousness.⁴⁷ What they all have in common, however, is the idea that in addition to knowledge and factual information, historical thinking primarily comprises skills and abilities or

⁴⁴ See, for example, Anne Brædder: ‘Public History in Scandinavia: Uses of the Past’, in: Paul Ashton and Alex Trapeznik (eds.): *What is Public History Globally? Working with the Past in the Present*, London 2019, 121–130.

⁴⁵ An overview is provided by: Mario Carretero et al. (eds.): *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, Basingstoke 2016; Klas-Göran Karlsson: ‘Making Sense of Lessons of the Past. Theoretical Perspectives on Historical Learning’, in: Holger Thünemann et al. (eds.): *Begriffene Geschichte – Geschichte begreifen*, Frankfurt a.M. 2016, 101–126.

⁴⁶ An exemplary case of this discourse is Bärbel Völkel’s approach, which emphatically probes inclusive models of historical consciousness of growing importance to learning in and beyond schools. See Bärbel Völkel: *Inklusive Geschichtsdidaktik*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2017.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Waltraud Schreiber et al.: *Historisches Denken. Ein Kompetenz-Strukturmodell*, 2nd edn., Neuried 2006; Peter Gautschi: *Guter Geschichtsunterricht. Grundlagen, Erkenntnisse, Hinweise*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2009, here 48–54; and most recently Bracke et al.: *Theorie*, 93–106; for an overview, see *ibid.*, 74–93.

‘thinking tools’ (*Denkzeuge*),⁴⁸ such as the historical-critical method (source criticism).

Historical competencies

In recent years, the concept of ‘competence’ has become increasingly prevalent in accounts of the activities and goals characteristic of historical learning products, especially at schools and universities; most German curricula are now ‘competence-oriented’. The paradigm shift from a focus on learning objectives to the privileging of competencies has generated a wide variety of models of historical competence (including those of Hans-Jürgen Pandel and Peter Gautschi), which no longer describe learning content, but foreground what learners are expected to accomplish. Outlining even the rudiments of this would exceed the scope of this book, but generally speaking, competence is understood to mean specific abilities, skills and forms of preparedness that the individual can deploy in a targeted manner ‘in order to solve specific problems’ (Franz E. Weinert 2001). One of the most elaborate models of historical competence has been developed by the ‘FUER Geschichtsbewusstsein’ group (‘Förderung und Entwicklung von reflektiertem Geschichtsbewusstsein’ or ‘Promotion and Development of Reflective Historical Consciousness’), centred around Waltraud Schreiber. This schema draws on Jörn Rüsen’s work and the template of historical thinking put forward by Wolfgang Hasberg and Andreas Körber and presented here. In the FUER group’s model, historical thinking is conceptualised as an ensemble of diverse competencies relating to posing questions, methodology, orientation and expertise. Competence models that focus on the learning subject can be applied not only to the history classroom, but also to other situations in people’s lives. This potentially makes them important to public history as they can help us identify the objectives of historical education. It is, however, no easy task to evaluate whether competencies in the non-school sphere are being successfully nurtured.

Recommended reading

Barricelli, Michele et al.: ‘Historische Kompetenzen und Kompetenzmodelle’, in: Michele Barricelli and Martin Lücke (eds.): *Handbuch Praxis des Geschichtsunterrichts*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2009, 207–235; Heil, Werner: *Kompetenzorientierter Geschichtsunterricht*, 2nd fully revised and expanded edn., Stuttgart 2012

Jörn Rüsen’s cycle of historical thinking

In our view, a model grounded in the three steps of ‘historical perception’, ‘historical interpretation’ and ‘historical orientation’ has much to offer public history. The importance of history’s orientational function has been explored by history didactician Jörn Rüsen.

⁴⁸ Günther-Arndt: ‘Historisches Lernen’, 40.

His cycle of historical thinking⁴⁹ is based on the assumption that history manifests itself not only in the academic discipline, but also amid the practices of everyday life, where each person's 'need for orientation within time' arises. To meet this need, institutionalised historical scholarship provides interpretations based on scientific theories and methods, presenting them as narrative reconstructions, that is, histories, in various representational forms. These representations in turn take on orientational roles within the praxis of everyday life, that is, the social setting in which individuals ask new questions of history due to their need for orientation or their interest. Historical objects, however, are perceived by individuals in

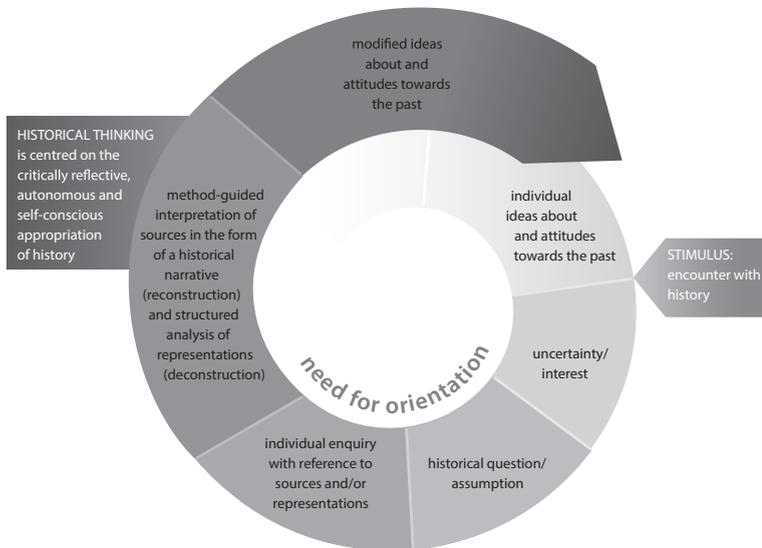


Diagram 1: The spiral of historical thinking.

⁴⁹ Jörn Rüsen: *Historische Vernunft. Grundzüge einer Historik I: Die Grundlagen der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Göttingen 1993, here 29. Further developed into a 'matrix' of historical thinking in, for example: Jörn Rüsen: *Historisches Lernen*, 140–143; see also: Jörn Rüsen: *Historik. Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Cologne etc. 2013, 66–69.

accordance with their attitudes and valuations, in other words selectively and subjectively.⁵⁰

Dynamising
Rüsen's model

Wolfgang Hasberg and Andreas Körber have extended Rüsen's cycle of historical thinking, modelling the process as a spiral in order to focus on the individual's ability to orientate themselves historically.⁵¹ They position the individual process of historical thinking between a need for orientation, triggered by uncertainty, when 'previous ideas about history [. . .] are no longer sufficient', enquiry-driven reconstruction in the form of a historical narrative, and the critical, method-guided engagement with existing narratives or representations, that is, so-called deconstruction. Individual forms of engagement, potentially supported or stimulated by pedagogical or scholarly practices, then lead to new insights and thus to the development of modified 'ideas about and attitudes towards the past'⁵² that provide enhanced orientation vis-à-vis the present. This makes the methods of academic history (potentially) usable for the self-determined individual. In this context, the operation of deconstructing interpretations, which are presented in the form of historical narratives, is particularly significant: people encounter such representations much more frequently in their everyday lives than historical sources, and for the most part have to deal with them without expert guidance.

What does
the concept
of historical
thinking do
for public
history?

In simple terms, the cycle of historical thinking comprises a historical question, followed by analysis and interpretation of historical sources and especially historical representations, and concluding with orientation.⁵³ This is an ideal-typical description of how, beyond remembering (see Chapter 9), people appropriate history autonomously and self-consciously in order to assure themselves of their position within society (Diagram 1). The concept of historical thinking

⁵⁰ See Manuel Köster: 'Vom Holocaust lesen. Textverstehen im Spannungsfeld von Darstellungstext und Identitätsbedürfnissen', in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtsdidaktik* 11 (2012), 116–130, 122.

⁵¹ On this and the following, see Hasberg and Körber: 'Geschichtsbewusstsein dynamisch', 187.

⁵² See *ibid.*

⁵³ Our own rendering based on Wolfgang Hasberg and Andreas Körber: 'Geschichtsbewusstsein dynamisch', in: Andreas Körber (ed.): *Geschichte – Leben – Lernen*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2003, 177–200, here 187; Gautschi: *Guter Geschichtsunterricht*, 51; Norbert Parschalk: *Geschichte und Identität. Konstruktiver Geschichtsunterricht in Zeiten globaler Veränderungen*, Brixen 2012, 94.

thus explicitly contradicts the idea of a top-down process of mediating history. Instead, it focuses – in consciously normative fashion – on the positive value of independent, critical engagement with history, as represented in various forms, in a free and democratic society. The stimuli here may come from a visit to a museum, a film, a tweet or a trip to the countryside.⁵⁴ For public history, the idea of historical thinking thus opens up a domain-specific form of the general conception of mediation or education. This approach helps us grasp history as an interpreted reconstruction of the past, as a ‘construct of consciousness’,⁵⁵ and facilitates a shift away from the positivist idea that history shows ‘how things really were’. For museums, this means, for example, refraining from limiting the presentation of historical contexts to factual ‘knowledge stocks’ such as names, dates and places. In addition, they might address the history of scholarship, offer differing interpretations or reconstructions of the same event or place, and depict the production of historical knowledge itself, for example by shedding light on research questions and methods.

The explicit normativity of the theories and models found in history didactics, as we have outlined them, constitutes one aspect of their potential for public history. They allow us to identify criteria for determining the didactic quality of public history, regardless of form, medium or institution. They help us identify, in a reasoned way, what historical representations must do if they are to help people develop a reflective historical consciousness and provide them with historical orientation. One example would be the requirement to highlight explicitly the constructed nature of the content presented. Furthermore, the values being promoted should always be transparent. In a pluralistic society, they can – and must – be continually renegotiated, and all public historians who aspire to mediate history are inevitably involved in this renegotiation of values as well.

The normative dimension of historical thinking

⁵⁴ Marko Demantowsky: ‘Public History auf Abwegen. Heimatgeschichte als Einladung’, in: *Merkur. Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken* 834 (2018), 30–40, here 43 f.

⁵⁵ Karl-Ernst Jeismann: “Geschichtsbewußtsein” als zentrale Kategorie der Didaktik des Geschichtsunterrichts’, in: Karl-Ernst Jeismann (ed.): *Geschichte und Bildung. Beiträge zur Geschichtsdidaktik und zur historischen Bildungsforschung*, Paderborn etc. 2000, 46–72, here 51.

8.5 Operationalisations and concretisations

Current, often elaborate research projects are increasingly seeking to get to grips with the ‘elements and structures of [historical] thinking’⁵⁶ and thus the appropriation of phenomena in historical culture. In line with the pragmatic approach outlined above, in what follows we shift focus from the learning subject and their thought processes to the offerings of public history – be they products or communicative offerings. To this end, we extract certain elements from the theoretical models and draw on their normative postulates to produce quality criteria for public history. These criteria can aid the kind of analysis of public history products that aims to decipher the messages they convey. The results of such an analysis allow for criteria-led statements about the quality of a public history offering and thus an evaluation informed by predefined, transparent standards. At the same time, criteria of this kind – when handled in a consciously normative, pragmatic way – facilitate the development of best-practice approaches to the mediation of history and thus assist its practitioners in concrete ways.

8.5.1 Principles for promoting historical thinking

To develop relevant criteria grids in concrete and pragmatic ways, in addition to drawing directly on the models presented above, we can adapt principles of historical learning formulated with a view to learning in schools.⁵⁷ According to Pandel, these diverse principles – which, he underlines, can undoubtedly be supplemented – serve as an orientational framework for the ‘configuration of learning conditions’; they have been reflected upon with varying degrees of intensity and are, of course, a subject of academic discourse.⁵⁸ A large

⁵⁶ Julia Thyroff: ‘Facetten des Denkens im Museum – methodischer Zugang, empirische Befunde’, in: *Didacta Historica* 3 (2017), 1–11, https://codhis-sdgd.ch/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Didactica-3_2017_Thyroff.suppl%C3%A9mentaire.pdf, last accessed: 11 December 2020.

⁵⁷ See Ulrich Mayer et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Methoden im Geschichtsunterricht*, 5th edn., Schwalbach i. Ts. 2016, Part 1: *Prinzipien* (14–134).

⁵⁸ See Pandel: *Geschichtsdidaktik*, 268 f., 331–360 (quote 311); for an introduction to this discourse, see also Michael Sauer: *Geschichte unterrichten. Eine Einführung in Methodik und Didaktik*, 10th edn., Seelze 2012, 76–91.

number of these principles, moreover, exist in the form of criteria for and requirements of museum and memorial site education.⁵⁹

An orientation towards scholarly research embodies the precept that all ‘educational objects’ should be recognised as ‘conditioned’ by such research and presented accordingly.⁶⁰ This does not mean subjugating all historical learning products to research, let alone prescribing for all time which historical methodologies ought to be used. Instead, the goal is to make it clear that, and to what extent, knowledge about the past is shaped by academic researchers and their methodology. Hence, an orientation towards academic scholarship requires a departure from positivist modes of presentation; it demands the laying bare of one’s starting point, questions, sources, research methods and concepts, as well as the scope of one’s own interpretations. Such approaches have been pursued for some time in comics and graphic novels, for example. Especially when these are based on real events, efforts are often made to clarify this through an accompanying section featuring city maps, illustrations, interviews, and sometimes bibliographies and the like. In some cases, even footnotes are provided. One of the first comic productions of this kind was *Prisca et Silvanus* by Dorothee Šimko and Roloff of 1995, an educational text on the Augusta Raurica Roman archaeological site produced by the local museum and intended for use in museal contexts. Readers even have the option of identifying everyday objects in the comic as archaeological finds with the help of an index.⁶¹

Science orientation

59 For an introductory account, see: Tobias Nettke: ‘Was ist Museumspädagogik? Bildung und Vermittlung in Museen’, in: Beatrix Commandeur et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Museumspädagogik. Kulturelle Bildung in Museen*, Munich 2016, 31–42.

60 Bodo von Borries: ‘Wissenschaftsorientierung’, in: Ulrich Mayer et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Methoden im Geschichtsunterricht*, 5th edn., Schwalbach i. Ts. 2016, 30–48, here 30. The author quotes here from the Strukturplan für das Bildungswesen (‘Structural Plan for the Education System’) published by the German Education Council in 1972.

61 On *Prisca et Silvanus*, see for example: Christine Gundermann: *Jenseits von Asterix. Comics im Geschichtsunterricht*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2007, 103–110. However, there are also pitfalls here, because scientificity is often merely staged in the absence of a truly science oriented approach; this is what is known as ‘authenticity simulation’; see Christine Gundermann: ‘Inszenierte Vergangenheit oder wie Geschichte im Comic gemacht wird’, in: Hans-Joachim Backe et al. (eds.): *Ästhetik des Gemachten. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur Animations- und Comicforschung*, Berlin 2018, 257–283.

Multi-perspectivity

Multi-perspectivity brings a core element of the historical method to historical thinking as a key teaching principle. Perspectivity is recognised as a 'basic fact of human perception', which is why sources from different perspectives must first be consulted in order to answer a historical question.⁶² In both research and historical mediation, it is thus crucial to make a reasoned selection of sources representing the situation or attitude of historical actors from different (political, social, economic, and so on) groups and to contextualise these sources accordingly. This includes pointing up lacunae as such, for example in the case of 'voiceless groups' that have left no traces in the historical record. When didactician Klaus Bergmann initially introduced multi-perspectivity as a principle of history didactics, he chiefly emphasised differing positions within society. Today, however, a broader understanding of diversity is applied, one that captures social inequalities in a more nuanced way and allows us to identify lacunae and intersectionalities more systematically.⁶³

Controversy and plurality

Departing from the level of sources, multi-perspectivity continues at the level of representations in the form of controversy: historiographies offer different interpretations of the past, whose controversial nature must be laid bare through historical mediation. At a third level, when citizens in a democratic society grapple with controversial representations of history, pluralistic conceptions of history emerge. Multi-perspectivity, controversy and plurality thus form a triad. In museal practice, we often find approaches that introduce a secondary perspective, for example via contemporary testimonies, which expands the lead narrative and sometimes challenges it, as in the exhibition staged at the German Hygiene Museum in Dresden in 2018–2019, *Rassismus. Die Erfindung der Menschenrassen* ('Racism. The Invention of Human Races'). Here, multi-perspectivity was orchestrated to impressive effect on several levels. First, at the source level, where those who were made the object of research by Western European scholars were provided with names and, if possible, biographies, while relevant knowledge gaps were also identified. At the level of representation, meanwhile, colour-coded 'interven-

⁶² Klaus Bergmann: 'Multiperspektivität', in: Ulrich Mayer et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Methoden im Geschichtsunterricht*, 5th edn., Schwalbach i. Ts. 2016, 65–77, here 65.
⁶³ See Martin Lücke: 'Multiperspektivität, Kontroversität, Pluralität', in: Michele Barricelli and Martin Lücke (eds.): *Handbuch Praxis des Geschichtsunterrichts*, vol. 1, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2012, 281–288, here 284.

tions' in thematic texts ensured the visibility of interpretations by non-white members of the curatorial team, who joined at a later stage of the curating.⁶⁴

A problem orientation, as a principle of teaching-learning processes, is based on the assumption that merely practising routines is an insufficient means of developing a reflective historical consciousness. A problem orientation may be understood as a teaching strategy and as a way of gaining knowledge. Such an orientation indicates that engaging with history requires us to pose a historical question. This is a basic motivational prerequisite for historical thinking, while also being consonant with the science-oriented approach to history. Solving a historical problem, then, means being able to account for the epistemic trajectory involved.⁶⁵ For example, when presenting the Mesolithic period, it makes a difference whether a museum simply focusses on key events (global warming) and their consequences for humans and the environment (changes in flora and fauna, the rise of sedentarism), or identifies a common thematic thread that guides us through the entire epoch. A question generated in our present, for example, about why the mammoth became extinct (leaving only today's hairless elephants), opens up – based on a concrete 'historical problem' – the space for a multi-layered discussion of causes and consequences. Answering this question takes us through relevant aspects of the topic in an insight-generating way, linking it to the present. Much the same goes for questions such as 'How do we know that . . .?' or 'What were the consequences of . . .?'. Open educational products that allow visitors to explore historical materials themselves, perhaps posing their own questions, which are not necessarily addressed in the historical presentation itself, are anchored in this principle.

When it comes to historical learning, history didactics ascribes tremendous importance to relevance to the present, to lived reality and to experience. This link to the present, in which our ideas about the future also need to be borne in mind, highlights a fundamental

Problem
orientation

Relevance to the
present, to lived
reality and to
experience

⁶⁴ See Susanne Wernsing et al.: 'Vermessung, Abformung und Ausstellung', in: Susanne Wernsing et al. (eds.): *Rassismus. Die Erfindung von Menschenrassen*, exhibition catalogue, Göttingen 2018, 48–55.

⁶⁵ See Michele Barricelli: 'Problemorientierung', in: Ulrich Mayer et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Methoden im Geschichtsunterricht*, 5th edn., Schwalbach i. Ts. 2016, 78–90.

(social) function of history that we have already outlined: its orientational function.⁶⁶ Relevance to the present thus underscores the moment of individual uncertainty, which triggers a need for orientation within the spiral of historical thinking. The focus on lived reality, in turn, represents a way of calibrating this present relevance by foregrounding the concrete social structures in which learners find themselves. The goal is to enable them to link the historical phenomenon at issue to their own world of experience.⁶⁷ Connections to the present are usually easy to recognise in print and visual media in light of specific medial logics. The link between the present and the past is staged most frequently and most obviously in the form of anniversaries.⁶⁸ To create a connection to the present and to people's lived reality beyond 'remembrance-day journalism' is far more challenging, especially given the heterogeneous target audiences of most public history offerings. However, to the extent that such a connection does in fact highlight the orientational potential of history rather than indulging in nostalgia (see the info box in section 2.1), it is all the more important. A now common museal practice, as seen for example at the German Emigration Centre in Bremerhaven, is the presentation of historical biographies whose protagonists accompany visitors en route through the exhibition. The aim is to build a bridge from the past to the present through individualised identificatory options. The introductory section of historical exhibitions often emphasises a topic's contemporary relevance. In some cases, however, historical institutions enable their visitors to take this step themselves by asking them questions. The Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, for instance, has been experimenting with a variety of analogue and digital formats for some time. To take one example, visitors are asked – following their visit to the exhibition – about their own experiences with regard to room for manoeuvre in threatening situations or their stance on freedom of expression in democratic societies.

⁶⁶ See Klaus Bergmann: 'Gegenwarts- und Zukunftsbezug', in: Ulrich Mayer et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Methoden im Geschichtsunterricht*, 5th edn., Schwalbach i. Ts. 2016, 91–112.

⁶⁷ See also Pandel: *Geschichtsdidaktik*, 353 f.

⁶⁸ For an introduction, see Susanne Kinnebrock: 'Why Napoleon is Exciting Time after Time: Media Logics and History', in: Susanne Popp et al. (eds.): *Commercialised History. Popular History Magazines in Europe*, Frankfurt a.M. 2015, 147–163.

The following three criteria for assessing public history products, which are closely related, originate in different didactics and are therefore not domain-specific, yet they have had a lasting impact on the discourse of history didactics. Enquiry-based learning is closely aligned with the precepts of a science orientation and problem orientation but is not entirely congruent with them. Above all, it takes account of the ways people learn without school, namely in a way geared towards experience and interest – and unsystematically. Enquiry-based learning focuses on curiosity, the intrinsic motivation to approach a historical phenomenon, and thus foregrounds the subject who interacts with an object. Yet hands-on scenarios or observable experiments, as in the natural sciences, are few and far between in historical teaching-learning contexts. The latter tend to revolve around acquiring complex methodological skills, which enable the individual to approach a historical question of personal interest independently and systematically and thus answer it.⁶⁹ This can lead to the generation of new empirical findings, but may also underpin the development of new and personally significant insights and evaluations. One example of enquiry-based learning at the interface between the mediation of history in schools and public history is the German President's History Competition, organised by the Körber Foundation. Young people formulate their own historical question on a preset topic, which they try to answer through research and in their own narrative – with guidance, if necessary.⁷⁰ Of course, less elaborate forms of enquiry-based learning are also widespread, especially in digital media, such as the online historical exhibition *Du bist anders?* ('Are you different?'), which invites visitors to explore the biographies of young people during the Nazi era in an interactive format.⁷¹

Enquiry-based
learning

Action orientation as a guiding principle is based on the insight that we understand more easily and effectively that which we develop

Action orientation

⁶⁹ See Heike Wolters: *Forschend-entdeckendes Lernen im Geschichtsunterricht*, Frankfurt a.M. 2018, 23.

⁷⁰ <https://www.koerber-stiftung.de/geschichtswettbewerb>, last accessed: 30 May 2019.

⁷¹ <https://dubistanders.de/>, last accessed: 20 May 2019; see also Uwe Danker and Astrid Schwabe: *Geschichte im Internet*, Stuttgart 2017, 86 f.

through action.⁷² This pedagogical approach, which is closely linked to concepts of holistic learning, is seen as a supplement to purely intellectual work; the focus of pedagogical efforts is no longer exclusively on cognitive processes. An action orientation as a criterion of 'good' public history, that is, public history considered valuable from a didactic perspective, is intended to dissolve the dualism of thinking and acting. Action is accorded an important role, but on the premise that this action must then be reflected upon. By including the learning subject in all their physicality in the learning process, an action orientation also creates a bridge to inclusive learning.⁷³ Empirical findings show that one's own actions are remembered for longer than purely cognitive processes.⁷⁴ An action orientation can often be found in events centred on living history and reenactment that allow visitors to do and participate, but cultural history museums too make use of such approaches. At the LVR-Industriemuseum Papiermühle Alte Dombach, a former paper mill-turned-museum, for example, visitors can not only make paper themselves, but also mix parts of the paper pulp, the *Gulpe*, together with the museum staff, before going on to couch and press the paper. This creates a physical experience for those involved, one that not only fosters historical imagination and thus an engagement with historical actors, but that also helps place the production process in time; further, it invites comparison with industrialised production techniques, which are then visualised and demonstrated using the relevant machines. As we see it, from a scholarly point of view, an action orientation is a sound approach in such contexts of historical learning above all when the working methods and materials are highly authentic. For example, opportunities to make jewellery within the framework of museal pedagogy should not be about reproducing pieces from earlier times using today's tools, as then the focus is solely on the product rather than on engaging with the technical possibilities of the era.

Needs orientation

Generally speaking, a needs orientation has yet to become a recognised principle in public history. Still, we are going to include it here as

⁷² See Bärbel Völkel: 'Handlungsorientierung', in: Ulrich Mayer et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Methoden im Geschichtsunterricht*, 5th edn., Schwalbach i. Ts. 2016, 49–64.

⁷³ See Völkel: *Inklusive Geschichtsdidaktik*.

⁷⁴ See Martin Schuster's comments on episodic learning in museums: Martin Schuster: 'Lernen im Museum', in: Martin Schuster and Hildegard Ameln-Haffke (eds.): *Museumspsychologie. Erleben im Kunstmuseum*, Göttingen 2006, 84–102, here 85 f.

it has been playing an increasingly important role in the design of cultural products for around a decade. Originally, this precept informed the development of user-friendly software. Today, it is a guiding criterion for the design of museum exhibitions, for example. In this setting, learning opportunities are tailored to the interests, abilities and requirements of their target group. While history didactics initially highlighted the need for a differentiated approach to reflect age and school level, in accordance with its focus on schools,⁷⁵ it is vital, against the background of lifelong learning, to expand this perspective in public history contexts. Museum studies scholars have suggested, for example, that we cease talking about visitor research and instead think in terms of needs research. This is what underpins the ‘personas’ concept,⁷⁶ which originates in the field of IT development: user typologies are created prior to the design of programme interfaces, enabling a better grasp of users’ differing needs and interests. Ever more museums have embraced this concept since the 2010s. This means that when designing museal offerings, the target group’s (or groups’) needs – intellectual, interest-related, action-related, physical, and so on – can be taken into account. In these settings, learners should not be regarded as a cross-section of statistical data. Instead, the individual needs behind this data should be recognised and appropriate solutions offered for as large a group as possible. While a needs orientation cannot make every historical product accessible to every user, it can create specific offerings for every user. The kind of conceptual ensemble we are envisaging here makes it much easier to create inclusive and integrative services. There is, however, little empirical data available to date on the needs of users of specific media and institutions. If such needs are merely assumed rather than investigated empirically, tensions may arise with other criteria, such as a science orientation.

The principles presented here to foster historical thinking in the field of public history cannot be fully implemented in any one histor-

⁷⁵ See Bodo von Borries: ‘Alters- und Schulstufendifferenzierung’, in: Ulrich Mayer et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Methoden im Geschichtsunterricht*, 5th edn., Schwalbach i. Ts. 2016, 113–134.

⁷⁶ There is currently an almost complete lack of specific literature on the complex of needs orientation, the personas concept and fields of public history. The exception is: Bettina Lambertz: *Personas im Museum. Historische Ausstellungskonzeptionen und Bedürfnisorientierung am Beispiel des MiQua. LVR-jüdisches Museum im Archäologischen Quartier Köln*, Master’s thesis, University of Cologne, 2018.

ical (learning) product, especially given that they are to some degree in tension with each other and, above all, with other factors typically arising from the structures of the medium involved. Nevertheless, these principles provide orientation and can help us analyse – or create – a public history service that is ‘valuable’ from a history didactics point of view.

8.5.2 Normative grids derived from history didactics as a basis for analysing and designing public history products

The literature now includes a number of proposals on grids for analysing historical media products, grids that compile theory-based didactic quality criteria. Although these grids differ in the detail, they have a great deal in common. Dietmar von Reeken and co-authors Hilke Günther-Arndt and Janine Kemnitz, for example, have developed tools for evaluating historical literature for young people from a history didactics perspective.⁷⁷ Krešimir Matijević and Astrid Schwabe,⁷⁸ meanwhile, have addressed historical non-fiction children’s books. Based on the model of historical competencies produced by the Gesellschaft für die Didaktik des Sachunterrichts (Society for the Didactics of General Studies), which is derived from the FUER model,⁷⁹ the latter authors have drawn up a relevant catalogue of questions. Central to these evaluation grids is consideration of the structural features of relevant media, which shape how history can be narrated in a given case: content and form must be regarded as equally important in public history.

77 Dietmar von Reeken: ‘Das historische Jugendbuch’, in: Hans-Jürgen Pandel and Gerhard Schneider (eds.): *Handbuch Medien im Geschichtsunterricht*, 5th edn., Schwalbach i. Ts. 2010, 69–83, esp. 78 f.; Hilke Günther-Arndt and Janine Kemnitz: ‘Schreiben um zu lehren? – Geschichtsdidaktische Kategorien in der historischen Jugendliteratur’, in: *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz* (ed.): *Geschichtsbilder: Historische Jugendbücher aus vier Jahrhunderten*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin 2000, 240–254, esp. 244–252.

78 Krešimir Matijević and Astrid Schwabe: ‘Bikinis in der römischen Therme? Erkundungen im geschichtskulturellen Feld der historischen Kindersachbücher’, in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtsdidaktik* 16 (2017), 107–121.

79 Gesellschaft für Didaktik des Sachunterrichts (ed.): *Perspektivrahmen Sachunterricht*, 2nd edn., Bad Heilbrunn 2013.

Here we would like to present an example of a normative didactic grid. This was developed as an ideal-typical catalogue for use in the design of a digital public history product – one that succeeds from a history didactics perspective and whose fundamental goal is to promote historical thinking.⁸⁰ The catalogue of criteria we have in mind here was developed by Uwe Danker and Astrid Schwabe. Informed by history didactics, it comprises four fields: ‘(historical) social world’, ‘historicity’, ‘(re)construction of the past’ and ‘mediation’.⁸¹

The first two pillars, ‘(historical) social world’ and ‘historicity’, are based on the model of historical consciousness developed by Pandel and outlined above, but expanded through the addition of history’s crucial relationship to the spatial dimension; these pillars focus primarily on the content of historical representation. The third pillar, ‘(re)construction of the past’, draws on the constructivist concept of history, from which the criteria of controversy, openness, source interpretation and multidimensionality are derived, in addition to the criterion of multi-perspectivity presented above. This pillar requires mediation of the past social world through multidimensional approaches that go far beyond pure political history, in other words, that factor in aspects of social, cultural, economic and everyday history. These dimensions should be accessed via sources and the interpretation of these sources, which must accord with the historical method. It is essential that sources are integrated into rep-

80 See Uwe Danker and Astrid Schwabe: ‘Normative fachdidaktische Anforderungen an virtuelle Geschichtspräsentationen. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Umsetzung am Projektbeispiel eines “Virtuellen Museums”’, in: Uwe Danker and Astrid Schwabe (eds.): *Historisches Lernen im Internet. Geschichtsdidaktik und ‘Neue Medien’*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2008, 60–89; further developed in Schwabe: *Historisches Lernen im World Wide Web*, 54–72. See more references there. The catalogue of criteria claims to be valid for any form of history mediation; it initially served as a guideline for the development of the virtual regional history museum [Vimu.info](http://www.vimu.info), which presents the history of the German-Danish border region from 1830 to the present day. See www.vimu.info/general_01.jsp, last accessed: 26 December 2020. In a further step, specific questions about the evaluation of online historical offerings and digital public history were derived from this catalogue from a history didactics perspective. See Danker and Schwabe: *Geschichte im Internet*, esp. 31 ff. and 47–57.

81 See *ibid.* ‘Geschichtsdidaktischer Kriterienkatalog’, featuring the cornerstones of ‘(historische) soziale Welt’, ‘Geschichtlichkeit’, ‘(Re-)Konstruktion von Vergangenheit’ and ‘Vermittlung’.

representations and contextualised in ways that are comprehensible to recipients. The criterion of openness, meanwhile, requires that the interpretations inherent in a given representation make no absolute claim to truth: recipients must be able to arrive at their own assessments by critically examining both the representation itself and the related sources, that is, they should be stimulated to think historically. Here we see a close connection with the principle of a science orientation. 'Mediation', as the fourth pillar, comprises criteria relating mainly to the presentation of meaningful content, a presentation that is appropriate to the target group, that can be criticised and is plausible; these criteria also help lay bare the selection processes involved (we referred above to relevance to the present and to people's lived reality, as well as a needs orientation). Mediation encompasses access to history through a personalised representation that shows historical facts from the perspective of the 'ordinary' people that typify various social groups. Such representations may entail tentative opportunities for identification. The criterion of emotions requires not only the presentation of, and reflection on, the significance of emotions in history, but above all the prudent, thoughtful use of emotions to mediate history, along with strict avoidance of strategies centred on emotional overwhelm.

8.6 Conclusion

Let us return to the case discussed earlier: the two very different reconstructions based on the same Neanderthal skeleton from La-Chapelle-aux-Saints in the early twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In relation to the history didactics model of the spiral of historical thinking, these two historico-cultural representations can be used as a source of inspiration that facilitates an 'encounter with the universe of the historical', as envisaged by Peter Gautschi. Reconstruction 1 (the ape-like, seemingly 'primitive' creature) and reconstruction 2 (our seemingly close 'relative') can interface with the viewer's ideas about the evolutionary history of humankind and evoke radically different associations. Due to their contrasting nature, they may be unsettling and thus arouse interest in the historical question of why two such different representations have arisen on the basis of one and the same find. In light of this unsettling factor, individuals can formulate suppositions that may be verified

or falsified through an in-depth examination of the historical sources and representations of the topic. First, they can grasp the process of reconstructing history (in this case by evaluating the significance of a Neanderthal skeleton and its interpretation in different centuries). Second, they acquire the ability to deconstruct the two Neanderthal reconstructions based on the sources, that is, to critically scrutinise them and place them in the context of their genesis. Ideally, this will lead to modified ideas about Neanderthals, their way of life and their character, and beyond this, to changed attitudes to the products of historical culture and their meaningfulness. On the basis of individuals' modified ideas about and attitudes towards the past, the cycle of historical thinking begins anew with the next stimulus that touches on this topic. Based on the individual and collective need for orientation in relation to past and present (the significance of the Neanderthal for us today), historical learning of this kind aims to facilitate structured, method-orientated approaches to history and representations of history (through the evaluation of sources and representations) and has the potential to prompt people to appropriate history in an independent, reflective way by engaging with it.

Applying didactic principles of this kind can enrich public history. In what follows, we would like to present an example that we consider highly successful in this respect: the French film *Le fils de Néandertal ou le secret de nos origines*.⁸² In this film, a team of scientists has an 'encounter with the universe of the historical' when they are confronted with an extraordinary find. The skeleton of a human female turns up in the attic of a Basque farmer. This had been recovered as a block during an excavation, with the surrounding soil still in place, helping ensure its preservation. The researchers become aware of it when it is offered for sale on the internet and decide to pay the farmer a visit. The find having been secured, it reveals a surprise: the Stone Age woman, a member of the genus *Homo sapiens* (modern humans), harbours the bones of a foetus with clear Neanderthal characteristics in her pelvic cavity. An archaeological sensation, this evidence definitively refutes the long-held idea that *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals did not interbreed. The finding that the father was a Neanderthal shatters previous ways of explaining the extinction of Neanderthals and describing their coexistence

⁸² French 2016, dir.: Jacques Mitsch, prod.: Gedeon Programmes, Arte.

or interaction with modern humans. Together with the scientists, the audience goes through the process of forming hypotheses and asking questions, analysing sources or data and confronting existing knowledge. How closely are we humans today related to the Neanderthals? And how might the mixing of the two gene pools be proven? The documentary scenes seem to provide clear and credible answers to these questions. The research documented in the film also addresses the audience's need for orientation in another way, namely by creating an image of Neanderthals who consciously cared for the environment and whose way of thinking and living might serve as a model for us as we grapple with the climate crisis.

The film is structured in such a way that modified ideas about the past, in this case about the Palaeolithic and the Neanderthals, arise among viewers. However, it ends with an unexpected twist that provides a striking new source of 'stimulus' and generates a new moment of 'uncertainty'. Following an elaborate search for clues that has the audience on the edge of their seats, the scientists track down the original site of the spectacular discovery. And there, in a cave, the whole story is ultimately revealed as a farce; the supposed documentary turns out to be a docufiction. The scientists have fictionalised their actions and satirised archaeological research, themselves and their interpretative activities. To some degree, then, this product of public history places a question mark over scientific knowledge acquisition itself and, by enabling viewers to deconstruct what is shown in retrospect, encourages them to engage in critical historical thinking regarding their own ideas about science. Furthermore, on a meta-level, the film touches on various categories appearing in the catalogue of historical didactic criteria presented above. It questions interpretive authority in science, provides opportunities for identification with the characters and the subject matter, addresses historicity from both a temporal and spatial perspective, especially in relation to fact and fiction, and almost compels critical thinking through its (staged) mono-perspectivity and hermetic source interpretation. Finally, when it comes to the mode of mediation, which works with emotionalisation, personification and a carefully selected case study, the film is designed to make watching and participating a genuine pleasure.

Introductory literature

Bracke, Sebastian et al.: *Theorie des Geschichtsunterrichts*, Frankfurt a.M. 2018.

Barricelli, Michele and Lücke, Martin (eds.): *Handbuch Praxis des Geschichtsunterrichts*, Schwalbach i. Ts. 2012.

Commandeur, Beatrix et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Museumspädagogik. Kulturelle Bildung in Museen*, Munich 2016.

Mayer, Ulrich et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Methoden im Geschichtsunterricht*, 5th edn., Schwalbach i. Ts. 2016.

9 Memory

9.1 Introduction

In 2006, the non-profit organisation *Unsere Geschichte. Das Gedächtnis der Nation e.V.* ('Our History. The Memory of the Nation') was founded in Mainz to compile contemporary witnesses' recollections of German history and preserve them for future generations. To this end, the association dispatched the 'Jahrhundertbus' ('Century Bus'), a mobile recording studio, to crisscross Germany from 2011 onwards. Following an announcement in local and regional media, this bus made stops in numerous German cities to record individual memories of past experiences on video. The project benefited from the prominence of its initiators, namely Guido Knopp, then head of the Contemporary History editorial team at ZDF (a leading German TV channel), and Hans-Ulrich Jörges, member of the editorial board of the weekly *Stern* magazine. A total of around 1,000 interviews were conducted,¹ which the association viewed as 'jigsaw pieces in a nation's picture of history', pieces that mould 'a society's self-image'.² The interviews, recorded in the visual style of ZDF documentaries, were made available online in the form of short clips, with the portal emphasising topics such as everyday life in a divided Germany, the Holocaust and Germany as a society of migration. The interview extracts were supplemented by educational handouts.³

The association's self-description makes it clear that 'The Memory of the Nation' sees itself as a contribution to the culture of remembrance. The project aims to create a collective memory by collecting individual recollections and making them accessible, thus forging a (national) community. This instance of the collection of testimonies

1 The videos have now been transferred to the online video platform *Zeitzeugenportal*, which is maintained by the Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Foundation. See <https://zeitzeugen-portal.de/ueber-uns>, last accessed: 23 November 2020.

2 The objectives of the association, which was liquidated, can still be found in the association directory of the city of Mainz, https://mainz.de/verzeichnisse/vereinsverzeichnis/Unsere_Geschichte._Gedaechtnis_der_Nation_e.V..php, last accessed: 23 November 2020.

3 See Judith Keilbach: 'Das Gedächtnis der Nation. Eine Online-Plattform, die Fernsehen ist', in: Knud Andresen et al. (eds.): *Es gilt das gesprochene Wort. Oral History und Zeitgeschichte heute*, Göttingen 2015, 181–194.

from contemporary witnesses demonstrates both the social function of memory and its political dimension, which is inherent not only in the Mainz-based project, but in cultural memory in general. For example, this project selects only certain memories for inclusion in its storehouse of ‘memory’, creates categories and gives some topics, which it considers particularly relevant, extra emphasis in schools, educational institutions, museums and memorial sites.

To bring out how the concept of memory can be used in public history, below we outline its origins and current academic use, as well as its multifaceted character, while also discussing its conceptual strengths and weaknesses. To this end, we introduce the concepts of collective and cultural memory, which are fundamental to almost all memory models, as well as the notion of realms of memory; we further explore the images and media negotiated as part and parcel of these concepts. In addition, we present a selection of more recent perspectives that problematise the often static and (implicitly) national frame of reference that typifies the leading schemas of memory, expanding them to include ‘cross-border’ and thus more fluid concepts. Finally, we use the example of (contemporary) witnesses of the Holocaust to point up the practice-relevance of these theoretical concepts.

9.2 Term and concepts

We take our lead here from the debate in the German-speaking countries, presenting the conceptual fields central to German-language academic discourse. Our main focus is on the concept of memory and its differentiation. We pursue the concept of the culture of remembrance (see the following info box) no further here, nor do we investigate related concepts such as *heritage* (see Chapter 5).

The concept of memory as used in public history is a metaphor through which individuals’ bodily processes or characteristics are applied to a collective. Yet it should be borne in mind that individual remembering works quite differently from the ‘memory’ of a group.⁴ The memory metaphor helps homogenise a heterogeneous group by converting the diverse and contradictory memories of its members

Memory

Memory as metaphor

⁴ Some of the authors whose works we discuss here address the connection between individual and collective memory explicitly.

into a uniform ‘memory’. This is accompanied by the naturalisation of the social structures and political dynamics that determine what is remembered. The metaphor of memory takes no account of this socio-political process of remembering.

Culture of remembrance

The notion of a culture of remembrance (*Erinnerungskultur*) can be regarded as the leading concept in present-day German-language historical research on memory. Beyond the popularisation of the concept of remembrance described above and its linkage with a given culture as a marker of identity, the idea of a culture of remembrance has been developed since the 2000s by Christoph Cornelißen, who understands it as an umbrella term encompassing various forms of the conscious remembrance of historical events, personalities and processes. Cornelißen also defines the term more precisely by identifying four dimensions of the study of memory: 1) the social framework within which a memory is negotiated and which, for example, may be scrutinised with a view to economic, social, generational or other hegemonic structures, 2) the nation as a still crucial interpretive frame for memories, 3) beliefs and ideologies, that is, interpretive schemas of such potency that they influence the formation of memories at the levels of sense-making and narrativisation and 4) media through which memories are communicated but that also shape them through their specific characteristics. The concept of a culture of remembrance has mostly been applied to recent German history and has gained little traction in relation to other eras. Cornelißen established the term at a historical moment when history didactics had managed to introduce the concept of historical culture (*Geschichtskultur*) (see Chapter 6). The emergence of ‘culture of remembrance’ as a concept, then, also lays bare ‘competition’ between the sub-disciplines of academic history.

Recommended reading

Cornelißen, Christoph: ‘Was heißt Erinnerungskultur? Begriff – Methoden – Perspektiven’, in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 54/10 (2003), 548–563; Cornelißen, Christoph: ‘Erinnerungskulturen (Version: 2.0)’, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 22 October 2012, https://docupedia.de/zg/Erinnerungskulturen_Version_2.0_Christoph_Corneli.C3.9Fen?oldid=132747.

9.2.1 Collective memory

Maurice Halbwachs:
collective memory

Theories of memory in the cultural sciences almost always refer to the concept of *mémoire collective*, collective memory, as developed by Maurice Halbwachs in several writings between the 1920s and 1940s. As a sociologist, Halbwachs was interested in the relationship

between the individual and society. In his reflections on collective memory, he thus drew on concepts that assume a connection between individual perceptions and a socio-cultural frame of reference.⁵ With regard to memories of past events, Halbwachs argues that the coherent memories of individuals can only be formed and stabilised through communication and interaction. This social moulding of individual memories can be seen, for example, in childhood memories, in which fragments of one's own recollections are fused with others' narratives.⁶

According to Halbwachs, retellings and other memory-related practices contribute to the collective memory of a social group, from which they simultaneously draw sustenance. The social group may be a family that structures its members' memories, a religious community or a social class in which, for example, memories of living and working conditions or social achievements are shared.⁷ Groups simultaneously share and generate a collective memory, that is, individual memory and collective memory permeate each other. Both are group-specific and contribute to the construction and reproduction of collective identity. While Halbwachs sees few points of contact between the memories of social groups and the history of a nation,⁸ the above example demonstrates that nations too are now regarded as social groups whose identity must be strengthened by a shared memory.

Halbwachs categorises individual recollections and collective memory as 'lived history', which is constituted through everyday communication within a social group and thus mutable. He distinguishes this lived history from learned or written history,⁹ 'read about in books and thought and learned in schools'.¹⁰ History presents past events in their totality (and, as objectively and impartially

Memory of social groups

History as lived and learned

⁵ The postulate of a collective consciousness that forms the framework for individual actions goes back to Émile Durkheim, one of whose students was Halbwachs.

⁶ Maurice Halbwachs: *On Collective Memory*, Chicago 1992 (French orig. 1925), 46 ff.

⁷ *Ibid.*, chapters 5, 6 and 7.

⁸ Maurice Halbwachs: *The Collective Memory*, New York 1980 (French orig. 1950), 51 f.

⁹ See for example *ibid.*, 57, 68 and 78.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

as possible), which distinguishes it from the particular memory of a social group.¹¹

Halbwachs' distinction between memory and history must be understood against the background of the development of the discipline of history. When he produced his oeuvre, the writing of contemporary history as we know it today – as a sub-discipline of academic history – did not yet exist. Its establishment means that we cannot uphold Halbwachs' strict division between a remembered past on the one hand and the scholarly interpretation of the past on the other.

Collective memory
and public history

Still, the concept of collective memory can be rendered fruitful for public history in light of its capacity to explain the dynamics of, and the conflicts surrounding, public history projects. First, it heightens our awareness of the functioning and mechanisms of public history. By addressing emotions and emphasising experiences, this subdiscipline aims to bring 'learned history' back into the 'lived history' of collective memory (we will be scrutinising one theoretical take on this procedure below in the shape of *prosthetic memory*). Second, the concept of collective memory helps explain the complications often entailed in the projects of contemporary history. These projects can be understood as a communicative practice through which memories are stabilised within a social group.¹² At the same time, they are usually based on the collective memory of a specific group, which may diverge significantly from that of another community of memory. As a result, the planning, conception and implementation of contemporary public history offerings are frequently accompanied by conflicts over the establishment of a specific memory as generally recognised (contemporary) history. In the German context, the reactions of former soldiers and members of the political

¹¹ Ibid., 83 f.

¹² As in the case of the exhibition *SchwarzÖsterreich. Die Kinder afroamerikanischer Besatzungssoldaten* at the Volksmuseum in Vienna (27 April–21 August 2016), which explored the discrimination against and marginalisation of the first generation of black Austrians. See https://volkskundemuseum.at/schwarzoesterreich_die_kinder_afroamerikanischer_besatzungssoldaten, last accessed: 27 August 2020, or *The Afterlives of Slavery*, one of the permanent exhibitions at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, which looked at the after-effects of slavery right up to the present day, <https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/en/whats-on/exhibitions/afterlives-slavery>, last accessed: 23 November 2020.

right to the first so-called Wehrmacht exhibition, in which that entity's crimes and its active participation in the war of extermination were depicted using private photographs,¹³ provide a prime example of this. The same goes for the remembrance of the GDR, whose portrayal as a history of dictatorship often clashes with the everyday recollections of former GDR citizens.¹⁴

9.2.2 Visual memory

In the 1920s, scholar of art and culture Aby Warburg studied European visual memory, and his research provides valuable insights into collective memory.¹⁵ To elucidate how antiquity lived on in Renaissance art, Warburg created a never-to-be-completed Mnemosyne Atlas, in which he combined different works of art into thematic panels or series of images (see Chapter 11, 'Reception').¹⁶ This

Aby Warburg:
pathos formula

13 The term 'Wehrmacht exhibition' now refers to two travelling exhibitions organised by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research: the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944*, shown from 1995 to 1999, and the exhibition *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941–1944*, shown from 2001 to 2004. On the controversy surrounding the first and second exhibitions, see Hannes Heer: *Vom Verschwinden der Täter: Der Vernichtungskrieg fand statt, aber keiner war dabei*, Berlin 2004; Reinhard Rürup: 'Die deutsche Wehrmacht und die NS-Verbrechen: Zur Diskussion um die "Wehrmachtsausstellung"', in: Reinhard Rürup (ed.): *Der lange Schatten des Nationalsozialismus. Geschichte, Geschichtspolitik und Erinnerungskultur*, Göttingen 2014, 184–204; Heribert Prantl (ed.): *Wehrmachtsverbrechen. Eine deutsche Kontroverse*, Hamburg 1997; Hans-Günther Thiele (ed.): *Die Wehrmachtsausstellung. Dokumentation einer Kontroverse*, Bonn 1997.

14 See Juliane Brauer and Irmgard Zündorf: 'DDR-Geschichte vermitteln. Lehren und Lernen an Orten der DDR-Geschichte', in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 70/7–8 (2019), 373–389, here 377.

15 Like Halbwegs, Warburg too engaged with the theories of sociologist Émile Durkheim. See Dorothee Bauerle: *Gespensstergeschichten für ganz Erwachsene. Ein Kommentar zu Aby Warburgs Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, Münster 1988, 35, note 1.

16 Photographs of individual panels of the atlas can be found on the website *Mnemosyne. Meandering through Aby Warburg's Atlas*, <https://live-warburglibrary-cornelledu.pantheonsite.io/>, last accessed: 27 August 2020, which was created to accompany Christopher D. Johnson: *Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg's Atlas of Images*, Ithaca 2012.

project was undergirded by theoretical concepts concerning the role of images in memory.

According to Warburg, experiences become materialised in expressive movements that are captured in works of art in the form of specific pictorial formulas.¹⁷ In these ‘pathos formulas’ – the term coined by Warburg – the ‘extremes of human experience’ are manifested, which ‘imprint themselves on the collective memory’.¹⁸ What matters here is that, according to Warburg, the affective potential of these pathos formulas, such as the fears and forms of excitation inscribed in the images, continues to exercise an effect generations later. Images, then, unconsciously transmit past experiences that may be reactivated when viewed. Warburg was interested in ancient pictorial formulas, which were incorporated into Renaissance artworks to increase the expressive power of images, from an art historical perspective.¹⁹ Yet the notion that images possess an affective power in addition to their memory-related potential is of more far-reaching significance. It must always be borne in mind when dealing with images in public history contexts.

Visual memory
in photographs

Anthropologist Cornelia Brink, in her analysis of the ‘public use of photographs from Nazi concentration camps after 1945’ (to translate the subtitle of her study), has shown that these images are oriented towards older pictorial traditions and thus build on specific habits of seeing and emotional states, which are reactivated when the images are presented in public.²⁰ Critical analysis of the selection of images in exhibitions, therefore, not only allows us to draw interesting conclusions about the intended function of photographs in a given exhibition context (for example, to document an event, to arouse compassion, to shock or confront the observer). It also sheds

¹⁷ Peter Burke refers to this observation by Warburg when he points out in his essay on social memory that remembering entails drawing on schemas and that as a result myths are reproduced. Warburg’s pathos formulas can thus be understood as schemas. See Peter Burke: ‘Geschichte als soziales Gedächtnis’, in: Aleida Assmann and Dietrich Harth (eds.): *Mnemosyne. Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung*, Frankfurt a.M. 1995, 289–304.

¹⁸ Bauerle: *Gespensstergeschichten für ganz Erwachsene*, 38.

¹⁹ Aleida Assmann: *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, Munich 2003, 226.

²⁰ Cornelia Brink: *Ikonen der Vernichtung. Öffentlicher Gebrauch von Fotografien aus nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern nach 1945*, Berlin 1998, 17.

light on the interpretation undergirding a particular presentation of a historical event. Thus, depending on the selection and combination of images, an exhibition may either tackle the ‘crimes against the European Jews’ or focus on the ‘suffering of the Jews’.

9.2.3 Cultural memory

Systematic study of collective memory began in Western Europe in the 1980s, when society’s efforts to get to grips with its own past became increasingly important. In addition to memories themselves, a renegotiation of practices and modes of remembrance also took place in this context. Scholars of literature and culture began to take a greater interest in the forms and dynamics of collective memory, while memories also became established as a topic in academic history, in substantial part as a result of new methodological approaches such as oral history.

In the German-speaking world, it was chiefly Egyptologist Jan Assmann and literary scholar Aleida Assmann who influenced the terminology. Both analysed the forms and transformations of memory from a cultural perspective. Their model of memory was developed in light of diverse phenomena from a wide range of eras, including the mnemonic techniques of non-literate cultures, Jewish festivals commemorating pre-biblical experiences of exile, Shakespeare’s historical dramas and installations by contemporary artists. Building on Halbwachs’ concept of memory, Aleida and Jan Assmann distinguish between two forms of collective memory: cultural memory and communicative memory. Cultural memory is understood as spanning historical eras, situated within the realm of an objectivised culture (*objektivierte Kultur*)²¹ and supported through normative texts.²² As a collective term, cultural memory refers to ‘all knowledge that guides action and experience within the specific interactional framework of a society and is available across generations for repeated practice (*Einübung*) and instruction

Aleida and Jan Assmann: communicative and cultural memory

²¹ Jan Assmann: ‘Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität’, in: Jan Assmann and Tonio Hölscher (eds.): *Kultur und Gedächtnis*, Frankfurt a.M. 1988, 9–19, here 11.

²² A. Assmann: *Erinnerungsräume*, 13.

(*Einweisung*)'.²³ In contrast, communicative memory refers to the recollections of contemporary witnesses that are passed on orally and updated within everyday communication, and that typically span three to four generations.²⁴ The transition from vivid shared memory to the official transmission of cultural memory takes place through objectivation, such as the writing down of personal memories, monuments, archiving, compulsory school curricula and forms of ritualisation, such as days of remembrance.²⁵

Functional and stored
memory

Aleida Assmann also distinguishes between functional and stored memory.²⁶ What she calls functional memory is the necessarily selective memory on which a community draws as it constructs meaning and forms an identity, whereas stored memory is a reservoir of unstructured, unused memories. However, the content of stored memory can be updated at any time and thus become a component of functional memory. While memories in the functional memory are permanently in use, stored memory is dependent on media such as writing, which make it possible to store information about the past independently of present memory. In European societies, it is usually archives and museums that collect and maintain documents and objects from the past and thus function as literal 'storage'.

Forgetting and
updating

This differentiation of cultural memory highlights another key, though usually implicit, element in various theories of memory: remembering is contrasted with forgetting. Forgetting is a necessary process, as not all information about the past that is available in literate cultures can be remembered in the present. The distinction between functional and stored memory takes account of the fact that what has come down to us from posterity and past experiences are not lost, even if they play no role in current meaning-making pro-

23 J. Assmann: 'Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität', 9.

24 Jan Assmann: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, Munich 2000, 50; A. Assmann: *Erinnerungsräume*, 13.

25 Jan Assmann refers to the model of a 'floating gap' between communicative and cultural memory, which describes the period in which it is decided what content is to be transferred from communicative to cultural memory and thus secured in the long term. In societies that do not pass on their knowledge in exclusively oral fashion, however, such gaps are rarely to be found. See J. Assmann: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 48 ff.

26 See A. Assmann: *Erinnerungsräume*, 133 ff.

cesses. They are located in the stored memory and can potentially be updated, just like the holdings in a museum depot in the case of cultural memory. The material testimony gathered there can be re-interrogated at any time in response to impulses from the present and may be reintroduced into an exhibition with an updated interpretation.

Conversely, there is also an active and mostly ritualised practice of forgetting in which – as in colonial aphasia or *damnatio memoriae* – a social prohibition on remembering is imposed or a memory gap is intentionally produced.²⁷ In the case of ancient Rome, a good deal of research has been done on the ‘damnation of memory’, which entailed the destruction of material evidence and objects of remembrance, such as statues and records, or the erasure of names from public inscriptions.²⁸ This type of visible deletion simultaneously highlights the imperative to remember the *damnatio memoriae* itself. The academic study of colonial ‘aphasia’, by way of contrast, is still in its infancy. This aphasia in relation to our colonial past reflects the failure to engage properly with colonialism, which contributed so much to the wealth and knowledge of modern Europe but is often ignored in historical accounts.²⁹ In addition to postcolonial studies, whose theoretical concepts have yet to be widely received in the German-speaking countries, the attempt to come to terms with Europe’s colonial heritage is currently being pursued chiefly in the context of debates on the restitution of cultural assets and provenance research.³⁰

*Damnatio
memoriae* and
colonial
aphasia

²⁷ On the concept of colonial aphasia, see Ann Laura Stoler: ‘Colonial Aphasia. Race and Disabled Histories in France’, in: *Public Culture* 23/1 (2011), 121–156, here 125; on *damnatio memoriae*, see Florian Greßhake: *Damnatio memoriae. Ein Theorieentwurf zum Denkmalsturz*, Munich 2010.

²⁸ Harriet I. Flower: *The Art of Forgetting. Disgrace and Oblivion in Roman Political Culture*, Chapel Hill 2006; Eric Varner: *Mutilation and Transformation. Damnatio memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture*, Leiden and Boston 2004.

²⁹ See Ann Laura Stoler: *Duress. Imperial Durabilities in our Times*, Durham 2016; Britta Schilling: *Postcolonial Germany. Memories of Empires in a Decolonised Nation*, Oxford 2014; Paul Bijl: *Emerging Memory. Photographs of Colonial Atrocity in Dutch Cultural Remembrance*, Amsterdam 2016.

³⁰ See, for example, Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr: *Zurückgeben. Über die Restitution afrikanischer Kulturgüter*, Berlin 2019; Larissa Förster and Holger Stoecker: *Haut, Haar und Knochen. Koloniale Spuren in naturkundlichen Sammlungen der Universität Jena*, Weimar 2016; Daniel Morat: ‘Katalysator wider Willen. Das Humboldt Forum in Berlin und die deutsche Kolonialvergangenheit’, in: *Zeit-historische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 16/1 (2019), 140–153.

Political dimensions
of forgetting

The political dimension of forgetting is not only evident in the case of totalitarian regimes that prohibit the remembrance of resistance movements or political opponents or that are themselves supposed to be forgotten following their demise, as in the case of Stalinism. Forgetting was also a core prerequisite for colonialism, which denied the reality of the colonised countries' rich cultures or destroyed them in order to establish itself as a civilising project. This effacement of cultural traditions is described by Aimé Césaire as a 'forgetting machine'.³¹ When colonial rule came to an end, the violence it entailed was forgotten in many European countries – as a precondition for the retrospective idealization of the colonial project. In recent times, both academia and public history have begun to critically examine these topics.³² It is against this backdrop that the Black Lives Matter movement provided impetus for change in Europe in 2020.

The long silence about Nazi crimes of violence in post-war West German society can be understood in the same terms.³³ This silence not only acted as a mechanism of exoneration, but also established a 'complicity' that held society together in the founding phase of the FRG – often at the expense of the victims and the persecuted. Aleida Assmann mentions silence, victim syndrome and anti-communism in this context as mechanisms deployed to ward off guilt while at the same time freezing memory.³⁴

³¹ Aimé Césaire: *Discourse on Colonialism*, New York 2000 (French orig. 1955), 52.

³² For example, dedicated public historians in Bonn (<https://decolonize-bonn.de>), Munich (<https://mapping.postkolonial.net>), Frankfurt (frankfurt.postkolonial.net) and Amsterdam (<https://mappingslavery.nl/en>) offer city tours on the colonial past of their own municipality (last accessed on 27 August 2020). Museums too are (once again) increasingly asking themselves how they might exhibit the colonial past and are grappling with the provenance of their collections; see note 30.

³³ Representative of the large amount of research on this topic are: Dan Bar-On: *Die Last des Schweigens. Gespräche mit Kindern von Nazi-Tätern*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1996; Helmut Dubiel: *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte. Die nationalsozialistische Herrschaft in den Debatten des Deutschen Bundestags*, Munich 1999; Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert: *Geschichtsvergessenheit – Geschichtsversessenheit. Vom Umgang mit deutschen Vergangenheiten nach 1945*, Stuttgart 1999; Micha Brumlik et al. (eds.): *Umkämpftes Vergessen. Walser-Debatte, Holocaust-Mahnmal und neuere deutsche Geschichtspolitik*, Berlin 2000; Manfred Hettling: 'Die Historisierung der Erinnerung – Westdeutsche Rezeption der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit', in: *TelAviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte*, 29 (2000), 357–378.

³⁴ See part 1, by Assmann, in: Assmann and Frevert: *Geschichtsvergessenheit – Geschichtsversessenheit*; Lars Rensmann: 'Baustein der Erinnerungspolitik.

Dealing with the past, coming to terms with the past, and the politics of history

The term ‘dealing with the past’ (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) was coined in the early Federal Republic of Germany and essentially refers to efforts to overcome the legal, political, economic and social consequences of Nazi crimes and moderate them domestically. It thus refers to the attempts in post-war West German society to live with the Nazi past. In the scholarship on contemporary history, the term ‘dealing with the past’ is controversial. It is usually placed in inverted commas as it implies that grappling with one’s responsibility and guilt is a completable process that ends when the guilty past has been dealt with. Yet the past cannot be undone and getting to grips with it must not mean drawing a line under it. This is why the term ‘coming to terms with the past’ (*Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*) was proposed as an alternative. A much more active notion, it suggests a process with no definable end, one spanning generations. It highlights the political and social task of ongoing confrontation with past violence and injustice, regardless of whether individuals need to ‘deal with’ the consequences of their own involvement. In the same vein, ‘coming to terms with the past’ has also been applied since the early 1990s to efforts to process the history of the GDR.

The term ‘politics of history’ (*Geschichtspolitik*), meanwhile, was coined by West German historians in the 1980s. The key focus here is on the strategies and decisions made by political office-holders in the first post-war decade as they sought to establish and cement certain memories, and practices of remembrance, in order to regulate what was and was not remembered. This term highlights the targeted political approach to memory and forgetting from the Adenauer era onwards.

Recommended reading

Assmann, Aleida: *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*, Bonn 2007; Dudek, Peter: “‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’”. Zur Problematik eines umstrittenen Begriffs’, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 1–2 (1992), 44–53; Ulrike Jureit and Christian Schneider: *Gefühlte Opfer. Illusion der Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, Stuttgart 2010; Eckel, Jan and Moisel, Claudia (eds.): *Universalisierung des Holocaust? Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik in internationaler Perspektive*, Göttingen 2008; Frei, Norbert: *Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit*, Munich 1996; Troebst, Stefan: ‘Geschichtspolitik (Version: 1.0)’, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 4 August 2014, <https://docupedia.de/zg/Geschichtspolitik?oldid=125442>.

Die politische Textur der Bundestagsdebatte über ein zentrales “Holocaust-Mahnmal”, in: Micha Brumlik et al. (eds.): *Umkämpftes Vergessen. Walser-Debatte, Holocaust-Mahnmal und neuere deutsche Geschichtspolitik*, Berlin 2000, 135–167, here 140–142.

Trauma as a form of forgetting

Individual memory too is characterised by the forgetting of events that are not actively remembered. Trauma, meanwhile, is a particular form of forgetting. In the case of traumatic experiences, the ‘observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are knocked out, malfunction’.³⁵ As a result, the traumatising events can only be remembered fragmentarily or not at all. It is therefore impossible to pass on memories verbally to subsequent generations. In the case of collectively shared traumas, such as those triggered by war or genocide, it is primarily ‘cultural objectifications’ (literature, art, films, and so on) that enable subsequent generations to learn more about the traumatic experiences of those affected. This is why not just psychology and medicine, but also the cultural sciences explore traumas.³⁶ In contemporary societies, growing attention has been paid to the transgenerational after-effects of historical traumas, such as slavery, or the genocide of indigenous peoples and European Jews.³⁷

9.2.4 Media of memory

The analyses produced by Aleida and Jan Assmann, along with numerous other authors, underline the crucial role played by media

³⁵ Dori Laub: ‘Bearing Witness or the Vicissitude of Listening,’ in: Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub: *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York 1992, 57–74, here 57.

³⁶ Literary scholar Marianne Hirsch, for example, has coined the term *postmemory* to characterise more precisely and analyse the relationship between people who have had a traumatic experience and the subsequent generation, Marianne Hirsch: *Family Frames. Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, Cambridge (MA) 1997.

³⁷ See, for example, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart: ‘*Oyate Ptayela: Rebuilding the Lakota Nation Through Addressing Historical Trauma Among Lakota Parents*’, in: *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 2/1–2 (1999), 109–126; Dan Bar-On et al.: ‘Multigenerational Perspectives on Coping with the Holocaust Experience: An Attachment Perspective for Understanding the Developmental Sequelae of Trauma Across Generations’, in: *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 22/2 (1998), 315–338; Joy DeGruy: *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome. America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*, Milwaukee 2005. For a comprehensive overview of research, see Nathaniel Vincent Mohatt et al.: ‘Historical Trauma as Public Narrative: A Conceptual Review of How History Impacts Present-Day Health’, in: *Social Science & Medicine* 106 (2014), 128–136.

in the remembrance or commemoration of past events. The concept of media used in this context is generally a broad one. In addition to writing and images, Aleida and Jan Assmann also understand the body, for instance, as a medium in which memories are inscribed and through which remembrance rituals are performed. Halbwachs already pointed out that geographical places can function as memory media, a point we will come back to later. Astrid Erll, conversely, focuses on the various *functions* fulfilled by media in the process of remembering. She distinguishes between media as instruments that make memory-relevant communication possible in the first place (such as language or writing), media as technologies enabling the dissemination and transmission of memory content (such as writing or the Internet), and media as cultural objectivations that facilitate memories in concrete ways (such as photographs in the family album). In addition, she highlights the institutionalisation and functionalisation of media within the framework of cultures of remembrance.³⁸

Research in the cultural sciences on the topic of memory is primarily interested in media as cultural objectivations, foregrounding media offerings that are centred on the culture of remembrance and spotlighting their content, meanings and forms. Scholars in the field examine, for example, memory narratives in literature, comics or films, compare different genres or literary forms (epic, tragedy, and so on) and analyse narrative structures (a-chronological, flashbacks and the like). The use of social media to remember historical events is another growing focus of attention.³⁹

The (medial) transmission of memories utilises existing schemas. These are cognitive structures activated to categorise events and

Schemas as cognitive structures

38 Astrid Erll: 'Medium des kollektiven Gedächtnisses: Ein (erinnerungs-)kulturwissenschaftlicher Kompaktbegriff', in: Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (eds.): *Medien des kollektiven Gedächtnisses. Konstruktivität, Historizität, Kulturspezifität*, Berlin 2004, 3–22, here 15 f.

39 Examples include: Hannes Burkhardt: 'Anne Frank auf Facebook. Erinnerungskulturen im Social Web zwischen Trivialisierung und innovativer Erinnerungsarbeit', in: Peter Seibert et al. (eds.): *Anne Frank. Mediengeschichten*, Berlin 2014, 136–163; Christian Bunnenberg and Nils Steffen (eds.): *Geschichte auf YouTube. Neue Herausforderungen für Geschichtsvermittlung und historische Bildung*, Berlin 2019; Gerd Sebald and Marie-Kristin Döbler (eds.): *(Digitale) Medien und soziale Gedächtnisse*, Wiesbaden 2018.

experiences, making it easier to deal with the environment and lending structure to knowledge. Historian Peter Burke used this term, which is informed by theories of cognition, in his reflections on social memory (his term), pointing out that the representation of the past is geared towards existing models.⁴⁰ As an example, he cites *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come* by John Bunyan, published in 1678, which was available for use as a schema for the perception of the First World War; this in turn shaped the reception of the Second World War. Akin to the pathos formulas analysed by Warburg, schemas give structure to the production of meaning and provide a framework for both individual and collective memory.

While the form and content of medial mechanisms for remembering have been extensively researched, as yet there has been no systematic examination of the specific characteristics and memory-related potential of the different kinds of media and their varying forms of materiality (such as the difference between photographs shown in an exhibition in the [original] small-scale format typical of the era involved, those printed in large format on an exhibition wall and those projected onto a surface as part of an installation). Only a few media studies scholars have addressed the issue of materiality or considered the different media *dispositifs* in which cultures of remembrance are embedded.

Prosthetic memories

Film scholar Alison Landsberg, for example, explores a form of remembering that has emerged through the development of mass media, and film in particular, which she calls *prosthetic memory*.⁴¹ This encompasses memories that are not 'one's own' because the events were not witnessed personally, but which are nevertheless part of a person's pool of experience because they were 'relived' in the cinema, theatre or museum. *Prosthetic memories* are 'privately felt public memories that develop after an encounter with a mass cultural representation of the past, when new images and ideas come into contact with a person's own archive of experience'.⁴² *Prosthetic memories* thus transcend the mere understanding of past events and

⁴⁰ Peter Burke: *Varieties of Cultural History*, Ithaca (NY) 1997, 49 f.

⁴¹ Alison Landsberg: *Prosthetic Memory. The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York 2004.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 19.

set in motion a personal engagement that may itself have an impact on subjects.⁴³

These 'prosthetic memories' arise when specific representations of the past generate resonance with individual experiences (see Chapter 4) and when a given performance of history is linked to a physical or sensory experience. Some media are better able to affect people in this way than others. Marianne Hirsch emphasises the affecting power of photographs, which often appeal to viewers more directly and physically than narratives can.⁴⁴

Affecting through
resonance

Films and television programmes deploy a broad repertoire of techniques (including camera work, editing, and the use of sounds and music) to affect their audience, to move them to tears, for example. In line with this, Landsberg describes the US mini-series *Roots*, broadcast in 1977, as a *prosthetic memory* that prompted viewers to remember slavery regardless of their origin and skin colour. One interesting feature of Landsberg's reflections is her reference to people's knowledge of the difference between their own memory and the images and narratives presented. Although we experience the past depicted in films, plays or digital games intensely, as viewers, visitors or users we are aware that we are in the cinema, theatre or in front of a screen and that this depiction is not our own, self-experienced past.

Social psychologist Harald Welzer and his colleagues conducted a multi-generational study on the transmission of memories of Nazism and the Holocaust. He too underscores the potent impact of films. With regard to the historical awareness of National Socialism, his research team shows that among the grandchildren of those who experienced life under Hitler, 'visual clichés and film scenes are interwoven indistinguishably with the autobiographical accounts' of contemporary witnesses.⁴⁵

Overlays

Jeffrey Shandler, meanwhile, has used eyewitness accounts from the Visual History Archive at the USC Shoah Foundation to examine the ways in which Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List* (United States, 1993) is integrated into the narratives of Holocaust

⁴³ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁴ Marianne Hirsch: *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, New York 2012, 39.

⁴⁵ Harald Welzer et al.: 'Opa war kein Nazi'. *Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis*, 3rd edn., Frankfurt a.M. 2002, here 106.

survivors.⁴⁶ It emerges that not only do collectively shared memories permeate each other, as already described by Maurice Halbwachs, but representations circulating in the mass media are also reflected in the accounts and memories of contemporary witnesses.

9.2.5 Realms of memory

We have already seen clear evidence that collective memories help social groups form an identity. One variant of this process serves to create national meaning. Historian Pierre Nora coined the term ‘realms of memory’ in late 1970s France. His notion of *lieux de mémoire* does not necessarily refer to a geographical location, but includes days of remembrance, people, key events, texts, objects, and so on. Between 1984 and 1992, Nora published a seven-volume compendium in an attempt to capture French national memory using examples as diverse as Joan of Arc, the Marseillaise, Verdun and the Tour de France.⁴⁷

Pierre Nora: *lieux de mémoire*

In his theoretical reflections on this project, Nora defines a *lieu de mémoire* as ‘any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community’.⁴⁸ He distinguishes between the material, symbolic and functional levels of *lieux de mémoire*; though these are present in every realm of memory, their significance varies.⁴⁹ For example, the social structures of memories attain visibility in archives (materially), minutes of silence (symbolically) and textbooks (functionally). Nora advocates for ‘history of the second degree’, which is ‘less interested in events themselves than in the construction of events over time, in

⁴⁶ Jeffrey Shandler: *Holocaust Memory in the Digital Age. Survivors’ Stories and New Media Practices*, Stanford 2017.

⁴⁷ See Pierre Nora (ed.): *Les lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols., Paris 1984–1992: *I. La République* (1984); *II. La Nation*, 3 vols. (1986); *III. Les France*, 3 vols. (1992).

⁴⁸ Pierre Nora: ‘From Lieux de mémoire to Realms of Memory. Preface to the English-Language Edition’, in: Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzmann (eds.): *Realms of Memory. Rethinking the French Past*, New York 1996, xv–xxiv, here xvii.

⁴⁹ See Pierre Nora: ‘Between History and Memory: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, in *Representations*, No. 26, special issue: ‘Memory and Counter-memory’ (Spring 1989) 7–24, here 19.

the disappearance and reemergence of their significations; less interested in “what actually happened” than in its perpetual reuse and misuse, its influence on successive presents; less interested in traditions than in the way in which traditions are constituted and passed on’.⁵⁰ He sees the role of historians as facilitating collective ‘self-exploration’ by enabling society to engage with all the pieces of a ‘fragmented national memory’.⁵¹

The concept of *lieux de mémoire* has been taken up in a number of countries. Publications on (national) realms of memory that include examination of non-geographical sites have appeared in Germany, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Canada.⁵² Here the concept of a realm of memory is mostly understood as a metaphor, one that highlights a focal point of collective memory and identity.⁵³

The concept of realms of memory is often seen as problematic, chiefly because of its national orientation. The premise of a central political entity, which was commonplace in the historiography of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ignores the constructed nature of national identity, a phenomenon analysed in detail in studies on the ‘invention of the nation’⁵⁴ and the ‘invention of traditions’.⁵⁵ The linkage of nation and collective memory naturalises decisions

Memory and nation

⁵⁰ Pierre Nora: ‘From *Lieux de mémoire* to Realms of Memory’, xxiv.

⁵¹ Pierre Nora in Cornelia Siebeck: ‘Erinnerungsorte, *Lieux de Mémoire* (Version: 1.0)’, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 2 March 2017, https://docupedia.de/zg/Siebeck_erinnerungsorte_v1_de_2017?oldid=126408.

⁵² For example, on Germany: Etienne François and Hagen Schulze (eds.): *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, 3 vols., Munich 2001; on the Netherlands: Wim van den Doel (ed.): *Plaatsen van Herinnering. Nederland in de twintigste eeuw*, Amsterdam 2005; on Luxembourg: Sonja Kmec et al.: *Lieux de mémoire au Luxembourg. Usages du passé et construction nationale/Erinnerungsorte in Luxemburg. Umgang mit der Vergangenheit und Konstruktion der Nation*, Luxembourg 2007; on Canada: Thomas Henry Bull Symons (ed.): *Les Lieux de la mémoire. La commémoration du passé au Canada*, Ottawa 1997.

⁵³ See Hans-Henning Hahn et al.: *Deutsch-polnische Erinnerungsorte – Polsko-Niemieckie Miejsca Pamięci. Re-Interpretationen und ein neues Forschungskonzept*, Zentrum für historische Forschung Berlin der Polnischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 5th edn., October 2009, 18; Siebeck: ‘Erinnerungsorte’.

⁵⁴ See Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London and New York 1983.

⁵⁵ For an introduction, see: Eric Hobsbawm: ‘Inventing Traditions’, in: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.): *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983, 1–14.

anchored in the politics of history (for instance, concerning days of remembrance or monuments): specific events appear as the ‘commemorative heritage’ of a nation. Further, a homogeneous community of remembrance is posited without evidence that a country’s population, which is usually highly heterogeneous, does in fact share the same memories. Through their practices outside the universities, the various history movements in Germany, which foreground a ‘history from below’ in the shape of history workshops and neighbourhood associations, have already demonstrated to impressive effect that a culture of remembrance is often locally situated and can exist on both a micro and meso level.

Increasing awareness of transnational and global interconnections and interdependencies has altered the concept of realms of memory. Although the nation remains the key frame of reference, interest is now focused on transnational memories, as in (geographically understood) ‘German-Polish realms of memory’, or ‘European realms of memory’.⁵⁶ Further, a growing number of studies refer to local or transregional phenomena, as exemplified by the ‘shadow places’ discussed by Martin Sabrow or Stefanie Eisenhuth, and the study on transmunicipal realms of memory by Christine Gundermann.⁵⁷

9.2.6 Fluid memory

Cosmopolitan memory As an alternative to the national perspective on the culture of remembrance, Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider propose the concept of *cosmopolitan memory*. On the basis of Holocaust remembrance in the Federal Republic of Germany, the United States and Israel, they point out that mnemonic commonalities already existed in the post-war years despite national and cultural specificities.⁵⁸ These sociologists

⁵⁶ Hans-Henning Hahn et al. (eds.): *Deutsch-Polnische Erinnerungsorte*, 5 vols., Paderborn 2012–2015; Pim den Boer et al. (eds.): *Europäische Erinnerungsorte*, 3 vols., Munich 2012.

⁵⁷ See Stefanie Eisenhuth and Martin Sabrow (eds.): *Schattenorte. Stadtimages und Vergangenheitslasten*, Göttingen 2017; Christine Gundermann: *Die versöhnten Bürger. Der Zweite Weltkrieg in deutsch-niederländischen Begegnungen 1945–2000*, Münster 2014.

⁵⁸ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider: *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, Philadelphia 2006, 57 ff.

then observe a universalisation or cosmopolitanisation of Holocaust remembrance from the 1990s onwards. In the course of this process, they assert, the event was decontextualised and became a moral benchmark for identification with humanistic values. Levy and Sznajder discuss this cosmopolitanisation against the backdrop of a ‘second modernity’, as manifest above all in the ‘de-territorialization of politics and culture’,⁵⁹ to which the transnational exchange of mass medial forms of remembrance has made a significant contribution. They argue that in the case of Holocaust remembrance, the global circulation of images and narratives results in the intermingling of the perspectives of perpetrators, victims and rescuers, such that viewers receive a wide range of options for identification.

Astrid Erll is also interested in a culture of remembrance that transcends political and cultural boundaries, a culture whose dynamics she tries to grasp through the terms *transcultural* and *travelling memory*.⁶⁰ In her studies, Erll emphasises the need to focus on processes of remembering that occur beyond or across territorial and social borders, thus problematising the assumption of a homogeneous and stable identity that underlies many concepts of memory. In contrast to an analysis of converging cultures of remembrance, to which the concept of cosmopolitan memory lends itself,⁶¹ Erll’s ideas can be used to analyse how memories circulate and change in a specific context. For example, Erll used the Indian Rebellion against British colonial rule in 1857 to bring out the transformations of (Indian and British) narratives of remembrance that took place during the transition from empire to a post-colonial or multicultural society.⁶² Through her dynamic conception of memory, Erll pays

Transcultural memory
and travelling memory

⁵⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁰ Astrid Erll: ‘Travelling Memory’, in: *Parallax* 17/4 (2011), special issue: ‘Transcultural Memory’, 4–18.

⁶¹ In the introduction to the German version of the book, Levy and Sznajder point out that memories are not homogenised in cosmopolitan memory, which is in fact a context-dependent universal memory. See Levy and Sznajder: *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust*, Frankfurt a.M. 2001, 30.

⁶² Astrid Erll: ‘Remembering across Time, Space, and Cultures: Premediation, Remediation and the “Indian Mutiny”’, in: Astrid Erll and Anne Rigney (eds.): *Mediation, Remediation and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, New York 2009, 109–138.

Multidirectional
memory

attention to the specific constellations of a globalised world in which diverse, constantly changing options for remembrance circulate.⁶³

While the concepts of cosmopolitan or transcultural memory focus on changes in the commemoration of a past event, Michael Rothberg addresses the connection between memories of *different* events.⁶⁴ He too notes the globalisation of Holocaust remembrance, but in his analysis he explores the similarities and links with remembrance practices focused on the crimes of colonialism, among other things. He understands the mutual referencing that goes on in that context not as competition between victim stories, but as a *multidirectional memory* that enables the articulation of traumatic events whose painful consequences have yet to be fully acknowledged. After the Second World War, for example, references to the Holocaust lent a new emphasis to the memory of slavery, with the history of enslavement being simultaneously incorporated into the perception and description of the Holocaust. More recent crimes are also provided with a framework through such references, as in the case of the ‘ethnic cleansing’ that occurred during the Bosnian War (1992–1995). With reference to the war of independence in Algeria (1954–1962), Rothberg shows, among other things, how torture, racism and the establishment of internment camps under French colonial rule were linked to the incipient remembering of the Second World War in France.

The various theoretical conceptions of remembrance or memory help clarify the diverse perspectives available to those seeking to implement public history projects. Past events may, for example, be presented as national or global history. But it is also possible to attribute a universal meaning to them, to emphasise the diverse forms of their remembrance and commemoration, or to highlight the dynamics of a constantly transforming memory. Through the use of specific media, visitors, viewers and users may be addressed with varying degrees of emphasis on the senses and emotions, and invited to engage personally with the past.

⁶³ Erl: ‘Travelling Memory’.

⁶⁴ Michael Rothberg: *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford 2009.

9.3 Operationalisation: (contemporary) witnesses of the Holocaust

By probing memories of the Holocaust, we can bring out the extent to which theoretical ideas about cultural memory can be operationalised both for critical analysis and within the practice of public history.

Witnesses to the systematic disenfranchisement, persecution and annihilation of the Jewish population of Europe have exchanged their views on these events from the outset. Not only did survivors communicate what happened to them in many different ways, but those who were not persecuted by the Nazis also shared their memories of events, through conversations about neighbours who had disappeared, for example. In this communication, the events in question were integrated into a semantic framework that in turn shaped individual memories, as described in a number of theories of memory.

Diaries documenting these horrors or literary works published soon after the Second World War represent objectivations that are available to cultural memory today as means of remembering the Holocaust.⁶⁵ Photographs and film footage taken after the liberation of the concentration camps⁶⁶ are also among these objectivations, as are the numerous audio documents and video testimonies in which Holocaust survivors describe their lives or contemporary witnesses recall their past experiences.⁶⁷ All of these formats and media entail the use of narrative models, visual motifs and schemas to depict and remember the Holocaust; these endow the events with meaning and emphasise specific forms of significance. Photographs and film footage of liberated concentration camps, for example, emphasise the need

Memories and cultural memory

65 See Lawrence L. Langer: *Holocaust Testimonies. The Ruins of Memory*, New Haven 1991; James E. Young: *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*, Bloomington 1988.

66 See Barbie Zelizer: *Remembering to Forget. Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye*, Chicago 1998.

67 As early as the summer of 1946, US psychologist David Boder conducted interviews with concentration camp survivors, focussing on information about individuals and their lives. See Alan Rosen: *The Wonder of Their Voices. The 1946 Holocaust Interviews of David Boder*, Oxford 2010. On the special nature of the interviews, see Judith Keilbach: 'Mikrofon, Videotape, Datenbank. Überlegungen zu einer Mediengeschichte der Zeitzeugen', in: Martin Sabrow and Norbert Frei (eds.): *Die Geburt des Zeitzeugen nach 1945*, Göttingen 2012, 281–299, here 285 ff. The recording of video testimonies began in the early 1980s; see *ibid.*, 294 ff.

to bear witness,⁶⁸ while autobiographical narratives entail efforts to construct one's life as a continuum despite traumatic experiences.⁶⁹

The memories of contemporary witnesses, as presented today in a public history context, are always preceded by processes of interpretation that have occurred through their exchanges with others or in connection with the meanings superimposed by the media – with regard to the Holocaust and many other events. The Holocaust, however, poses a particular problem with regard to witnessing: survivors are often traumatised by the inhuman events to which they were subjected. The conditions in the camps, the humiliation and the horrors of extermination were so harrowing that they often triggered profound psychological shock, such that the cognitive perception of traumatic situations was limited. Due to this psychological defence mechanism, some Holocaust survivors are not sure of the reality of their experiences. They doubt the factuality of the events,⁷⁰ remembering no more than fragments or nothing at all.

For fact-based attempts to represent the past, then, memories of traumatic experiences represent a special challenge.⁷¹ If these memories are presented in this context within public history, contemporary witnesses may be exposed to inappropriate criticism, as their credibility can be called into question by comparing them with other sources that guarantee a high degree of objectivity. For example, the memory of a Holocaust survivor who recalled four chimneys going up in flames during an uprising in Auschwitz was

⁶⁸ See Zelizer: *Remembering to Forget*.

⁶⁹ See Ulrike Jureit: *Erinnerungsmuster. Zur Methodik lebensgeschichtlicher Interviews mit Überlebenden der Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslager*, Hamburg 1999.

⁷⁰ Psychoanalyst Dori Laub attributes this in substantial part to the insidious nature of the events themselves, which were configured as an 'event without a witness'. See Dori Laub: 'An Event Without a Witness. Truth, Testimony and Survival', in: Shoshana Felmann and Dori Laub: *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York 1992, 75–92.

⁷¹ One strategy deployed by the defence lawyers in the first Frankfurt Auschwitz trial (1963–1965) was to cast doubt on the credibility of the victim-witnesses by highlighting contradictions and factual errors in their statements. See Devin O. Pendas: 'Der 1. Frankfurter Auschwitz-Prozess 1963–1965. Eine historische Einführung', in: Raphael Gross and Werner Renz (eds.): *Der Frankfurter Auschwitz-Prozess. Kommentierte Quellenedition*, vol. 1, Frankfurt a.M. 2013, 55–85, here 80.

dismissed as unreliable because this clashed with the number of chimneys actually destroyed.⁷² Such derogatory attitudes are in fact entirely inappropriate since memories are always ‘experiential syntheses’⁷³ and eyewitnesses of the Holocaust often remember only to a limited degree due to the trauma suffered. Their memories primarily provide insights into the meaning and significance they ascribe to past events. It is this subjectivity, which emerges in the narratives of contemporary witnesses, their ‘patterns of perception and memory, sensitivities and value judgements’,⁷⁴ that make interviews with contemporary witness so valuable. If they themselves fit their experiences into a historical context, they are engaging in historiography that goes beyond their experience as such. This too must be taken into account.

At the same time, the accounts of contemporary witnesses are invaluable for public history because the emotional force of their stories turns the communication of history into an experience (see Chapter 4) that may have a lasting effect on the listener. The personal accounts of contemporary witnesses are often characterised by a forcefulness and vividness that can trigger consternation and empathy in the listener. Holocaust survivors who visit school classes or appear in video interviews recalling the humiliations and atrocities they experienced often prompt others to engage with these events. This engagement is not focused on factual knowledge of past events or structures but (ideally) triggers efforts to put oneself in the speaker’s shoes and inspires empathy, in other words, it engenders emotional involvement (see Chapter 3). As ‘secondary witnesses’, listeners may then take on the responsibility of ensuring that Holocaust survivors’ testimonies are not forgotten.⁷⁵ This may be pursued by participating in meetings with survivors, recording life stories or collaborating on commemorative projects. Public history practitioners can help facilitate such involvement through decisions about the

Secondary witnessing

⁷² Laub: ‘Bearing Witness’, here 59 f.

⁷³ Jureit: *Erinnerungsmuster*.

⁷⁴ Cordula Tollmien: ‘Zeitzeugenbefragung am Beispiel der NS-Zwangsarbeiter’, in: *Archiv-Nachrichten Niedersachsen* 6 (2002), 9–21, here 9.

⁷⁵ Geoffrey Hartman refers to the ‘witness by adoption’ or ‘intellectual witness’ of the Holocaust. See Geoffrey Hartman: ‘Shoah and Intellectual Witness’, in *Partisan Review* 65, 1 (1998), 37–48, here 37 and 39.

framework of encounters with contemporary witnesses, such as the choice of location or the duration of dialogues.

Duration and
location

Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour documentary film *Shoah* (France, 1976–1985), for instance, makes 'secondary witnessing' possible by giving viewers the time to listen to lengthy accounts by Holocaust survivors without interruptions. For example, the scene in which – in a Tel Aviv hairdressing salon – Abraham Bomba talks about having to cut the hair of captives in Treblinka who were then immediately sent to the gas chamber, lasts 18 minutes.⁷⁶ The length and detail of these accounts distinguish *Shoah* from many other films and television programmes, but also from numerous exhibitions that merely present sound bites from interviews with contemporary witnesses. Due to their brevity, these statements cannot evoke empathetic participation to the same extent.

At the Information Centre that forms part of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, the seating and the intimate listening environment, created among other things by headphones, enable visitors to engage with audio or video testimony. The large number of testimonies available on computers in the publicly accessible video archive, meanwhile, makes contemplation more difficult: the decision to listen to a particular individual's account can be easily reversed at any moment.

Digital technologies

To keep the memory of the Holocaust alive, increasing use is also being made of social media. Through their integration into everyday life, these have the potential to forge prosthetic memories. Yet the extent to which this is successful depends not least on the form of the posts and the activities associated with a given profile. While 'Anne Frank' on Facebook (@annefrankauthor, @annefrankhouse), for example, shares information *about* Anne Frank, 'Eva Heyman' on Instagram (@eva.stories) posts her *own* stories,⁷⁷ which connect to her followers' experiential realm both aesthetically and in their nar-

⁷⁶ On the staging of this scene, see Brad Prager: 'The Real Abraham Bomba. Through Lanzmann's Looking Glass', in: Erin McGlothlin et al. (eds.): *The Construction of Testimony. Claude Lanzmann's Shoah and Its Outtakes*, Detroit 2020, 275–301.

⁷⁷ The stories are based on the diary of 13-year-old Éva Heyman, who was deported to Auschwitz in 1944 and murdered there. See Magdalena Pulz: 'Die Geschichte eines im Holocaust getöteten Mädchens als Instagram-Story. "Nach einer wahren Geschichte" fühlt sich hier wirklich wahr an', in: *jetzt*, 3 May 2019, <https://>

rative style. The USC Shoah Foundation, meanwhile, produces ‘interactive biographies’⁷⁸ to establish a personal connection between Holocaust survivors and visitors to museums and memorials. Life-size 3D projections of contemporary witnesses, who provide answers to a wide range of questions from visitors, are intended to create the impression of a personal conversation. Whether these answers are overshadowed by the novelty of the technology or whether they, like narratives, are capable of affecting the viewer is yet to be analysed. Overall, archives such as the USC Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archive – which has collected over 50,000 video testimonies from Holocaust survivors and has made them searchable and, in some cases, retrievable online with the help of a database – ensure that the Holocaust is preserved in cultural memory rather than slipping into oblivion.⁷⁹

One of the responsibilities of many public historians is to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive in the cultural memory. This they accomplish through exhibitions, films, memorial events, social media posts, commemorative plaques (*Stolpersteine*, literally ‘stumbling stones’) and much more. These contributions can in turn be critically analysed from a meta-perspective using the theoretical concepts discussed here. We might, for example, scrutinise the transformations in representations and narratives of the Holocaust manifest in the transition from communicative to cultural memory, or explore differences rooted in a given historical, political, or societal context of remembrance (with regard to memorial sites or transcultural memory). The specific patterns and schemas on which memories of the past draw and their political implications can be investigated, as can the media contexts and characteristics that help shape and transform cultural memory.

Critical analyses

www.jetzt.de/digital/holocaust-instagramstories-spielen-wahre-geschichte-nach, last accessed: 24 November 2020.

⁷⁸ The USC Shoah Foundation explicitly rejects the use of the term ‘hologram’. See the FAQs published as a PDF: https://sfi.usc.edu/sites/default/files/docfiles/dit_general_faq_20200220.pdf, last accessed: 24 November 2020.

⁷⁹ On the problematic aspects of this archive, in particular indexing, accessibility and circulation on the Internet, see Judith Keilbach: ‘Collecting, Indexing and Digitizing Survivors. Holocaust Testimonies in the Digital Age’, in: Axel Bangert et al. (eds.): *Holocaust Intersections. Genocide and Visual Culture at the New Millennium*, Oxford 2013, 46–63.

In addition, one might critically analyse the various remembrance practices in light of their approach to contemporary witnesses, probe the role of the latter within a specific public history project and examine the global circulation of interviews with them. Are the latter deployed to present new technologies, to emphasise the universality of human rights (cosmopolitan memory) or to give present-day individuals some sense of the suffering and horror experienced at other times and in other regions (multidirectional memories)?

9.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have presented a number of concepts of memory at large within the cultural sciences, bringing out their relevance and productive potential for public history. As we see it, the conceptual distinctions found in the research literature, which can generally be traced back to their (historical, national and disciplinary) contexts of origin, rather than implying a need to prioritise conceptual work as such, underscore the imperative of working critically with these concepts. The ideas presented here focus on a variety of phenomena, practices and media that – in all their diversity and interactions – characterise our present.

It is above all via the fields of modern and contemporary history that concepts of memory have become established within the discipline of history. The coining of the term ‘culture of remembrance’ in particular highlights competing concepts from other sub-disciplines. We have briefly touched on reception research and its significance to ancient history; the concept of *memoria*, meanwhile, is the point of departure for those seeking to determine the relevance of memory in medieval studies; and history didactics has been the main source of the concept of historical culture (see Chapter 6). In recent years, there has been greater convergence with respect to the latter concept in particular: research in contemporary history makes more frequent reference to historical culture and many writings in history didactics now work with concepts of memory as well. Can we systematically distinguish these two approaches? In terms of their origins, we can do so with great precision, as the chapter in this book on historical culture demonstrates. It seems that concepts of memory have focused more on deep chronological structures, while concepts

centred on historical cultures pay greater attention to differences within a given present. Both approaches emphasise the importance of memory/history for people as social beings. However, when these concepts are used to analyse cultural objectifications with a historical dimension, both exhibit a weakness: neither approach foregrounds the economic dimension of history- and memory-centred products, such as exhibitions or games, an aspect that requires explicit elucidation. This, however, should not be taken as an argument against these conceptual approaches, but as an invitation to consider them through an always critical and reflexive lens.

Introductory literature

Assmann, Aleida: *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, Munich 2003.

Erll, Astrid: *Memory in Culture*, New York 2011.

Landsberg, Alison: *Prosthetic Memory. The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York 2004.

Rothberg, Michael: *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford 2009.

10 Performativity

10.1 Performing history: Introduction

History in the battle panorama is immersive

In the autumn of 1884, Union general and Gettysburg veteran John Gibbon visited the Battle of Gettysburg Panorama by French painter Paul Philippoteaux, which had recently been opened in Chicago. Though not especially convinced by the precision of the detailed military depictions, he was enthusiastic about the panorama's immersive effect. It was evidently capable of taking visitors from the urban Chicago of the 1880s to the fields of Gettysburg, transporting them into the tumult of the three-day battle in July 1863, which, even at the time, was seen as crucial to the subsequent course of the Civil War. Gibbon described the impressions of his visit in a letter to former chief of artillery in the Union Army, Henry J. Hunt, another Gettysburg veteran. Gibbon underscored the realism of the panorama, stating that he had barely been able to rid himself of the impression of being at the scene of the events.¹

History is experienced physically in the panorama

Panoramas were among the most popular urban leisure attractions in Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century. Battle panoramas in particular, that is, those depicting contemporary or historical battles from national history, reached a broad, predominantly urban audience from the early nineteenth century onwards as a form of entertainment-focused historiography. Before visitors entered the rotunda, efforts were made to thoroughly prepare them for their encounter with the panoramic image. After purchasing an admission ticket, they first had to traverse a dimly lit corridor. Passing under the panorama, this led to a staircase that took visitors to a viewing platform inside the rotunda. Once on the platform, visitors found themselves completely enveloped by the panorama painting, which was suspended in such a way as to create a hyperbolic, 360-degree surround. The platform restricted freedom of movement in order to keep visitors at a certain distance from the image, a prerequisite for the spatial illusion. Technical measures also prevented an unobstructed view of the upper and lower boundaries of the image. Above the platform, the view was restricted by a canopy,

1 John Gibbon to Henry Jackson Hunt, 6 September 1884, Gilder Lehrman Collection: GLC02382.52.

while below was the so-called *faux terrain*: a three-dimensional diorama consisting of thematically apt objects and landscape imitations, which extended the two-dimensional pictorial representation into the three-dimensional interior of the rotunda as far as the visitor platform. The entire technical set-up of the panorama, already patented by Robert Barker towards the end of the eighteenth century, aimed to provide visitors with the most realistic experience possible of the scenery depicted and to facilitate an immersive experience (see info box on ‘Immersion’ in section 4.3).² This applied not only visually, but also in terms of content: in the Gettysburg panorama, Philippoteaux positioned the viewer amidst the ranks of Union soldiers facing an onslaught from Confederate troops. Visitors thus became clearly located actors within the depicted history. Through immersive techniques (see Chapter 4, ‘Experience’), they experienced the visit as a kind of performance, but one in which they were much more intensively involved as actors than, for example, in the case of a contemporary theatre visit. Visiting the battle panorama as visual historiography allowed for a form of neutralised, peacetime participation in wartime experience, one that was largely free of depictions of violence, safe and – as confirmed by veterans – authentic.³ The battle panorama can, therefore, be understood as a special form of performative historiography, one that enabled visitors to participate as intensively as possible through the technical configuration of the apparatus and that invited them to physically appropriate the scene depicted by traversing the panorama.

The production of a historical or battle panorama was associated with considerable effort, not only technically but also in terms of content. Production kicked off with the painters inspecting the site and carrying out topographical studies; they also had photographs of the terrain taken to facilitate the most precise possible depiction of the landscape. Through research in museums and archives along with conversations with contemporary witnesses, the artists gained a sense of the course of the battle, familiarising themselves with the visual aspects of the military equipment used. Painters specialising in different forms of pictorial content turned out studies and sketches

History is generated by physical practices

² Anon: ‘The Cyclorama’, in: *The Scientific American*, 6 November 1886, 296.

³ Thorsten Logge: ‘Updating the Past. The Absence of Atrocities in the “Battle of Gettysburg” Cyclorama’, in: *International Panorama Council* 3 (2019), 61–68.

of soldiers in various battle poses. The panorama was then produced as a large-scale painting, typically in continuous dialogue with veterans of the battle, and was finally presented to the public in the specially constructed rotundas.⁴ Hence, not only the visit to a historical or battle panorama but also its production was associated with a series of physical practices through which actors appropriated the historical event involved.

History *makes*
the event it
recounts

Like any form of historiography, the battle panorama cannot reproduce the historical reality of the battle shown. This would in any case have been far from entertaining and would have seriously jeopardised visitors' physical integrity. The panorama displays an aesthetically suitable selection of battle scenes, a visual interpretation that deviates from historical reality by reducing it. The staged event, then, exists exclusively in this form: the panorama manufactures what it supposedly merely depicts. The exhibition and presentation of history can also be understood – as in the example of the panorama – as a performance, as an autonomous event that is always temporally, spatially and socially specific, a phenomenon that enables various groups of visitors to actively and productively engage with the history presented, although its reception can never be entirely predetermined.

History is
performative

History, then, is always made. Its production and reception are performative. At a basic level, grasping the performativity of history allows us to discuss the potency of historical representations within discourses on the past. The insights of performativity theory can, therefore, enrich a research-orientated public history that deals with the production, representation, distribution, exhibition and reception of history in the public sphere. By foregrounding the making of history and the representation of history in various public arenas, such a public history can help us apprehend them as the performing of history.

⁴ Contemporary descriptions of panorama production can be found for example in Anon.: 'The Cyclorama'; Theodore R. Davis: 'How a Great Battle Panorama is Made', in: *St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks* 14/2 (1886), 99–112.

10.2 Concepts and fields of research

The term ‘performative’ was first used by philosopher John L. Austin, who introduced it in his lecture on the philosophy of language *How to Do Things with Words* (1955),⁵ deriving it from the verb *perform*. Austin was attempting to make it clear that language not only has a descriptive character, but that actions are carried out with it through the act of speaking; in other words, utterances can be performative. A vivid example of this is the launching of a ship, which is typically performed by smashing a bottle against the hull and stating, ‘I name this ship the such-and-such’. In this case, no existing fact is represented; a new one is created in and through the utterance. Austin used the term ‘performative’ to refer exclusively to speech acts, but since the 1990s it has also been applied to actions performed physically.

Speech
produces
reality

But speech act theory does not locate the authority to make meaning primarily in the speaker. Instead, it assumes that meaning is ‘generated by the recipients at the moment of reception’.⁶ In the theory of performativity, performance obviously plays a central role. Originating in theatre studies, performativity theory initially focused mainly on performances in the theatrical context, but it has since expanded its perspective – as rooted in that framework – to potentially include all human practices. These are always simultaneously performed in the sense of ‘carried out’ and in the sense of ‘enacted’ and are, therefore, understood as performances that generate meaning and significance through interaction between performers

⁵ John L. Austin: *How to Do Things with Words*, The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955, Oxford 1967.

⁶ Jürgen Martschukat and Steffen Patzold: ‘Geschichtswissenschaft und “performative turn”’. Eine Einführung in Fragestellungen, Konzepte und Literatur’, in: Jürgen Martschukat and Steffen Patzold (eds.): *Geschichtswissenschaft und ‘performative turn’. Ritual, Inszenierung und Performanz vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit*, Cologne etc. 2003, 1–32, here 6, with reference among other things to Michel Foucault: ‘Was ist ein Autor?’ (1969), in: Michel Foucault: *Schriften in vier Bänden. Dits et Ecrits*, vol. 1: 1954–1969, ed. by Daniel Defert and François Ewald, Frankfurt a.M. 2001, 1003–1041; Roland Barthes: ‘Der Tod des Autors’, in: Uwe Wirth (ed.): *Performanz. Zwischen Sprachphilosophie und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt a.M. 2002, 129–139; Wolfgang Iser: ‘Das Modell der Sprechakte’ (1976), in: Uwe Wirth (ed.): *Performanz. Zwischen Sprachphilosophie und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt a.M. 2002, 104–110.

and audience at the moment of performance (*in actu*). Performances are thus moulded in a crucial way by the physical co-presence of all those involved, highlighting the active participation of viewers in the generation of meaning and significance.

Hence, thanks to speech act theory, performativity theory has had a social constructivist component since its beginnings, insofar as it emphasises that interpretation and meaning are generated with, in and through language, in other words, that social reality is produced linguistically. It thus refers directly to (contemporary and historical) social practices in which meaning and significance are negotiated communicatively, such as political festivals or rituals. Such ideas are also highly compatible with the social constructivist sociology of knowledge founded by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in the 1960s.⁷ What comes to the fore here is the need to clarify and differentiate the concept of public if we are to describe the communicating, assembly-based publics – potentially extendable through the mass media – in which and through which history is produced and negotiated.

Public(s)

When analysing public representations of history, it makes sense to use a differentiated concept of the public or public sphere. Since the distinction between 'private' and 'public' fails to adequately convey the diversity of producers and recipients within discourses related to the past, different publics must be distinguished in order to survey communicative spaces and the actants communicating within them. Adopting this approach also enables us to identify the terrain of historical sense-making, its scope and those involved in it, and to describe their communicative actions within this context.

Jörg Requate understands the public as a social sphere constituted chiefly by communication. Social sub-areas such as science, religion, associational life, sport and culture give rise to a number of vertical sub-publics, each of which must be analysed separately. Drawing on the work of sociologists Jürgen Gerhards and Friedhelm Neidhardt, Requate also distinguishes between distinct horizontal publics, which can be differentiated in light of their varying reach and degrees of permanence.

1. *Small publics* or *encounter publics*. These terms refer to all communication between people who encounter one another more or less by chance – through conversations on the bus or at the pub, over the garden fence or

⁷ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann: *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Garden City 1966.

in the supermarket. In the field of public history, this includes past-related communication (such as commenting on current events through historical comparisons or sharing childhood experiences) and communication with the help of actants (murals, monuments, posters, and so on). Public representations of history may be consciously deposited in public space in the form of actants – as a means of generating encounter publics in which past-related communication takes place.

2. *Assembly-based publics*. This covers communication between people who encounter one another in specific spaces at defined times. In the field of public history, these include film screenings, exhibitions, theatre performances, lectures, seminars, festivals and celebrations, re-enactments, and so on, in which historical facts are discussed or performed.
3. *Mass medial publics*. This denotes communication characterised by a certain permanence, which is supported by a technical and professional apparatus and has a rather abstract audience whose ability to react remains limited. The term includes, for example, the press, TV, radio or cross-media forms and formats accessible via the Internet. Gerhards and Neidhardt view the (mass medial) public as ‘an intermediary system whose political function consists in the reception (input) and processing (throughput) of certain topics and opinions as well as in the mediation of the public opinions (output) resulting from this processing vis-à-vis citizens on the one hand and the political system on the other’ (Gerhards and Neidhardt 1991, 32 f.; see Requate 1999, 13).

The vertically differentiated sub-publics can be linked with the horizontal, medial publics. The public then appears as a sphere featuring multiple sectoral subdivisions, in which sub-publics can also be differentiated horizontally – from the encounter public to the mass medial public.

Public representations of history may also be located both horizontally and vertically as media of history. While the horizontal lens primarily focuses our attention on reach and accessibility, the vertical perspective defines the discursive communities in which the specific representation of history within a past-related discourse helps generate historical meaning.

Recommended reading

Requate, Jörg: ‘Öffentlichkeit und Medien als Gegenstände historischer Analyse’, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 25/1 (1999), 5–32; Gerhards, Jürgen and Neidhardt, Friedhelm: ‘Strukturen und Funktionen moderner Öffentlichkeit. Fragestellungen und Ansätze’, in: Stefan Müller-Doohm and Klaus Neumann-Braun (eds.): *Öffentlichkeit, Kultur, Massenkommunikation. Beiträge zur Medien- und Kommunikationssoziologie*, Oldenburg 1991, 31–89.

Today, the concept of the performative is not only part of the basic vocabulary of theatre studies/performance studies but has also undergone a significant expansion and differentiation as a result of the theatre studies debate. In the German-speaking context, Berlin-based theatre studies scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte was one of the first to grapple with the realm of the performative and the concept of performativity. Her numerous contributions have strongly influenced the debate on the topic and have also helped introduce it to the disciplines of history and the cultural sciences.⁸

Definition of
the performative

According to Fischer-Lichte, the performative refers to

certain symbolic actions that do not express or represent something predetermined, but that generate the reality to which they refer. This reality arises *through* execution of the action. A performative act must be thought of exclusively as an embodied one.⁹

When we talk about the performative, we are referring to physical actions carried out in specific temporal and spatial situations that constitute social reality through the interplay between performers and audience. The meaning generated in this process is fragile and only exists at the moment of the performance, which can itself be described as an event (that is, as unique, extraordinary, communicative and transformative). It cannot be reproduced – the performance is always unique in its configuration and course – but it may attain a certain stability through repetition as a citation. The term ‘performative’ refers not only to the actions executed, but always also to their character as performance.

The performance
is an event

Hence, the term ‘theatricality’, along with the closely related terms ‘performance’, ‘staging’, ‘physicality’ and ‘perception’, are central to research in the cultural sciences that takes its lead from the performative. One of the core characteristics of performance is the ‘physical co-presence of actors and spectators’, who come together at a certain

⁸ Here, we will mention just two key monographs: Erika Fischer-Lichte: *Ästhetik des Performativen*, Frankfurt a.M. 2004; Erika Fischer-Lichte: *Performativität. Eine Einführung*, Bielefeld 2012.

⁹ Fischer-Lichte: *Performativität*, 44 (emphasis reflects the original: ‘bestimmte symbolische Handlungen, die nicht etwas Vorgegebenes ausdrücken oder repräsentieren, sondern diejenige Wirklichkeit, auf die sie verweisen, erst hervorbringen. Sie entsteht, *indem* die Handlung vollzogen wird. Ein performativer Akt ist ausschließlich als ein verkörperter zu denken’).

time and place to experience a situation collectively.¹⁰ One of the key hallmarks of the performance is the confrontations and interactions between participants: whatever actors do has an effect on viewers and vice versa. The performance, then, only comes into being as it unfolds. This means it cannot be planned; it is 'unique and unrepeatable' and this makes it an event that cannot be pinned down, which is in fact fleeting.¹¹ Performances can only be experienced once, so their meaning too can only be experienced once. Or to put it another way: meaning arises anew through and within every performance.

The concept of staging must be distinguished from that of performance. Narrowly understood, in the first instance staging means 'preparing', 'adapting', 'rehearsing' and even 'configuring creatively'. As an aesthetic term, however, it can be defined far more broadly to cover 'cultural techniques and practices through which something is rendered manifest'.¹² However, 'staging' also has an anthropological component: as a creative process, it is capable of relating the imaginary, the fictional and the real to each other.¹³ While the performance is uncontrollable as its course cannot be completely planned, staging is imbued by the intended action, which is meant for an audience in a delimited space and is supposed to exercise an effect.¹⁴ Staging thus refers to the intentional and is therefore – unlike performance – repeatable.

Between
staging and
performance

10 Erika Fischer-Lichte: 'Einleitung: Theatralität als kulturelles Modell', in: Erika Fischer-Lichte et al. (eds.): *Theatralität als Modell in den Kulturwissenschaften*, Tübingen and Basel 2004, 7–26, here 11.

11 Erika Fischer-Lichte: 'Performance, Inszenierung, Ritual. Zur Klärung kulturwissenschaftlicher Schlüsselbegriffe', in: Jürgen Martschukat and Steffen Patzold (eds.): *Geschichtswissenschaft und 'performative turn'. Ritual, Inszenierung und Performanz vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit*, Cologne etc. 2003, 33–54, here 39; for more on the event-like quality of the performance, see: Fischer-Lichte: *Performativität*, 67 f. On event theory, see also Andreas Suter and Manfred Hettling: 'Struktur und Ereignis – Wege zu einer Sozialgeschichte des Ereignisses', in: Andreas Suter and Manfred Hettling (eds.): *Struktur und Ereignis*, Göttingen 2001, 7–32.

12 Erika Fischer-Lichte: 'Theatralität und Inszenierung', in: Erika Fischer-Lichte et al. (eds.): *Inszenierung von Authentizität*, Tübingen and Basel 2007, 9–28, here 19.

13 See Fischer-Lichte: 'Theatralität und Inszenierung', 21.

14 See Josef Früchtl and Jörg Zimmermann: 'Ästhetik der Inszenierung: Dimensionen eines gesellschaftlichen, individuellen und kulturellen Phänomens', in: Josef Früchtl and Jörg Zimmermann (eds.): *Ästhetik der Inszenierung. Dimensionen eines künstlerischen und gesellschaftlichen Phänomens*, Frankfurt a.M. 2001, 9–47, here 21.

Physicality is
central to
performances

A performance is not conceivable without the participants' bodies. The bodily movements of some express emotions, which in turn provoke emotional and bodily reactions or states in others.¹⁵ Of particular interest here is the concept of *embodiment*, which emphasises the phenomenal body (*Leib*) as the starting point for cultural productions. Meanings are only generated through shared experience and the associated process of embodiment.¹⁶ Yet the presentation and reception of texts, the viewing of images and the use of things can also be regarded as performative acts.¹⁷

'Perception' unites simultaneously occurring physical, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, memorative and other processes.¹⁸ The performative analysis probes how and as what something is perceived, as well as seeking to establish the effect of perception on the perceiver.¹⁹ This perspective thus affirms the role of the audience and foregrounds processes of reception.

The performa-
tive in studies
of ritual

The concepts outlined above also play a key role in studies of ritual. British anthropologist Victor Turner addressed the realms of the performative, dramatic and theatrical, exploring the diverse relationships 'between social drama and on-stage drama, dramatic ritual and ritual drama, theatre plays in quotidian contexts and everyday life in the theatre'.²⁰ In the early 1950s, drawing on the work of ethnographer Arnold van Gennep, Turner focussed in particular on rites of passage.

The three
phases of
rites of
passage

In his book *Les rites de passage*, published in 1909, van Gennep put forward a tripartite model for categorising ritual practices, distinguishing between rites of separation (*rites de séparation*), transitional or liminal rites (*rites de marge*) and rites of incorporation (*rites d'agrégation*).²¹ On this view, separation phases are character-

¹⁵ See Fischer-Lichte: 'Theatralität als kulturelles Modell', 20.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, 21.

¹⁷ See Fischer-Lichte: *Performativität*, 135–178.

¹⁸ See Fischer-Lichte: 'Theatralität als kulturelles Modell', 23.

¹⁹ See Fischer-Lichte: *Performativität*, 65.

²⁰ Erika Fischer-Lichte: 'Einleitung: Zur Aktualität von Turners Studien zum Übergang vom Ritual zum Theater', in: Victor Turner: *Vom Ritual zum Theater: Der Ernst des menschlichen Spiels* (English 1982), Frankfurt a.M. and New York 2009, i–xxiii, here ii.

²¹ Arnold van Gennep: *The Rites of Passage*, 20th edn. Chicago and London 2019 (French orig. 1909), 10–11.

ised by rites that end the old state or in which the old state is bid farewell; the liminal/transition phase is regarded as an ‘in-between’, while the incorporation phase consolidates the new status. Turner focussed specifically on van Gennep’s ‘liminal’ or ‘transitional’ phase, which is considered the most elaborate within the context of rites of passage, developing the concept of the liminal against the background of his research among the Ndembu of Zambia. According to Turner, the liminal represents a phase of ‘betwixt and between’,²² in which the people undergoing transition are neither one thing nor another and in which special rules apply. Participants experience this phase as quite threatening, but at the same time as a ‘source of creativity, spontaneity and humanity’,²³ which give rise to a kind of mystical solidarity or lead to an experience of social immediacy among the actors involved.²⁴ The group is thus characterised by a sense of connectedness that nullifies all hierarchical structures.²⁵ To convey this, Turner introduced the concept of *communitas*, which describes a sense of community among individuals on the same footing and a close bond between those involved in the ritual, in which a new identity is created.²⁶

What Turner observed in the rituals of the Ndembu and described as liminal transformation and the *experience* of *communitas*, he also applied to modern societies, introducing the term ‘liminoid’. Unlike the liminal phenomena of traditional societies, which

Voluntariness
in rituals of
modernity

²² Victor Turner: *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure*, Ithaca (NY) 1969, 95.

²³ Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger: *Rituale*, Frankfurt a.M. and New York 2013, 25.

²⁴ Victor Turner: ‘Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage’ (1964), in: William A. Lessa (ed.): *Reader in Comparative Religion. An Anthropological Approach*, New York etc.: 1979, 234–243, here 243.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 238.

²⁶ Anthropologist Edith Turner, Victor Turner’s wife and research partner, later described *communitas* as follows: ‘The participants are all in the same boat, as it were; they are all going through a change. Teenagers, students, trainees, travelers, those with the new jobs, those in disaster conditions develop this unlikely sense, which seems to be jogged into being by the circumstances. *Communitas* is thus a gift from liminality, the state of being betwixt and between. During this time, people find each other to be just ordinary people after all, not the anxious prestige-seeking holders of jobs and positions they often seem to be. And people like feeling this in themselves.’ Edith Turner: *Communitas. The Anthropology of Collective Joy*, New York 2012, 4.

are imbued with an obligatory character; liminoid phenomena of modernity are distinguished by voluntariness: ‘One is all play and choice, an entertainment, the other is a matter of deep seriousness, even dread, it is demanding, compulsory’.²⁷ Though sacred rituals have largely disappeared in modern societies, they live on in ‘performative genres and niches’ such as mass, pop and folk cultures as well as in subcultures.²⁸ According to Turner, play and sport are the ‘liminoid metagenres of our society’.²⁹ Rituals, then, exist in present-day Western societies and we encounter them as lived events and borderline experiences, for example in art and entertainment, as well as in sport and play.³⁰

Historical
reception as
a ritual

A visit to a battle panorama can also be described through the lens of ritual studies. The route through the dark passage culminating in ascent to the viewing platform decouples visitors from their everyday lives in a kind of separation phase, generating a moment of indeterminacy and disorientation.³¹ When visitors step onto the platform, the liminal or transformation phase begins: the immersive techniques used to create illusions in the panorama ensure that visitors are, ideally, no longer able to distinguish between reality and illusion. The panorama gives them a sense of being transported to another place and time, while positioning them as actors within the narrative presented. The hyperrealism of the panorama and the emotionally stirring, liminoid state it aims to achieve among visitors were already described in the nineteenth century and marketed as a key source of entertainment value – despite all the limitations resulting from the lack of movement in the representation as a snapshot frozen in time.³² The exit from the panorama (incorporation phase) finally leads through the dark corridor back into everyday life, to which visitors return – perhaps a little changed. Whether and if so to

27 Victor Turner: *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play*, New York 1982, 43. He describes the differences between the two in detail: *ibid.*, 52–55.

28 Peter J. Bräunlein: *Zur Aktualität von Victor W. Turner. Einleitung in sein Werk*, Wiesbaden 2012, 149.

29 Turner: *From Ritual to Theatre*, 56.

30 Bräunlein: *Zur Aktualität von Victor W. Turner*, 156.

31 Anon: ‘The Cyclorama’.

32 Bernard Comment: *Das Panorama. Die Geschichte einer vergessenen Kunstform*, Berlin 2000, 104–109.

what extent visitors or their historical awareness undergo a lasting transformation in this process has been little researched to date.

In principle, every engagement with history can be described from this perspective. This engagement is particularly striking in the case of the panorama, as well as in documentary and witness theatre:³³ the reception of history begins with leaving everyday life behind and adopting a specific attitude towards the mode of reception, which is partly determined by the medial form of historical representation. This may include visiting certain places (theatre, panorama, cinema, museum, memorial, and so on) or using a certain medium (book, magazine, audio book, podcast and computer game, for instance). The reception of history thus takes place in more or less communicative settings. Finally, viewers disengage the receptive mode, returning to their everyday lives with their historical consciousness strengthened, shaken or transformed.

10.3 Performativity in the discipline of history

Theories of performativity were taken up comparatively late by academic historians, and even today they are not used widely or as a matter of course beyond a few scattered studies.³⁴ The 2003 anthology *Geschichtswissenschaft und 'performative turn'* ('Academic History and the "performative turn"'), edited by Jürgen Martschukat and Steffen Patzold, to which Erika Fischer-Lichte contributed,³⁵ remains programmatically significant – alongside approaches to the cultural history of the political that explore political symbols, symbolic action and rituals, among other things.³⁶

33 Witness theatre is a form of documentary theatre centred on pasts that are primarily represented by historical documents and contemporary witnesses. See also Nils Steffen: "Ich wusste nicht, dass es so war!" Authentizität im Zeitzeugnis-theater", in: Thorsten Logge et al. (eds.): *Geschichte im Rampenlicht. Inszenierungen historischer Quellen im Theater*, Berlin 2020, 145–163.

34 See also Doris Bachmann-Medick: *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*, 6th edn., Reinbek bei Hamburg 2018, ch. 2.

35 Martschukat and Patzold: *Geschichtswissenschaft und 'performative turn'*.

36 See, among others, Achim Landwehr: 'Diskurs, Macht, Wissen. Perspektiven einer Kulturgeschichte des Politischen', in: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 35 (2003), 71–117; Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger: *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?*, Berlin 2005; Ute Frevert and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (eds.): *Neue Politikgeschichte*.

The theory of performativity imported into academic history by Martschukat and Patzold focuses on rituals, symbols and symbolic communications as well as stagings of all kinds, which had already been thematised by historians of the medieval and early modern periods. While the editors complained of a striking reticence in 2003, since then the study of symbols as well as symbolic and performative practices has increased in the fields of modern and contemporary history.³⁷

Modern societies communicate through performances

Martschukat and Patzold assume that modern societies (too) communicate to a large extent through performances, stagings and rituals, which function as a source of societal reassurance while enabling societies to negotiate and define their value systems. According to Martschukat and Patzold, in light of the social constructivist assumption shared by philosophy of language (John L. Austin, John Searle), theatre studies (Erika Fischer-Lichte), ritual research (Victor Turner), and gender studies (Judith Butler) that meaning is ‘produced only at the moment of utterance, performance or action’,³⁸ historians can trace the productive, meaning-constituting power of human actions. They can also use practices documented in the sources ‘as a kind of probe to explore the changing cultural figurations into which individual acts were fitted and in or through which they first produced a specific meaning’.³⁹ This approach was also propagated in gender studies, particularly in the work of Judith Butler, and linked to ritual theory. On this view, gender is expressed through ritualistically repeated grand and minor performances of the masculine and feminine, and it is through these forms of expression that it is constructed in the first

Perspektiven einer historischen Politikforschung, Frankfurt a.M. 2005; Thomas Mergel: ‘Überlegungen zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Politik’, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28/4 (2003), 574–606.

³⁷ See, for example, Klaus Hödl: *Wiener Juden – jüdische Wiener. Identität, Gedächtnis und Performanz im 19. Jahrhundert*, Innsbruck 2005; Jürgen Martschukat: “His Chief Sin is Being a Negro. Next he Whipped a White Man. Next he Married a White Woman”. Sport, Rassismus und die (In)Stabilität von Grenzziehungen in den USA um 1900’, in: *Historische Anthropologie* 15 (2007), 259–280; Frank Bösch and Patrick Schmidt (eds.): *Medialisierte Ereignisse. Performanz, Inszenierung und Medien seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt a.M. 2010; Janine Schemmer: *Hafenarbeit erzählen. Erfahrungsräume im Hamburger Hafen seit 1950*, Munich 2018.

³⁸ Martschukat and Patzold: *Geschichtswissenschaft und ‘performative turn’*, 10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

place. According to Butler, then, gender is not physically determined but is brought into being performatively at the moment of its execution and enactment – through practices that may be conveyed by the term ‘doing gender’.⁴⁰

While performativity now serves as an *umbrella term* in the humanities and social sciences, which refer to ‘performative culture’ and ‘cultures of the performative’,⁴¹ the prevailing text-focused paradigm has by no means been ousted by the paradigm of ‘culture as performance’.⁴² The *performative turn* – like every ‘turn’⁴³ since the *linguistic turn* – has not superseded other approaches. Different perspectives coexist simultaneously, expanding our field of vision. The performative *turn* must be viewed in the same vein as a supplementary approach. It has given rise to new fields that are no longer dominated by the assumption of a language- and text-based society, instead emphasising the importance of performances and thus bringing an aspect of culture that had long been ignored to the centre of scholarly attention.

Hence, history and the writing of history (or in a broader sense: the production of history) can be viewed from the perspective of performativity theory. Statements about the past, which in academia especially are produced on the basis of a complex, highly developed and tried-and-tested system of rules, do not simply establish and report how things were: they *make* historical events in and through

Performativity
is one
perspective
among others

Performative
historiography

⁴⁰ Judith Butler: ‘Performative Akte und Geschlechterkonstitution. Phänomenologie und feministische Theorie’, in: Uwe Wirth (ed.): *Performanz. Zwischen Sprachphilosophie und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt a.M. 2002, 301–320; Judith Butler: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York 1990; Judith Butler: *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘sex’*. New York 1993; Judith Butler: *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performance*, New York 1997.

⁴¹ Jörg Volbers: *Performative Kultur. Eine Einführung*, Wiesbaden 2014. From 1999 to 2010, the German Research Foundation funded the Sonderforschungsbereich 447 ‘Kulturen des Performativen – Performative Turns im Mittelalter, in der Frühen Neuzeit und in der Moderne’, which explored various aspects of performativity in interdisciplinary sub-projects, <https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/5482988>, last accessed: 14 September 2020.

⁴² Bachmann-Medick: *Cultural Turns*, 106.

⁴³ Andreas Reckwitz has characterised the talk of *turns* as ‘strategic dramatisation and simplification’; Andreas Reckwitz: ‘Affektive Räume: Eine praxeologische Perspektive’, in: Elisabeth Mixa and Patrick Vogl (eds.): *E-Motions. Transformationsprozesse in der Gegenwartskultur*, Vienna and Berlin 2012, 23–44, here 25.

history. Theatre studies scholar Freddie Rokem has applied the performativity-theoretical perspective to essentially every form of historiography and thereby expanded it. According to him, ‘any method of narrating or writing down a version of what happened is a form of performing history and bringing that past back to life’.⁴⁴

10.4 Approaches to aspects of the performative

10.4.1 Practices: Reenactment

The concepts of ‘performance’, ‘staging’, ‘physicality’ and ‘perception’ can be understood as analytical categories that may serve as the starting point for a public history focussed on the performative. The example of reenactments in popular historico-cultural contexts illustrates this well.⁴⁵ These recreations or embodied visualisations of historical events are often centred on battles and military conflicts.⁴⁶ In reenactments, a growing number of our contemporaries attempt – at least temporarily – to immerse themselves in the past, to incorporate it in order to experience it ‘in the flesh’ and with all their senses. Such attempts at immersion (see the info box on ‘Immersion’ in section 4.3) rely heavily on material culture – clothing, equipment and the remains of historical sites.

Reenactments
are *cultural*
performances

At the same time, reenactments are *cultural performances* that open up diverse spaces of action and experience – spaces in which the experiential dimension comes to the fore, as familiar from theatre and rituals. Yet as repetitions of a past event, reenactments can never be identical with ‘what they re-call, that is, what they phys-

⁴⁴ Freddie Rokem: *Geschichte aufführen. Darstellungen der Vergangenheit im Gegenwartstheater*, Berlin 2012, 34.

⁴⁵ For the essentials of reenactment, see Ulrike Jureit: *Magie des Authentischen. Das Nachleben von Krieg und Gewalt im Reenactment*, Göttingen 2020; Vanessa Agnew et al. (eds.): *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies. Key Terms in the Field*, London and New York 2020; on reenactments in the context of artistic performances, see the contributions in Jens Roselt and Ulf Otto (eds.): *Theater als Zeitmaschine. Zur performativen Praxis des Reenactments. Theater- und kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, Bielefeld 2012.

⁴⁶ Erika Fischer-Lichte: ‘Die Wiederholung als Ereignis: Reenactment als Aneignung von Geschichte’, in: Jens Roselt and Ulf Otto (eds.): *Theater als Zeitmaschine. Zur performativen Praxis des Reenactments*, Bielefeld 2012, 13–52, here 13.

ically call back into memory'.⁴⁷ They are cultural constructs that reflect singular events in the here and now, in our contemporary life-world.

Reenactment can be approached in a variety of ways. We may, for example, view it at the object level, bringing into view the functions and meanings of material culture. As mentioned above, this represents a core element of the immersive event as it gives actors the sense of experiencing the past directly, that is, physically. Closely linked to this is the aspect of authenticity (see Chapter 2). This too is generated chiefly via the object level, via the tangible experience of materiality.⁴⁸ A processual perspective, meanwhile, focuses on performative elements, which play a special role in experience-orientated approaches to history. This perspective helps us grasp random moments of 'becoming' and the entanglements of individuals or actors, things, spaces and atmospheres. This in turn allows us to identify possible complementary or mutually constitutive phenomena as well as structural similarities with other theatrical practices. The above-mentioned categories of analysis are apt both for modelling these complementary relationships and developing a systematic approach.

Reenactments are performances. Here, actors or reenactors reenact an event in front of an audience at a specific time and place. The reenactment of the Battle of Leipzig (1813) in 2013, for example, was such a performance. Several thousand actors came together to reenact the battle – under the eyes of more than 30,000 spectators.⁴⁹ We have yet to see detailed investigations probing the extent of interactions between the distant audience (on a raised platform in the Leipzig case) and the actors at such large events, interactions that may alter the performance. But there can be no doubt about the reality of the 'physical co-presence' described by Fischer-Lichte or the experience shared by everyone involved in the reenactment. The

Reenactments
are performances

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ulf Otto: 'Die Macht der Toten als das Leben der Bilder. Praktiken des Reenactments in Kunst und Kultur', in: Jens Roselt and Christel Weiler (eds.): *Schauspiel- en heute. Die Bildung des Menschen in den performativen Künsten*, Bielefeld 2011, 185–201, here 191.

⁴⁹ Bertram Haude: 'Krieg als Hobby? Das Leipziger Völkerschlacht-Reenactment und der Versuch einer Entgegnung', in: *Forum Kritische Archäologie* 4 (2015), 1–12, DOI: doi.org/10.6105/journal.fka.2015.4.1.

close connection between audience and actors is illustrated by another example, again from 2013. Under the aegis of the living history group Numerus Brittonum, a contingent of around twenty-five men and women set off to retrace the roughly 140-kilometre-long, scientifically reconstructed route of the Germanic campaign led by Emperor Caracalla in 213 AD between the *limes* towns of Aalen and Osterburken (Germany), recreating the soldiers' gear as faithfully as possible.⁵⁰ The nine-day march was accompanied by numerous present-day 'civilians'. It began in the open-air section of the Limes Museum in Aalen with a 'motivational speech' by 'Caracalla' to his troops and a sacrificial ceremony in which an actor dressed as a Roman priest invoked divine assistance at a stone altar. The ceremony was accompanied by a flautist, adding to the atmosphere of the scene. When he began to play, the audience became noticeably quieter, before falling completely silent, sensing that this was a significant and, in a way, uplifting moment. The meaning of the event thus emerged through the interaction, through the mutual (re)action of all participants over the course of the performance.

Reenactments are, of course, also stagings, that is, intentionally initiated and repeatable actions. They create the appearance of something, namely past historical events, such as the Battle of Leipzig, a military expedition to Germania or the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest. In these stagings, a relationship is formed between the real, the imaginary and the fictional: equipment and historical location (real), battle formations (imaginary = this is how it could have been) and actions on the battlefield (fictional = freely invented).

The body
produces
meanings

But reenactments are not only performances and stagings of history. The physical-affective experiences of the actors involved also manifest themselves at various levels. A banal example of physical experience relates to weather, clothing and equipment. Unfamiliar clothing scratches, shoes pinch, while heat and cold lead to physical reactions. In addition, the process of embodiment and the emotional

⁵⁰ For more details, see Stefanie Samida: 'Aneignung von Vergangenheit durch körperliches Erleben?', in: *Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 46/2–3 (2013), special issue: 'Kulturelle Aneignung von Vergangenheit', 105–122; Stefanie Samida: 'Per Pedes in die *Germania magna* oder Zurück in die Vergangenheit? Kulturwissenschaftliche Annäherungen an eine performative Praktik', in: Sarah Willner et al. (eds.): *Doing History. Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur*, Münster and New York 2016, 45–62.

immediacy of the action may engender an experience of presence similar to what Turner described as a ‘betwixt and between’ state and may constitute a liminoid, borderline experience. In the context of reenactments, the terms *period rush* and *time warp* have become established to convey this.⁵¹ Yet the transformative power of the performative is not only evident in the experience of presence, but also finds expression in the experience of Turner’s *communitas*. Participants, especially when they have organised themselves into groups, are closely connected to each other through shared experience; in the words of Edith Turner, ‘[T]hey are all going through a change’.⁵²

By taking into account the contribution of all those involved in the performance to the production of meaning and significance, we can describe history as a communicative process occurring in a variety of medial settings. This applies in principle to every performance of history, not just a reenactment or the viewing platform of a battle panorama. The spectrum encompasses history on the theatre stage,⁵³ documentary practices in film and television and academic historiography.

From this perspective, the formation of historical meaning takes place through performative acts. Once again, it is particularly striking here that this meaning-making cannot be a top-down process in the sense of a linear act of mediation; it always includes the possibility of creative-subversive appropriation. Hence, a public history geared towards performativity theory must scrutinise the role played by the unpredictability of historical performances and their, to some extent, always inherent unplannability, while also probing how adaptive, adoptive and transgressive forms of reception⁵⁴ affect recipients’ historical consciousness.

The creation of historical meaning is performative

⁵¹ See, for example, Rebecca Schneider: *Performing Remains. Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, London and New York 2011, 50 f.

⁵² Turner: *Communitas*, 4.

⁵³ Thorsten Logge et al. (ed.): *Geschichte im Rampenlicht. Inszenierungen historischer Quellen auf der Bühne*, Berlin 2020.

⁵⁴ What is meant here are different types or modes of appropriation of what is encountered: *adaptive* in the sense of (self-)adjustment, *adoptive* in the sense of acceptance or adoption and *transgressive* in the sense of a ‘rule-breaking’ or ‘creative’ adaptation.

10.4.2 Objects: Things in historical culture

We are always surrounded by things. We can see, hear, touch, smell and taste them, that is, perceive their colour, shape, texture, and so on, with all our senses. They also play an important role in the wide array of performative practices found in historical culture, such as reenactments and historical pageants, city anniversaries, medieval markets and more besides.

Material culture
is subject to
investigation

For many years, scholarly interest in objects and material culture was rather limited, being restricted to disciplines such as social and cultural anthropology, but for the past three decades the topic has been attracting growing interest across the cultural and social sciences. Since the 1990s, a distinct discipline has in fact emerged in the UK, known as material culture studies.⁵⁵ Surprisingly, however, neither the latter field nor subjects such as anthropology have so far dealt in any detail with objects, their use or their significance in historico-cultural practice. It is only recently that things have gradually begun to change in this regard.⁵⁶ Introductions to public history, meanwhile, grapple with things mainly in a museum context, in which exhibits are viewed primarily in terms of their function as signifiers.⁵⁷ Yet such a view of things falls short if they are assigned a purely object status and thus assumed to be passive.

Things are in fact far more than ‘mere objects of semantisation or symbolisation’.⁵⁸ In the debate on material culture within the

55 Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, Oxford 2010; Christopher Tilley et al. (eds.): *Handbook of Material Culture*, London 2006; for a selection of German-language research: Stefanie Samida et al. (eds.): *Handbuch Materielle Kultur: Bedeutungen, Konzepte, Disziplinen*, Stuttgart and Weimar 2014.

56 See for example Mads Daugbjerg: ‘“As Real as it Gets”: Vicarious Experience and the Power of Things in Historical Reenactment’, in: Sarah Willner et al. (eds.): *Doing History. Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur*, Münster and New York 2016, 151–171; Petra Tjitske Kalshoven: ‘Things in the Making’, in: *Etnofoor* 22/1 (2010), 59–74; Dawid Kobialka: ‘The Mask(s) and Transformers of Historical Re-Enactment: Material Culture and Contemporary Vikings’, in: *Current Swedish Archaeology* 21 (2013), 141–161.

57 See for example Martin Lücke and Irmgard Zündorf: *Einführung in die Public History*, Göttingen 2018, 61–65.

58 Karl H. Hörning: ‘Was fremde Dinge tun: Sozialtheoretische Herausforderung’, in: Hans Peter Hahn (ed.): *Vom Eigensinn der Dinge. Für eine neue Perspektive auf die Welt des Materiellen*, Berlin 2015, 163–176, here 170.

social and cultural sciences, one key benchmark is French philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour, along with the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) he founded in the late 1970s in connection with studies of science and the laboratory.

Latour assigns actional potential to things that are connected in a network with other things, people, hybrids, and so on, referring to them as ‘actants’.⁵⁹ In a sense, he thus raises them to the same level as social actors; they no longer stand ‘below people and their thinking, but become their counterparts’.⁶⁰ In accordance with Latour’s wick-erwork entangling everyone and everything in mutual interactions, things constantly confront us and, in their quality as actants, cease-lessly force us to act and react.⁶¹ In fact, though, when we interact with things, we generally give them different forms of attention, even ‘punishing’ them by disregarding them.⁶² We find these differing economies of attention in everyday life, but also in popular historical culture, such as the currently en vogue swords. We encounter these in children’s books and toy castles as well as in the form of ‘real’ wooden swords and futuristic lightsabers. (Young) adults are also fascinated by replicas of the swords wielded by heroes and villains in action and fantasy films, sword replicas used in live action role playing (LARP) and ‘authentic’ medieval and Asian swordplay. This is a key point of departure for public history, which needs to probe more intensively than before the relationships between people and things. Which things are embedded in historico-cultural practices and how? How and in what contexts are they used? What is the relationship between people and things? What role do things play in the performative setting? How do they influence performance and actors? What meanings do they evoke? Hence, what public historians need to scrutinise is not just the form, material and function of things – such as clothing (costume) and equipment – but also concrete action (in the context of the performance). The priority must be to unpack the interrelation-ship between people and things, to get to grips with the above-men-

Things have
potential
for action

59 Bruno Latour: ‘On Actor-Network Theory: A Few Clarifications’, in: *Soziale Welt* 47/4 (1996), 369–381, here 369.

60 Hans Peter Hahn: ‘Dinge als Herausforderung – Einführung’, in: Hans Peter Hahn and Friedemann Neumann (eds.): *Dinge als Herausforderung. Kontexte, Umgangsweisen und Umwertungen von Objekten*, Bielefeld 2018, 9–32, here 13.

61 *Ibid.*, 14.

62 *Ibid.*

Things in the
museal
presentation
of history

tioned network and thus with things' potency and agency as well as their cultural and symbolic significance.

More attention must also be paid to things and their performativity when examining representations of history in public spaces.⁶³ This is particularly true in the context of history exhibitions and historical museums. Here, things are deployed as exhibits in order to objectivise the museal presentation of history as it unfolds in three-dimensional space and to produce the authenticity of the associated narrative by means of material traces. But what makes a thing a museum object? How are exhibition texts and objects interwoven? How do visitors generate historical knowledge through their encounter with the exhibited objects? What role is played by things as museum and exhibition objects? How are they transformed through their inclusion in collections and, in the course of their museal presentation, how are they authorised and auratically charged? Last but not least, how do they become evidence of historical narratives and lines of argument? Here, an expanded history of historiography informed by the theory of performativity can generate fruitful questions that seek to tease out the impact of objects, up to and including their use as referenced traces and sources in academic historiography.

10.5 Doing history

If history is understood as a social practice that selects, organises and narratively processes traces of the past from an always present-day perspective (Jörn Rüsen), then all practices of history-making can in principle be described as performative acts. They differ primarily in terms of their medial representation, the conventions and conditions of their production and reception, their intended and actual publics, and in their target group-related modes of representation, along with the associated authentication and 'authentication' procedures.

The task of research-based public history is to identify, investigate and decipher the diverse performative practices of *doing history*. One of the imperatives here is to plan and reflect on current and future historical productions in such a way as to (make it possible to) explicate the motivations and goals of sense-making in the

⁶³ Fischer-Lichte: *Performativität*, 161–178.

production of historical interpretations. History is made – and the making of history is the key focus of a public history that draws inspiration from academic history and the cultural sciences.

Introductory literature

Fischer-Lichte, Erika: *Performativität. Eine Einführung*, Bielefeld 2012.

Martschukat, Jürgen and Patzold, Steffen (eds.): *Geschichtswissenschaft und 'performative turn'. Ritual, Inszenierung und Performanz vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit*, Cologne 2003.

Willner, Sarah et al. (ed.): *Doing History. Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur*, Münster and New York 2016.

Wirth, Uwe (ed.): *Performanz. Zwischen Sprachphilosophie und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt a.M. 2002.

11 Reception

11.1 Introduction

Modern depictions of Greek temples typically have one feature in common. They show white peripteral temples. This applies, for example, to the reconstruction of the Athenian Parthenon built in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1897, to the drawings of temples in the comic *Asterix at the Olympic Games*¹ and to the filmic representations in *Clash of the Titans* (United States 2010, directed by Louis Leterrier). And yet peripteral temples are just one of many possible forms of ancient Greek sacred architecture, and only rarely were Greek temples white. Their polychromy has not only been established scientifically (since the nineteenth century),² but is often a fact known in the context of popular science as well.

So why are they still repeatedly portrayed as purely white buildings in media products with a historical theme? The main reason is quite simple: because they have always been depicted that way. Due to its association with purity, simplicity and integrity, the colour white played a central role in the aesthetics of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western philhellenism, and it was consistently used in neoclassical architecture, which was inspired by its ideals. These influenced the visualisation of ancient Greek architecture to such an extent that the white temple has become something of an icon, whose value lies in its high degree of recognisability. Most people who see a white building with six or eight columns and an ornamental pediment immediately realise that the setting is that of classical antiquity and in particular ancient Greece; the same effect would not be achieved through a scientifically correct reconstruction of the Parthenon (featuring blue, red, yellow and black elements).³ On the contrary, such as an image would clash with expectations of a Greek temple, deeply unsettling some viewers.

¹ René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo: *Asterix at the Olympic Games*, Leicester 1972 (French orig. 1968).

² David T. van Zanten: 'The Parthenon Imagined Painted', in: Panayotis Tournikiotis (ed.): *The Parthenon and Its Impact in Modern Times*, Athens 1994, 259–277.

³ Filippo Carlà-Uhink: *Representations of Classical Greece in Theme Parks*, London and New York 2020, 18 f.

Underlying this icon we can discern mechanisms of historical reception. This term refers to the processes through which historical cultures, events, personalities, as well as cultural products from the past are utilised over shorter or longer periods of time within a given historical culture (see Chapter 6), becoming part of a widespread and shared ‘popular knowledge’. As these processes, in every cultural context, lead to the development of broadly distributed background knowledge, which ultimately takes on the character of the commonplace (we might also call this a cliché), we can view the reception of history, though not exclusively, as a process of stereotyping. As we just saw in the case of the polychromy of Greek temples, recipients’ expectations of certain historical representations are independent of scientific findings and philological reconstructions; they tend to be based on the history of the representation of events, figures and cultures. In this sense, historical reception defines what constitutes *pastness* in different cultural contexts. Pastness – as a quality denoting that which looks historical and is recognised as historical, regardless of how old it is, and thus that which seems ‘authentically historical’ – is in fact attributed to precisely those objects consonant with the expectations outlined above (see the following info box on ‘Pastness’).

While the term ‘reception’ is not yet particularly common in academic history, it has been used for several decades by scholars of ancient Greece and Rome in studies of the persistence of ancient themes, narratives and characters in post-antique eras. Yet the concept is of great relevance to every other area of historical scholarship as a heuristic tool for investigating the mechanisms underlying the recognition or acknowledgement of historical representations by a given (target) audience or for factoring them into the planning of public history products. The relevance to public history should be plainly apparent. It is through the reception of history that structures and horizons of expectation vis-à-vis history take shape in every cultural context – such as the expectation that Greek temples will be white. These expectations determine the recognisability of images, texts, and so on as ‘historical’ and their assignment to a specific past culture – or underpin the non-recognition of a coloured temple as a component of an ancient Greek city.

Pastness

The word ‘pastness’ was used as early as the nineteenth century, but only took on its current meaning in the twentieth century. Pastness refers to the quality, aura or status of something that is viewed as a remnant of the past or as otherwise belonging to the past. Since the 2000s, the term has been firmly anchored in the context of the debate on authenticity (see Chapter 2), where it refers to the quality of things that, due to their external appearance, give the impression of coming from a different era. Hence, buildings to which pastness is attributed do not have to be old – but they do have to look old or be perceived as old. Pastness is inherent in the ruins of Greek temples such as those in Agrigento or Paestum (both in Italy), as their structural condition indicates their origin in a bygone era. Artificial ruins built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as the Potsdam Ruinenberg of 1748, may have been new buildings at the time of their construction, but they too exude pastness: they were built to be imagined as historical buildings (see Chapter 7). By the same token, old architecture does not always exhibit pastness, as it is not necessarily perceived as old or ancient. Pastness, therefore, has three core characteristics: (1) it is a quality closely interwoven with materiality (pastness is recognised in material objects); (2) pastness only arises in resonance with the viewer’s prior knowledge and expectations; (3) pastness requires a credible narrative connecting past and present (in other words, the presence of a historical-looking artefact must be credible and explainable: an Egyptian pyramid in Australia, for example, remains devoid of pastness in the absence of a narrative setting out how it got there). It is important to emphasise that pastness, as a visible and tangible quality, is ascribed and, therefore, constantly changes; yet at the same time, on a superordinate level, pastness denotes the sum of all pasts existing in the present. The relevance of this concept to public history lies in the fact that public historians must be able to recognise this pastness or, in the context of exhibitions or other presentations, ensure that the historicity of the things on display is credibly conveyed.

Recommended reading

Holtorf, Cornelius: ‘The Presence of Pastness: Themed Environments and Beyond’, in: Judith Schlehe et al. (eds.): *Staging the Past. Themed Environments in Transcultural Perspective*, Bielefeld 2010, 23–40; Holtorf, Cornelius: ‘On Pastness: A Reconsideration of Materiality in Archaeological Object Authenticity’, in: *Anthropological Quarterly* 86/2 (2013), 427–443

11.2 Conceptual history

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, reception refers to ‘the act or action or an instance of receiving’, including the aspects

of ‘response, reaction’.⁴ In the context of public history, the latter meaning relates to the understanding and interpretative classification of the reactions of visitors to or observers of public history products; these can be measured and analysed, for example, by means of surveys (‘empirical reception research’).⁵ But since this volume focusses on public history products and their genesis from the perspective of historians and practitioners, we pay no further attention here to the specific forms and methods that typify such studies, which tend to involve statistics, psychometrics and data processing. In the following, the focus is on understanding reception as the assimilation or adoption of the ideas or cultural assets of other people, cultures and eras.

This approach to ‘reception’ was first developed in the field of literary studies and subsequently adopted and adapted in history and other humanities disciplines. The prelude was provided by reception theory, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, whose work is rightly regarded as one of the key sources of inspiration for reception aesthetics,⁷ had brought out the historical nature – and therefore the changeability and contextuality – of ‘understanding’ (*Verstehen*) in *Truth and Method* in 1960. This perspective implies that texts have no essential or singular meaning. Instead, meaning is constructed through the ceaseless interweaving of past and present and is always influenced by ‘prejudices’ (*Vorurteile*).⁸ Against the then

Origins in
literary studies

4 ‘Reception’, in: *Merriam-Webster Dictionary online*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reception#:~:text=noun,instance%20of%20receiving%3A%20such%20as>, last accessed: 14 May 2024.

5 With regard to the reception of literary works, see Achim Bartsch: ‘Rezeptionsforschung, empirische’, in: Ansgar Nünning (ed.): *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie. Ansätze – Personen – Grundbegriffe*, 5th edn., Stuttgart 2013, 652–654.

6 On the background to the term, see Hans Robert Jauf: ‘Rezeption, Rezeptionsästhetik’ (1992), in: Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (eds.): *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 8: R–Sc, Darmstadt 2019, 996–1004. For an account setting out a number of possible differences between *reception* and *reception theory*, see also Robert C. Holub: *Reception Theory. A Critical Introduction*, London and New York 1984, xii–xiv.

7 Holub: *Reception Theory*, 36–45.

8 Hans-Georg Gadamer: *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik (Gesammelte Werke, vol. 1)*, Tübingen 1990 (1960), 270–312; cf. Hans-Helmuth Gander: ‘Erhebung der Geschichtlichkeit des Verstehens zum hermeneutischen Prinzip’ (GW 1, 270–311), in: Günter Figal (ed.): *Hans-Georg Gadamer: Wahrheit und Methode*, Berlin 2007, 105–125.

dominant understanding of literary history as a series of well-defined and clearly describable eras, the aesthetics of reception began to place the reader's perception at the centre of literary studies. This means that understanding historicity in literary history needs to be based on understanding literature and art as a process in which the 'interaction' (*Wechselwirkung*) between authors and viewers or readers plays a crucial role.⁹ According to this approach, the meaning of a literary work is constituted at the moment of its reception, when readers perceive, understand, interpret and reproduce the text on the basis of their previous knowledge and 'horizons of expectation' (*Erwartungshorizonte*, a term that Romance philologist Hans Robert Jauß, one of the founders of reception theory, made central to his methodology).¹⁰ Reception is, therefore, not just passive absorption, but a constructive act of production, the sense-making act par excellence: it is only the reception of the text that gives it meaning. The same text is understood, judged and received differently at different moments and on the basis of varying horizons of expectation, just as things can be charged with pastness in specific ways at different instances.

New
historicism

Crucial to questions about reception and approaches to it is another literary theory, developed from the 1980s onwards, notably by Stephen Greenblatt: new historicism.¹¹ Instead of focussing on authors and their aims, this theory foregrounds the cultural-historical context in which a given text was produced, calling for 'consideration of the historico-cultural environment to be understood not as the answer, but as the question'.¹² This context is viewed as the historically and culturally specific fabric of texts or as a discursive

⁹ Holub: *Reception Theory*, 53–58.

¹⁰ Hans Robert Jauß: 'Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft' (1967), in: Rainer Warning (ed.): *Rezeptionsästhetik. Theorie und Praxis*, Munich 1975, 126–162, here 130–141; cf. Holub: *Reception Theory*, 58–63.

¹¹ Despite its name, which was primarily an attempt to distinguish it from new criticism, new historicism has nothing to do with historicism – which is why it is sometimes referred to as 'cultural poetics'; see Claudius Sittig: "Was ernst an ihm ist, kann sie schon". Die deutsche Literaturwissenschaft und der New Historicism aus der Neuen Welt', in: Rebekka Habermas and Rebekka von Mallinckrodt (eds.): *Interkultureller Transfer und nationaler Eigensinn. Europäische und angloamerikanische Positionen der Kulturwissenschaften*, Göttingen 2004, 87–106, here 98.

¹² Moritz Baßler: 'New Historicism – Literaturgeschichte als Poetik der Kultur', in: Moritz Baßler (ed.): *New Historicism. Literaturgeschichte als Poetik der Kultur*, 2nd edn., Tübingen and Basel 2001, 7–28, here 12.

network. Since history too can only be conveyed as a text¹³ and thus only within the same structure in which literary texts are produced and mediated, new historicism implies that the ‘historicity of texts’ is closely interwoven with the ‘textuality of history’¹⁴ and thus that the object of analysis always consists of historico-cultural structures and elements. Indeed, historical events also play a role insofar as they are further perceived, processed, memorialised or cited as a reason for decisions.¹⁵ This approach, to put it in simple terms, can shift the focus of research from the reception of a literary work by a reader to the reception of older texts by writers, who reshape and further mediate the ‘past’.

If one understands media products and culture in general as texts, and, in line with this, views intertextuality as a hallmark of comprehensive medial and cultural networks,¹⁶ the new historicist approach can also be applied beyond literary history to forms of the perception and reproduction of history. Images of the past emerge which, transmitted and repeated from text to text (in other words from medium to medium), become firmly established, giving rise to the above-mentioned horizons of expectation. It is at this point, through the investigation of such images and their relevance to the mediation and understanding of history, that the concept of reception can be applied to the fields of historical culture and culture of remembrance; this allows us to analyse the emergence, consolidation and mediation of ‘historical clichés’. Building on this, historian Harold Marcuse introduced the concept of ‘reception history’ into the debate in 2005,¹⁷ understood as ‘the history of the meanings that have been imputed to historical events’.¹⁸ Instead of texts, Marcuse focusses on historical events or personalities, probing how meaning

Applications
for historians

¹³ Hayden White: *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Baltimore 1973; cf. Holub: *Reception Theory*, 161 f.

¹⁴ Baßler: *New Historicism*, 8; Sittig: ‘Die deutsche Literaturwissenschaft’, 93.

¹⁵ Holub: *Reception Theory*, 67.

¹⁶ Baßler: *New Historicism*, 15.

¹⁷ Not to be confused with the term ‘reception history’ as used in biblical studies, which refers to the transmission, translation, exegesis and possible modification of biblical texts over the centuries.

¹⁸ See the page of Marcuse’s official university website dedicated to the history of reception, marcuse.faculty.history.ucsb.edu/receptionhist.htm, last accessed: 28 May 2019.

is attributed to them in contemporary and subsequently historical or historiographical interpretations. Here, he distinguishes this aspect of reception, which entails the ‘portraiture’ of historical events, from the way in which larger groups understand and ‘embed’ the same historical events (‘perception’). The reception of history thus becomes an analysis of the processes involved in transmitting certain interpretations of historical events and, therefore, an analysis of the genesis of the widespread background knowledge mentioned above. This opens up key fields for the investigation and praxeology of public history.

Usage in
classical studies

The concept of reception history, as proposed by Marcuse, has attracted meagre attention in historical scholarship to date. In contrast, the concept of reception has been received with interest in classical studies, particularly in the English-speaking world, where the theoretical discussion of reception, especially ‘classical reception’, has reached a high level of reflection.¹⁹ It is in this area in particular that German reception aesthetics has influenced English-language research.²⁰

Since the 2000s, ‘classical reception’ has increasingly established itself as a specialised field with its own organs of publication, such as the *Classical Reception Journal* founded in 2009.²¹ The 2010s saw growing collaboration between reception researchers and practitioners (such as writers, artists and directors) working on ancient themes and figures. This makes reception analyses in this field exemplary for public history: in an increasing number of publications, practitioners describe their relationship to the past and engage in dialogue with the scholars who study their works.²² The encyclopa-

19 See, for example, Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray: ‘Introduction: Making Connections’, in: Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray (eds.): *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, Malden etc. 2008, 1–9.

20 Charles Martindale: ‘Introduction: Thinking Through Reception’, in: Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas (eds.): *Classics and the Use of Reception*, Malden and Oxford 2006, 1–13, here 3 f.

21 Hardwick and Stray: ‘Introduction’, 2.

22 See, for example, the publications of comic author E. Shanower, in which he reflects on his graphic novel *Age of Bronze*, or of the South African sculptor Charlayn Solms who presents a series of twelve sculptures inspired by the Homeric epics and explains her approach to the ancient material, the secondary literature and previous forms of reception. Eric Shanower: ‘Twenty-First Century Troy’, in: George Kovacs and C. W. Marshall (eds.): *Classics and Comics*, Oxford 2011, 195–206;

dia of the ancient world known as *Brill's New Pauly* now comprises three volumes on the history of reception and history of science as well as a growing number of supplementary volumes dealing with the reception of specific ancient themes. These volumes are of great value to reception researchers and practitioners, as they describe the reception history of individual topics and figures from antiquity for a non-specialised readership, helping readers better understand the associated expectations.

The development of a persuasive model of reception capable of achieving a broad scholarly consensus would be a particularly useful means of better understanding the mechanisms of historical reception and refining methods of analysis. This has not yet happened; the conceptual history presented here should have made clear which definitional difficulties underlie the lack of such a model. One attempt to move in this direction and to make the concept of historical reception productive for public history is to think about it in conjunction with the model of transculturality.²³

Transculturality refers to a reciprocal interweaving of cultures with differing areas of circulation or distribution.²⁴ If these areas are understood in terms of time rather than place, one might refer not only to a synchronous transculturality, that is, the *entanglement* of two contemporary cultures, but also to a diachronic form of transculturality. In both cases, the focus is on how the elements, narratives, characters, and so on, of a given culture become inscribed in a receiving culture. Of course, in the case of diachronic transculturality, the mutual exchange does not operate at the level of personal communication. Information about the received culture is only acquired through sources – and thus representations. And yet the

Reception as
transculturality

Eric Shanower: 'Trojan Lovers and Warriors: The Power of Seduction in Age of Bronze', in: Marta García Morcillo and Silke Knippschild (eds.): *Seduction and Power: Antiquity in the Visual and Performing Arts*, London and New York 2013, 57–70; Charlayn Solms: *A Homeric Catalogue of Shapes. The Iliad and Odyssey Seen Differently*, London and New York 2019.

²³ Filippo Carlà: 'Historische Quellen, literarische Erzählungen, phantasievolle Konstruktionen. Die vielen Leben der Theodora von Byzanz', in: Jutta Ernst and Florian Freitag (eds.): *Transkulturelle Dynamiken. Aktanten – Prozesse – Theorien*, Bielefeld 2015, 31–62, here 33–38.

²⁴ Wolfgang Welsch: 'Was ist eigentlich Transkulturalität?', in: Lucyna Darowska and Claudia Machold (eds.): *Hochschule als transkultureller Raum? Kultur, Bildung und Differenz in der Universität*, Bielefeld 2010, 39–66.

entanglement applies to both sides: the received culture changes insofar as it is narrated and understood anew in the specific context of the receiving culture.²⁵

One example is the so-called ‘Roman salute’, which does not actually correspond to any form of ancient Roman greeting. Inspired by the gesture used by orators to attract the attention of the people, as passed down through ancient sculptures, the ‘Roman salute’ was invented as an interpretation of this action at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Silent film played a major role in this context, as attempts were made to depict the greeting of two Romans in a purely visual way, without sound. Through its adoption in fascist Italy, where it was intended to emphasise the Roman heritage within the nationalist historical culture of the dictatorship, the ‘Roman salute’ then became a symbol (or rather a performance) of far-right beliefs – always on the premise that its ‘ancient’ origins were authentic. Any filmic or pictorial representation of ancient Rome must therefore take into account the expectations of an audience that thinks it knows how two Romans greet each other. The ‘Roman salute’, then, is a product of the twentieth century and a vivid example of how that century changed the perception of ancient Rome.²⁶

11.3 Related concepts

Due to the historical genesis of the concept of reception, as described above, and the different academic cultures that formulated key aspects of it, certain disciplines or schools of thought formulated different concepts that are now sometimes used synonymously with that of ‘reception’ – often without clear reference to alternative conceptual frameworks. Some humanities scholars have attempted to bring order to this field and to define different terms in such a way that they have distinct areas of application and thus achieve greater precision.

²⁵ Hardwick and Stray: ‘Introduction’, 4; Lorna Hardwick: *Reception Studies*, Oxford 2003, 4.

²⁶ Martin M. Winkler: *The Roman Salute. Cinema, History, Ideology*, Columbus 2009.

The term ‘tradition’ was already used in the early twentieth century to describe the afterlife of classical literature.²⁷ Some authors, therefore, use reception and tradition as synonyms,²⁸ while others differentiate between the two terms: in particular, the concept of tradition tends to foreground ancient models and the forms associated with them as they have ‘trickled down’ across generations and eras. This means that research on tradition pays greater attention to the various ways in which these models were changed – sometimes with the more or less implicit assumption that the ancient models had an objective meaning that was or was not understood and reproduced.²⁹ Examples of such an approach are studies of the influence of a literary work, or even of a historical figure or historical event, on later generations.³⁰ The history of the impact of Queen Cleopatra thus sets out the ways in which, and to what ends, the life of the Ptolemaic queen has been narrativised in later eras, beyond the historiographical reconstruction of her actual activities and actions.

Reception and
tradition

The concept of reception, meanwhile, tends to look at the past from a present-day perspective, starting from the ‘receiving product’ and seeking to reconstruct sources of inspiration and antecedents of specific representations. The idea that analysing reception phenomena can help us recognise the ‘true core’ of historical figures, events or texts is thus erroneous. The point is to understand that there is no such ‘core’ in the first place, that such historical elements exist only through their ceaseless representation, narrativisation and interweaving in subsequent periods.³¹

The concept of historical transformation (*Geschichtstransformation*) was introduced in the 2000s in the German-speaking countries. This features major overlaps with the concept of reception history and has from the outset been deployed to grapple not only with the afterlife of antiquity, but with that of a vast range of historical eras, structures, figures, and so on. The concept centres on the way past events and personages are viewed from a later position in time in

Transformation

²⁷ Felix Budelmann and Johannes Haubold: ‘Reception and Tradition’, in: Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray (eds.): *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, Malden etc. 2008, 13–25, here 13 f.

²⁸ Budelmann and Haubold: ‘Reception’, 14 and 13–25.

²⁹ Hardwick: *Reception Studies*, 2 f.; Hardwick and Stray: ‘Introduction’, 4 f.

³⁰ Holub: *Reception Theory*, xii f.

³¹ Martindale: ‘Introduction’, 12.

accordance with the prevailing forms of historical consciousness and historical cultures.³² ‘Transformation’ spotlights a process of change that takes place between a reference area and a receiving area;³³ it emphasises the act of receiving a model, the understanding of which is then adapted to the new context. In relation to visual culture, too, the step following the transfer (that is, the selection and adoption) of older models is referred to as transformation.³⁴ As emphasised by translation studies, there is ultimately no transfer without transformation.³⁵

The biggest difference between the concepts of reception and transformation lies in the implications of the words themselves. While reception is usually associated with passivity in everyday speech and thus evokes processes that foreground the models from the past,³⁶ transformation points to the idea of a (pro-)active action and, therefore, mostly emphasises the role of the authors of ‘historicising’ products. However, the notion of transformation may foster the idea that such a (pro-)active act of visualising or representing historical eras is always intentional. This in turn may obscure the fact that certain representations of the past are so firmly anchored in the collective historical consciousness that their reproduction and continuation are not the object of a conscious choice. In this sense, they are not selected by recipients but ‘replicated’. One example of this is the above-mentioned depiction of ancient Greek temples. In most cases, illustrators, set designers and historical communica-

32 Sonja Georgi et al.: ‘Geschichtstransformationen. Medien – Verfahren – Funktionalisierungen’, in: Sonja Georgi et al. (eds.): *Geschichtstransformationen. Medien, Verfahren und Funktionalisierung historischer Rezeption*, Bielefeld 2015, 17–28, here 17 f.

33 Lutz Bergemann et al.: ‘Transformation. Ein Konzept zur Erforschung kulturellen Wandels’, in: Hartmut Böhme et al. (eds.): *Transformation. Ein Konzept zur Erforschung kulturellen Wandels*, Munich 2011, 39–56, here 39.

34 Laura Bieger: *Ästhetik der Immersion. Raum-Erleben zwischen Welt und Bild. Las Vegas, Washington und die White City*, Bielefeld 2007, 52; Filippo Carlà and Florian Freitag: ‘Strategien der Geschichtstransformationen in Themenparks’, in: Sonja Georgi et al. (eds.): *Geschichtstransformationen. Medien, Verfahren und Funktionalisierung historischer Rezeption*, Bielefeld 2015, 131–149, here 131–135.

35 Sittig: ‘Die deutsche Literaturwissenschaft’, 90.

36 But see Martindale: ‘Introduction’, 11, according to which *reception* is not to be understood as passive, but as active, which, Martindale tells us, distinguishes it, from *tradition* and *heritage*.

tors do not consciously decide to depict a Greek temple as a white peripteral temple; rather, they are exposed to entrenched horizons of expectation and reproduce them. Historical transformations can thus be understood as a subcategory of the broader phenomenon of the reception of history.

The implication of an active role is also the biggest difference between the concept of reception and that of ‘uses of the past’; indeed, the very word *use* immediately indicates an active and conscious action. The term ‘uses of the past’, which is very common in the English-speaking world, refers to actions through which the past is interpreted in order to achieve certain goals, because ‘accounts of the past serve present purposes; histories have innumerable functions and are of countless types’.³⁷ In 1874, Friedrich Nietzsche argued in favour of a ‘useful’ history (and historical scholarship) that helps shape the future,³⁸ while in positivism a key role was played by the idea of a historical science that searches for templates capable of providing guidance in the present. Other authors have used the term to emphasise historians’ duty to speak for broad sections of society and thus to become ‘useful’ to society as a whole. As a call for communication outside the academic world, then, to a certain extent the term embodies the programme of public history.³⁹ Since the decline of positivist approaches, the uses of the past have mainly been analysed in terms of the identity-creating role or impact of historical narratives. In that context, such narratives are viewed as constructs of history that are ‘used’ to generate images of self and others in order to strengthen, for instance, local, regional and national identities.⁴⁰ It should be emphasised that ‘uses of the past’ does not have a

*Uses of
the past*

³⁷ Jorma Kalela: *Making History. The Historian and the Uses of the Past*, New York 2012, 1.

³⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche: ‘Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen. Zweites Stück: Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben’, in: Friedrich Nietzsche: *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*, vol. 1: *Die Geburt der Tragödie. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I–IV. Nachgelassene Schriften 1870–1873*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 2nd edn., Munich 1988, 243–334.

³⁹ According to William J. Bouwsma: *The Usable Past. Essays in European Cultural History*, Berkeley etc. 1990, 1–3.

⁴⁰ See for example Constance de Saint-Laurent and Sandra Obradović: ‘Uses of the Past: History as a Resource for the Present’, in: *Integrative Psychology and Behavioral Science* 53/1 (2019), 1–13; here, the investigation of ‘how the past is transformed and mobilised for the present [. . .], as a resource to give meaning to

negative connotation – it is not a matter of exploiting or appropriating history (see the info box on ‘Appropriation’ in section 8.2), but centres on its application or utilisation. This is particularly clear in the English language, where the *uses* of history are often contrasted with its *abuses*, including cases of falsification and instrumentalisation of the past.⁴¹ The ‘uses of the past’ thus refers to narratives and representations of history that are consciously offered – and not to the mechanisms of recognition associated with expectations. The focus is on the possibility of different interpretations that lead to differing constructions of identity and, therefore, potentially come into conflict with one another. There is a danger here of ascribing the ‘uses of the past’ only to non-academic historiography and historical narratives, reinforcing the widespread assumption that academic works are free of such instrumentalisation.⁴² This is a particularly important point with regard to public history, because such divisions between a ‘good’ or ‘right’ and a ‘bad’ or ‘wrong’ use of history must be overcome – in the awareness that academic history, public history and popular history are in constant dialogue with each other.⁴³

11.4 Methodology of reception analyses

Reception analyses have produced their own methodology in order to examine the genealogy of the products of reception processes and the expectations of various audiences. Hence, from an academic perspective, the main aim is to understand the emergence and efficacy of reception products, their embedding in the historical cultures under consideration (see Chapter 6) and their interaction with other reception products. Due to the complexity of reception structures, reception analyses can in principle only be exemplary: it would be impossible to reconstruct every connection within a given cultural

present actions and groups as well as to imagine collective futures’ (ibid., p. 1 f.) is linked to the concept of collective memory.

⁴¹ See Margaret Macmillan: *The Uses and Abuses of History*, London 2009, p. xiii; Andreas Körber: ‘Uses’ and ‘Ab-Uses’ of History. *Possible Consequences for History Teaching at Schools*, Frankfurt a.M. 2012, https://www.pedocs.de/frontdoor.php?source_opus=6626, last accessed: 16 October 2020.

⁴² Kalela: *Making History*, 2 f.

⁴³ Ibid., 3.

context. Thus, according to Moritz Baßler, such an approach can only be ‘convincing’ if ‘it reveals individual connections, tracing individual threads of discourse in different regions of the historico-cultural fabric’.⁴⁴ This is also highly significant from a praxeological perspective: only an apt understanding of the mechanisms of reception processes allows a productive assessment of a target audience’s horizons of expectation, as we will show in the section on ‘operationalisations’ below.

Reception analyses are by no means meant to expose inaccuracies or errors in historical representations. Such an approach would fail to focus on audiences’ expectations or that which is immediately recognisable to each specific audience in a given historical culture. A search for historical errors would imply that there is *a single* correct representation of history that must be the same in every cultural context. A normative framework of this kind would also entail the assumption that historical representations are always based on immediacy, that is, on direct contact with a historical object, event or personality, without further influences or intermediate stages. Yet this is not the case: every textual or visual form of representation of the past is the product of a very long chain, whose links consist of discrete episodes of reception.⁴⁵ No modern representation of Gaius Julius Caesar, for example, is based on direct contact with him, an unmediated view of his person and actions. Consciously or unconsciously, our image of Caesar is shaped by what we have picked up from school lessons, read in comics such as *Asterix* and seen in films or plays (we need only think of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*). The choice of actors to play the part of Caesar is often influenced by visual expectations – as in the case of Northern Irish actor Ciarán Hinds, who played the Roman dictator in the successful TV series *Rome* (HBO, 2005–2007) and whose facial features are strongly reminiscent of earlier Caesar portrayals (including the drawings in *Asterix*). These products of reception, from which we derive our prior knowledge of Caesar, also stem from earlier works of art, literary traditions, historiographical products, and so on, all the way back to contemporary sources, particularly ancient portraits of the dictator. But even Caesar’s own texts or other contemporary sources do

Reception
chains

⁴⁴ Baßler: ‘New Historicism’, 19.

⁴⁵ Budelmann and Haubold: ‘Reception’, 16 f.

not provide direct access to him but only to his self-portrayal or the accounts produced by his contemporaries, which already contain the first forms of historical reception.

*Pictorial turn
and iconology*

Every form of historical representation, every episode in the reception of history, must therefore be embedded analytically in a complex web of visualisations, narratives, and so on, and can in fact only be understood through this lens: narrative elements and forms of visualisation evoke historical phases, eras, cultures and personages in the minds of recipients. The visualisation of history is in fact particularly significant as a key aspect of analyses of historical reception: a short or overweight Caesar would almost certainly clash with the expectations of a Western audience. As a result, reception analyses are also a major feature of visual culture studies – whose development in the late twentieth century is linked to the so-called ‘pictorial turn’.⁴⁶ The methods used to investigate the reception of history, then, can be geared towards those of iconological research. The latter is based on the assumption that

the human memory serves as a universal storehouse of recollections, allowing people to intentionally recall imagery – whether two- or three-dimensional – or to be unconsciously reminded of it. To trace visual forms and stereotypes back to older examples and identify conscious or unconscious derivatives is, therefore, much more than just a game played by art historians.⁴⁷

This approach is closely linked to the work of cultural scientist Aby Warburg, who developed it within the framework of his study of the role of classical motifs in Renaissance art.⁴⁸ Warburg’s conviction that works of art can only be explained in the historical context of their creation and that their ongoing impact continues to shape the art forms of the following centuries (see Chapter 9, ‘Memory’) stands in close proximity to the basic ideas of historical reception. Warburg

⁴⁶ Willibald Sauerländer: ‘Iconic turn? Eine Bitte um Ikonoklasmus’, in: Christa Maar and Hubert Burda (eds.): *Iconic turn. Die neue Macht der Bilder*, Cologne 2004, 407–426, here 408–410.

⁴⁷ Stefan Schweizer: ‘Aby M. Warburgs Renaissance: archäologische Bemerkungen’, in: Rebekka Habermas and Rebekka von Mallinckrodt (eds.): *Interkultureller Transfer und nationaler Eigensinn. Europäische und angloamerikanische Positionen der Kulturwissenschaften*, Göttingen 2004, 157–174, here 157.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 158.

illustrated his primary method in his *Mnemosyne Atlas*, a project intended to follow the migration of pictorial motifs through the epochs, though it was never to be completed.⁴⁹ Such processes are not limited to deliberate and explicit instances of citation (such as the drawings in the *Asterix* comics, in which the characters imitate and parody famous sculptures and paintings from a variety of eras).⁵⁰ In other words, we also have to consider the way in which earlier depictions, reflecting past horizons of expectation, are transmitted to a given present and further reproduced.

While Warburg's iconology⁵¹ thus provides major impetus for studies in historical reception – above all by emphasising the unconscious character of many of the mechanisms that generate expectations – two aspects must be seen as problematic from a present-day academic history perspective. The first is the presupposition that human nature exhibits ‘constants’,⁵² which underpins the assumption that certain pictorial motifs with a high emotional content (Warburg's ‘pathos formulae’) evoke similar reactions in every era (on this view, the function of works of art is in part to help tame such emotions).⁵³ The second and more serious problem is Warburg's reconstruction of the genealogy of individual motifs, as opposed to an analysis of the complex interrelationships underlying every historical representation. The fundamental transdisciplinarity of Warburg's investigations⁵⁴ is, however, still crucial to every present-day

49 See Warburg's essays in the section ‘Mnemosyne: Zwischen Evolutionstheorie und Bilderatlas’ and the editors' preliminary remarks in: Aby Warburg: *Werke in einem Band*, ed. by Martin Treml et al., Frankfurt a.M. 2010, 603–659.

50 Carlà-Uhink: *Receptions*, 173.

51 Aby Warburg uses the terms iconography and iconology synonymously; see Peter Schmidt: *Aby M. Warburg und die Ikonologie*, Wiesbaden 1993, 24–26.

52 Schweizer: ‘Warburgs Renaissance’, 164 f. In this sense, Warburg was hugely influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution; see Martin Treml et al.: ‘Vorbemerkung der Herausgeber (zu Teil I: Genese der “Pathosformel”)', in: Aby Warburg: *Werke in einem Band*, ed. by Martin Treml et al., Frankfurt a.M. 2010, 31–38, here 32.

53 Treml et al.: ‘Vorbemerkung’; Schweizer: ‘Warburgs Renaissance’, 165 f.

54 Martin Treml and Sigrid Weigel: ‘Einleitung’, in: *Aby Warburg: Werke in einem Band*, ed. by Martin Treml et al., Frankfurt a.M. 2010, 9–29; Schweizer: ‘Warburgs Renaissance’, 162 f.

reception analysis, which must navigate different media, cultures and epochs on a visual and textual level.⁵⁵

The three-stage analytical model put forward by art historian Erwin Panofsky is also relevant to historical reception and public history. Using the same method with which Panofsky initially scrutinises images from a semantic perspective, analysts can also begin by analysing historical representations in terms of what is presented in them. In a second stage, they can move onto iconographic analysis, which probes *how* the content presented is depicted (here, among other things, types are generated: a man with a lion skin and a club represents Hercules, for example). The final stage is the iconological investigation, which interprets the representation.⁵⁶ Panofsky emphasises that this analysis must be transdisciplinary and calls for the consultation of a wide range of documents – also a key methodological principle for scholars concerned with the reception of history. Further, in a very similar way to reception aesthetics, Panofsky underscores that the authors of artworks have no control over the ‘third level’, that is, over the conclusions drawn in light of their works.⁵⁷

We can run through Panofsky’s model using the example of a reenactment. Observing a group of participants on the semantic level might, for example, lead to the conclusion that the reenactors are in a non-quotidian situation, that they are all men and that they are carrying weapons. On the iconographic level, we might then conclude that they represent an army. In light of their costumes and weapons, an observer with knowledge of the types depicted and thus with fitting expectations might ultimately identify a modern or, more precisely, a Napoleonic army. On the iconological level, we might ask why these men in these costumes met at this particular place, what significance the staging of a battle fought over 200 years ago

55 Charles Martindale examines the reception of Ovid in Titian’s work and advocates the transgression of media boundaries; see Charles Martindale: *Redeeming the Text. Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception*, Cambridge 1993, 60–64.

56 Erwin Panofsky: *Ikonographie und Ikonologie. Bildinterpretation nach dem Dreistufenmodell*, Cologne 2006.

57 Erwin Panofsky: ‘Zum Problem der Beschreibung und Inhaltsdeutung von Werken der bildenden Kunst’ (1932), in: Erwin Panofsky: *Ikonographie und Ikonologie. Bildinterpretation nach dem Dreistufenmodell*, Cologne 2006, 5–32, here 26 f.

has for them. This may be followed by further questions. What role does the Napoleonic era play in the participants' historical culture? Where and how did they acquire their knowledge of the Napoleonic period and Napoleonic warfare? Which visual models have shaped their horizons of expectation? What identity-forming role do Napoleon's wars play in the region of the reenactment and for the individual participants?⁵⁸ To answer these questions, one must draw upon other information, other methods and other disciplines – from art and film history to the analysis of school textbooks and the study of political discourses, to mention just a few examples.

All of this illustrates that the concept of a chain of reception is inadequate, as it seems to imply that each reception product is the consequence of a previous one and the cause of a subsequent one. In reality, the influences are so diverse, multimedial, multi-layered and networked (a reception product may, for example, draw on two sources, one of which in turn refers to the other) that no representation in two or even three dimensions can fully bring out the complexity of this 'multidimensional reception polyhedron', which is subject to constant renewal. Once again, this reinforces the need for an interdisciplinary approach, because studies that focus on just one medium or one type of medium as sources, such as film, comics, painting, and so on, are unable to recognise the breadth and depth of these interrelationships. This sometimes leads to the neglect of those media and representations that appeal to very large audiences.⁵⁹

The depiction of Empress Theodora of Byzantium in the video game *Civilization V* (2010), for example, is based on her mosaic portrait in the church of San Vitale, Ravenna, which provided the template for her crown and earrings; but her appearance in the game is also based on her depiction in the painting *L'imperatrice Théodora au Colisée* (1886) by Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant. As in the painting,

From reception
chain to
reception
polyhedron

⁵⁸ For an example relating to female roles in the reenactment of everyday life in ancient Rome, see Filippo Carlà-Uhink and Danielle Fiore: 'Performing Empresses and Matronae: Ancient Roman Women in Reenactment', in: *Archäologische Informationen* 39 (2016), 195–204.

⁵⁹ Take, for example, historical representations in theme parks, which reach many millions of people worldwide every year. See Carlà and Freitag: 'Geschichtstransformationen', 133 f.; Filippo Carlà: 'The Uses of History in Themed Spaces', in: Scott A. Lukas (ed.): *A Reader in Themed and Immersive Spaces*, Pittsburgh 2016, 19–29, here 20.

the empress sits in a loge surrounded by rose petals, and her dress also matches that in the painting.⁶⁰ However, while Benjamin-Constant's empress watches from her box in the Colosseum as wild animals tear people apart, in the video game the empress is sitting in front of the Byzantine building recognisable to most players (in other words, that fits their expectations): the Hagia Sophia, depicted without minarets. Here, then, we can discern three strands: the only certain portrait of the empress from the sixth century; a well-known exemplar of nineteenth-century historical painting, which is frequently used as a book cover and is thus very popular; and the Hagia Sophia as an iconic image of the Byzantine Empire in the sixth century. And yet, the present-day iconology is quite different from that of the mosaic or the painting. In the twenty-first century, Theodora is a powerful politician given a positive portrayal through her force of will and self-assurance.⁶¹ Benjamin-Constant, for his part, was influenced by many different sources of expectation: by contemporary Orientalist and historical painting, of which he was an important representative; by the contemporary 'Byzantine revival', also visible in the Decadent movement; and by the new popularity of Theodora in the painter's creative period, which was due above all to Victorien Sardou's highly successful play *Théodora* (1884).⁶² Diagram 1 merely illustrates, in a simplified way, the complexity of these relationships and cross-references by highlighting the key sources and reception products involved.

Local, global
and glocal
forms of
reception

Such reception polyhedrons must always be understood and analysed in a particular context, because the horizons of expectation of those who receive a given representation are always group-specific and vary according to shared, popular representations of history. This is relevant on at least two levels. First, the same historical phenomenon may fit with very different structures of expecta-

⁶⁰ Filippo Carlà-Uhink: 'Theodora A.P. (After Procopius)/Theodora A.S. (After Sardou): Metamorphoses of an Empress', in: Filippo Carlà-Uhink and Anja Wieber (eds.): *Orientalism and the Reception of Powerful Women from the Ancient World*, London and New York 2020, 167–183, here 174 f.

⁶¹ Filippo Carlà: 'Prostitute, Saint, Pin-Up, Revolutionary: The Reception of Theodora in Twentieth-Century Italy', in: Marta García Morcillo and Silke Knippschild (eds.): *Seduction and Power: Antiquity in the Visual and Performing Arts*, London and New York 2013, 243–262, here 249–256.

⁶² Filippo Carlà-Uhink: 'Theodora A.P.', 174–176.

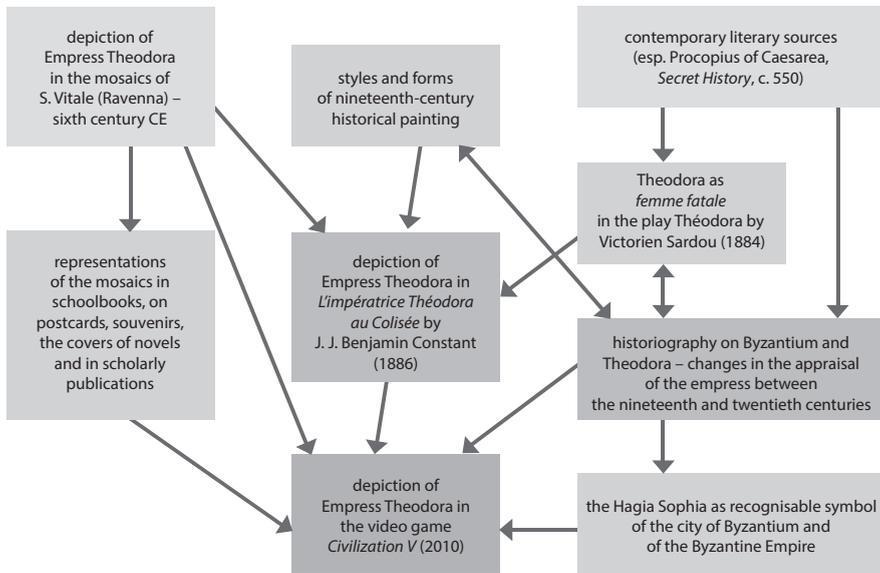


Diagram 1: Reception polyhedron with reference to the depiction of Empress Theodora of Byzantium in the video game *Civilization V* (2010).

tion, that is, different elements that construct *pastness*, and may therefore also be consonant with quite different processes of recognition. The forms that make a past culture, such as that of the Maya, recognisable to audiences in the Americas, Europe or Asia may differ greatly.⁶³ Even some of the jokes in the *Asterix* comics are hard to understand without in-depth knowledge of French history and pop culture.

Second, there are certain elements (narratives, images, and so on) that are widely known, possibly even globally, but that have variable meanings in different contexts – and must therefore be understood ‘glocally’. Yet these too are closely linked to the ways in which specific aspects of the historical past exercise an identity-forming effect in a given context. The Parthenon, or the ‘Greek temple’, is recognised worldwide as a symbol of classical Greece and especially of ancient Athens; but ancient Athens has a different meaning for Athenians or Greeks living today than for US-Americans, for whom, however, it may also play an important role as the ‘cradle of democ-

63 Carlà: ‘Uses of History’, 19.

racy'. Classical Greece may have a different meaning again for the Chinese, for whom it is viewed as another early advanced civilisation alongside imperial China or as the 'cradle of the West', which from the Chinese perspective is associated with a certain degree of exoticism.⁶⁴

Due to the advent of the mass media, and thanks to intensifying globalisation over the course of the twentieth century, the spread of such images, and therefore their recognition value, has increased significantly, even in quite different cultural and political contexts.⁶⁵ Successful historical films that reach a global audience are a good example of this. Horizons of expectation vis-à-vis the American Civil War, for example, have been shaped to a significant extent by the film adaptation of the novel *Gone with the Wind* (US 1939, director: Victor Fleming), and not only in the United States itself, but also in China, where the film is extremely popular. The global success of the film *Gladiator* (UK/US 2000, director: Ridley Scott) has established an image of Roman gladiator fights across the world that no doubt stems from earlier visualisations, particularly historical paintings and earlier films, but that trumps them all in terms of impact.⁶⁶ Against this background, novel modes of analysis and new activities are opening up for public history: the high degree of recognisability of certain historical images allows media products to be developed for an ever larger market. It goes without saying, however, that great care must be taken when considering what these recognisable elements and symbols mean for different audiences and what associations they may trigger.

⁶⁴ Carlà-Uhink: *Representations*, 189–192.

⁶⁵ See Michael Rothberg: *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford 2009; Astrid Erll: 'Travelling Memory', in: *Parallax* 17/4 (2011), special issue: 'Transcultural Memory', 4–18.

⁶⁶ The film was in fact so successful that it triggered a revival in the production of antiquity-focused films – a genre that had largely failed to excite audiences since the 1960s; see Martin M. Winkler: 'Gladiator and the Traditions of Historical Cinema', in: Martin M. Winkler (ed.): *Gladiator: Film and History*, Malden and Oxford 2004, 16–30; Andrew B. R. Elliott: 'Introduction: The Return of the Epic', in: Andrew B. R. Elliott (ed.): *The Return of the Epic Film. Genre, Aesthetics and History in the 21st Century*, Edinburgh 2014, 1–16; see also Monica S. Cyrino: *Big Screen Rome*, Malden and Oxford 2005, 207–256.

The fact that an approach to analysing (historical) reception is a product of the second half of the twentieth century⁶⁷ does not mean it can only be used to examine the historical representations of that period. Forms of the popularisation and visualisation of the past that shape clichés and horizons of expectation have always existed.⁶⁸ We need only think of medieval church paintings, for example, which – accompanied by the clergy’s explanations – were intended to bring biblical stories and the lives of the saints to life for a wide audience. Hence, irrespective of their historical accuracy, these images moulded how members of a given community imagined, for example, the appearance of a Roman proconsul or emperor across generations and influenced later representations. These forms of communication reached far fewer people than today’s Hollywood blockbusters. Theatre or opera performances, historical painting, and so on, are forms of reception products that can be examined in terms of their relationships to older representations and their influence on subsequent reception products. However, successful reception may also generate multiplier effects that make the images in question widely known and recognisable. A good example of this is the pictorial representation of Christopher Columbus. No portrait of the Italian navigator was produced during his lifetime. It is thought likely that the famous portrait by Sebastiano del Piombo depicts a different person. Regardless of this, a caption was subsequently added to that painting identifying the sitter as Columbus and in the late sixteenth century it was used by engraver Theodor de Bry as a model for his portrait of the seafarer.⁶⁹ This image of Columbus became the best-known and most popular depiction in the centuries that followed, far beyond the borders of Italy and Europe.

⁶⁷ Just as Warburg’s conceptions are bound up with the technical media of his time. See Thomas Hensel: *Wie aus der Kunstgeschichte eine Bildwissenschaft wurde*, Berlin 2011, 15 f.

⁶⁸ Hardwick: *Reception Studies*, 4.

⁶⁹ Paul Martin Lester: ‘Looks are Deceiving: The Portraits of Christopher Columbus’, in: *Visual Anthropology* 5 (1993), 211–227, here 218–221.

11.5 Operationalisations

As we have seen, reception analyses can examine and bring out the nature of the recognisability of certain motifs, figures and representations. These analyses must therefore operate genealogically, take into account the complexity of influences and factor in as many dimensions of the reception polyhedron as possible, even if a complete reconstruction of every facet of the object under consideration is of course impossible. At the same time, public historians must understand that they themselves are part of the multidimensional reception polyhedron. They receive influences and horizons of expectation while concurrently shaping the perpetuation and transformation of historical representations. Yet this praxeological level is impossible without the first level: in order to address a target audience more efficiently while scrutinising and deconstructing existing stereotypes, one must grasp the audience's expectations, as this is the only way to meet them or question them in a targeted way and achieve the desired learning effects. Colonial Williamsburg, a living history museum in Virginia, may serve as an example. It reconstructs eighteenth-century life in Williamsburg, which was the capital of the colony of Virginia from 1699 to 1776 and of the state of Virginia from 1776 to 1788. In order to convey a realistic, non-idealised image of the past, the decision was made to include 'depictions' of rubbish, dirt and the excrement of the animals living in the town. This dovetailed with visitors' expectations of a city in the pre-industrial age. In the process, the city may have become dirtier than it actually was in the eighteenth century, precisely because rubbish and filth had been turned into signs of *pastness*, in line with the widespread view of the past as a more primitive precursor of the present.⁷⁰

The targeted
unsettling of
expectations

For the practitioners of public history, this does not necessarily mean that one must always comply with such 'clichés' – yet only an awareness of the associated mechanisms makes it possible to deliberately unsettle the audience's prior knowledge in order to achieve certain (learning) effects. Public history can and should break with expectations at times; this succeeds above all when public historians

⁷⁰ Eric Gable and Richard Handler: 'Deep Dirt: Messing Up the Past at Colonial Williamsburg', in: Yorke Rowan and Uzi Baran (eds.): *Marketing Heritage: Archaeology and the Consumption of the Past*, Walnut Creek 2004, 167–181.

understand these mechanisms and are familiar with what the audience expects.

Public historians who wish to show that ancient Greek temples were polychrome must factor in that most people imagine them to be completely white if they are to purposefully place a question mark over this expectation; but they can do so only if they recognise this starting point and take it into account. For most viewers, the mere depiction of a colourful peripteral temple would simply evoke no associations and would, therefore, produce no automatic recognition effect. But the targeted unsettling of the audience's expectations may foster a curiosity that leads to the questioning of such stereotypes. A portrayal of the ancient city as colourful, loud and dirty rather than white and peaceful sparked many discussions during the first broadcast of the TV series *Rome* (HBO, 2005–2007), helping to convey a more realistic picture of the ancient city – including the life of the lower classes – to a wider audience.⁷¹

Consciously disrupting horizons of expectation may also have a different goal, namely to expose the mechanisms of *pastness* and the associated stereotyping, revealing the historical image as such – as a modern reconstruction, a modern narrative – in order to question positivist claims to objectivity. A well-known example of this kind is the film *Marie Antoinette* (US 2006, director: Sofia Coppola), which exhibits multiple anachronisms, such as the modern shoes worn by the eponymous heroine. These, though, are not 'mistakes', but rather a conscious decision to irritate the audience's *pastness*-related expectations, enabling them to identify more strongly with the queen and the court surrounding her:

In the case of Coppola's *Marie Antoinette*, the style is Cool, not so much because it markets Ladurée or Blahnik as brands, but because it updates the eighteenth century through a compression of styles, intermixed and confused, causing audiences to remember themselves and their society, rather than to think about an historical figure or the past.⁷²

⁷¹ On the representations of history and the forms of reception in the series, see Monica S. Cyrino (ed.): *Rome. Season One: History Makes Television*, Malden and Oxford 2008.

⁷² Jennifer Milam: 'Imagining Marie Antoinette: Cultural Memory, Coolness and the Deconstruction of History in Cinema', in: *French History & Civilization* 4 (2011), 45–53, here 47.

In a quite unique way, then, reception studies enables us to focus on the social negotiation processes entailed in popular and academic representations – and, rather than perceiving these variants as antagonistic, to view them as cross-fertilising aspects of historical cultures.

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