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Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories at Historic Reconstructions. By Laura Peers. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007. xxxiii + 207 pp. Figures, notes, references, index. $75.00 cloth, $27.95 paper.

Based on research carried out over a decade into enactment at five North American reconstructed historic sites in the Great Plains and around the Great Lakes, this is essentially a book about encounters: encounters between Native interpreters and visitors at historic sites, of course—but also encounters between differing preconceptions of history, between ways of life, between people and things, and between the present and the past. Indeed, the chapters are interspersed with "vignettes" or snapshots of such encounters.

All the sites discussed in the book depict the people, activity, and material culture associated with missions and fur trading. They were selected, as the author explains, "to reflect a range of historic contact situations . . . site sizes, visitor numbers, budgets, and institutional affiliations." Laura Peers succeeds in exploring a number of questions concerning the development, aims, politics, agency, and multiple contexts and interpretations of the historical representations negotiated at these sites. She is also effective in advancing her argument that such sites not only perform versions of the past, but are inextricably caught up in today's social and political currents.

The book's arguments are informed by the literatures of museum and material anthropology and cultural and heritage tourism. The former enables an analysis of the historic sites as multiply-layered, present-day cultural representations, and as performances of power; the latter facilitates exploration of "the tourist gaze" (John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 1990) and, importantly and more convincingly, the addition of Peers's emphasis on "the return gaze, and the attempts of Native peoples to disrupt tourists' preconceptions." Peers also draws on the anthropology of landscape and of borderlands, as well as on the by now well-worked concept of the "contact zone"—and while the book does not add significantly to theoretical debates in such areas, it does provide some fascinating and well-articulated examples through which an interested reader might consider them further.

Indeed, Peers's examples are engagingly and at times movingly conveyed. The writing is sensitive in political and more fundamental human terms. The book is at its most effective in its discussions of power, authority, and authenticity in the construction and performance of interpretations at the sites. Peers also demonstrates a notable, sympathetic, and pragmatic awareness of the real-world exigencies of running and working in historic sites, and of the potential disjuncture between academic analysis and heritage practice. I would have liked a map indicating the location of the sites discussed, but in general I greatly enjoyed this very readable book. It is worthy of a place on the bookshelf of anyone interested not only in the representation of First Nations, in reenactment, and in the politics and technologies of interpretation at historic sites in North America, but also all those interested more widely in the multiple layers and implications of "heritage," in the presentation of history, and in cultural encounter and power.

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