dealt with, perhaps, after a few years in yet another survey of Wildcat basketball. If so, we can hope that the author will consider more serious and thought-provoking themes. What is the role of this popular sport in a state’s society? Does it provide a “togetherness” that links those outside the university community with the students and faculty in Lexington? Can success in basketball be translated into a more favorable consideration of the university in the state legislature? For an outsider, reading this narrative account of the successes and vicissitudes of Kentucky basketball becomes as tedious as pouring over some other family’s album of baby pictures—however beautiful the child might be.

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Time travel, whether accomplished through reading, research, or historical reenactments, is a means by which humans seek their identities and relationships with others in the course of time. Using this premise, Jay Anderson transports his readers through his own “time machine” in the first monograph to examine the “living history” movement and the assorted methods by which its participants share in past human experiences through firsthand exposure.

Anderson chronicles the emergence of living history, beginning with Skansen, Sweden’s open-air museum, which spawned hundreds of regionally and culturally diverse museums. He explains how these museums have changed from filiopietistic showcases and antiquarian repositories to historical models that attempt to simulate life in another time and to create facsimiles of entire local or regional, material as well as social, cultures. Living history breathes life into static artifacts and emphasizes the world of ordinary people in an effort to interpret the seemingly unrecoverable past. By placing both people and objects in functional contexts, living history sites provoke visitors to think and to analyze their own contemporary culture, thereby drawing them into a “cross-cultural comparison” (p. 52).

An essential part of living history, notes Anderson, is “experimental archaeology,” or “imitative experiments” (p. 87) that replicate original processes, such as cooking, building, or blacksmithing, in order to test theories of past cultural behavior. Likewise, many reenactment and other “history buff” groups,
while often perceived as “playing with history,” actually seek to preserve vanishing arts and a fading folklife. Consequently, these forms of “experimentation may be a useful method of generating new data” (p. 177), contributing to examinations of historical hypotheses regarding past life and cultures. This analysis of process, combined with data on human values and behavior, creates a powerful educational tool, allowing one to become submerged deeper “into the stream of life at some point in the past” (p. 118).

Throughout his book Anderson successfully demonstrates that living history museums are not amusement parks, but examples of the “new” social history, dedicated to a holistic preservation of the past. They are living laboratories which examine the lives of ordinary people, recreate cultural landscapes, provide arenas for interdisciplinary analyses, and preserve cultural landmarks for future generations. While often considered to be escapism, living history is, to Anderson, a valuable historical interpretive tool which transcends the romantic, nostalgic images of history to offer participants the opportunity “to steep themselves in the historical context of a particular place and time” in order “to come to understand, appreciate, and feel the life of the people who once lived there and then” (p. 192).

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