

Lessons and Legacies Conference on the Holocaust XVI

The Holocaust: Rethinking Paradigms in Research and Representation

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Digital Holocaust Memory: Embodied Encounters?

Due to the inevitable and imminent passing of the Holocaust survivor generation, several digital projects have emerged hoping to preserve testimony in what Amanda Lagerkvist (2017) terms the 'digital afterlife'. Moreover, advancements in technology are enabling us to re-examine traditional methods for representing and teaching about the Holocaust. These projects include representations of former concentration camps in both videogames and virtual reality, 3-dimensional 'holographic' installations as well as tablet applications that provide playable stories through multiple-choice branch narratives.

Collectively these projects are responding to the potential challenges posed by the 'post-witness era' (Schult et al., 2015), and are proposing new ways to engage with the past that advance upon visual pedagogy. Most significantly, these projects are attempting to transfer 'embodied traces of Holocaust memory' (Shenker, 2015, 217), through the active participation of the user. This paper, then, will investigate this approach, questioning how can digital technology transform or disrupt existing paradigms for remembering and understanding the Holocaust. With a particular focus on the positionality of the user, this research will employ ideas of agency and interactivity as the theoretical frameworks for analysing the shifts in ways of 'doing memory' (Walden, 2019).

It will take an inter-disciplinary approach, drawing on both Holocaust studies and media theory to consider a selection of case studies including *The Last Goodbye*, *The Forever Project* as well as *The Virtual Journey*. Using these projects as a way to think critically about the possibility space, this work will consider to what extent users are truly offered an interactive and immersive experience that differs from their engagement with audio-visual representations and older forms of (embodied) memory practice. In turn, this research will comment on the future production of memory projects more generally and consider how the user is encouraged to take responsibility as witness in a post-survivor age.