Walking-with, re-membering the Holocaust: *Forced Walks: Honouring Esther*, a case study of somatic and digital creative practice

Abstract

The article explores a creative somatic and digital intervention working with Holocaust memory retrieved from archive testimony. A walking and multi-media arts approach renewing agency in Holocaust testimony and generating contemporary resonances is introduced. *Forced Walks* is a programme of speculative, socially engaged experiments, initiated by artists Richard White and Lorna Brunstein. *Honouring Esther* (2015-17), the first *Forced Walks* project, walked the route of a Nazi Death March digitally transposed to Somerset (UK), subsequently retracing it in Lower Saxony, Germany. The project worked with the digitised testimonies of survivors and witnesses including that of the eponymous Esther. Making public anniversaries personal and personal anniversaries public, the first walk took place on the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Belsen, and the second on the seventy-first of Esther's arrival at the Bergen-Belsen death camp. Juxtaposing registers of walking and curated interventions generated empathic dialogues, the project engaged walkers in co-creating an immanent reflective space materialised in mark-making, social media and installation. The paper reviews the use of mobile media and social networking, and discusses the catalysing of affect and involuntary thought. An emergent hybrid somatic/digital process, 'making the return' in a specific Holocaust context is presented.

Introduction

This paper offers an artist-researcher's perspective on the use of digital media and social networking in the context of a specific walking and multimedia project, *Honouring Esther*. This is an exploration of an element of the discussion presented as part of the author's research-creation PhD. *Honouring Esther* emerged out of an on-going collaboration with installation artist Lorna Brunstein, whose mother is the eponymous Esther. Lorna's creative practice draws on and interrogates her experience as a Second-Generation survivor; her work and the mixed-media installation pieces she produced through *Honouring Esther* are significant but in this context are largely bracketed. This commentary attends primarily to the live walking phases of the project with some reference to the extended phase and the

exhibition/installations in which those works were shown.

Honouring Esther is a contribution to work on Holocaust memory and education both in form and content. This paper contextualizes the work and attending to its digital/somatic hybridity, offers glimpses of the understandings and ways of knowing afforded. For both artists it was a highly personal experience: much of this commentary is therefore in the first person, this is not to distract or distance from Lorna Brunstein's contribution but for it to be understood as my own partial perspective; in Barad's terms this is an articulation of an emergent 'response-ability'.[1]

I begin with an inciting moment from my walking arts practice and continue with a summary of the methodological and ethical context. This is followed by a summary of the development and conduct of the walks and commentary contextualising the *Honouring Esther* project. I explore the theoretical and methodological grounding of this iteration of *walking-with*. I set out the case for *Honouring Esther* as an emergent, hybrid walking and multi-media practice through which walkers and other participants are enabled to engage in a process Ahmed describes as 'making the return'[2] . I offer this as a contribution to renewing agency in Holocaust testimony through an informal socially engaged pedagogy, honouring the commitment to bear witness that survivors made in recording their story. I indicate the potential for what Pappachrissi[3] describes as 'affective attunement', arising from the weaving of somatic experience with digital media and networks towards generating an 'affective network'.[4]

An inciting moment

On the last day of a walking arts project celebrating the historic white horse figures cut into the chalk slopes of the Wiltshire Downs,[5] the circular route brought us back across the track of our outward journey. Throughout the walk I had been posting and curating social media,

blogging and launching the locative media apps I had created. Consecutive days of continuous walking and tweeting had brought me to a particular heightened state of awareness, I felt, as 'deep topographer' Nick Papadimitriou[6] describes his walking in London, as if I had walked myself into my body, into the land, and the land and the walk into me. Ninety miles of walking and the launch of eight apps lay behind us, our social media trails streamed in multiple dimensions; we stood on the edge of a golf course high on the chalk downs looking west into an oncoming squall. I reflected that I had not walked such a distance since working in Sudan more than thirty years earlier.

In sharing my reflection with my walking companion a week-long conversation coalesced around bodies, poverty, empire, surveillance, beauty, wealth, global warming and more. The connections I had been exploring on the ancient track infused me, thinking about who had walked before me and why; connecting with the lives and their material remains, connecting with other places I had walked, feeling the ground through my feet, my legs moving me onward. A wave of emotion percolated through my body, settling around an awareness of my privileged gaze as a white man walking in a richly networked country; a moment of embodied awareness in which all those people who walk because they have to, held up a mirror to me, as I walked for pleasure. Returning from that involuntary moment of emotion and empathy I was further challenged, 'all your walks are about walking for pleasure, what about all those who walk because they have to?' The questioner was my life partner, artist, Lorna Brunstein and as we reflected and talked, the concept for a new collaboration emerged. This became *Forced Walks*, a programme of socially engaged artist-led somatic/digital interventions grounded on juxtaposed registers of walking, 'We walk at a time and to a place of our choosing in solidarity with those who had no choice'.[7]

Honouring Esther

Honouring Esther (2015-17), walking 'the line of a Nazi Death March transposed, returned and retraced'[8], was the first iteration of *Forced Walks*, co-hosted by myself and Lorna Brunstein. Esther Brunstein, Lorna's mother, was a proud Yiddishist from a Jewish international socialist, Bundist, background; she drew on this heritage as a public speaker, notably for the Anti-Nazi League in the 1990s and 2000s. As a human rights activist, she gave her testimony to ensure that the story of resistance, solidarity and survival would not be forgotten.

In August 1944 Esther had been transported with a group of Polish Jewish women from Auschwitz-Birkenau to a slave labour camp at Hambühren-Ovelgönne, Germany. In February 1945, as the Nazi state was collapsing, the surviving women were forced to march to the Bergen-Belsen camp.[9] The Death Marches across Europe that took place during this period have been widely, if not completely, documented;[10] some have been re-traced as memorial, penance and pilgrimage.[11] *Honouring Esther* digitally and somatically referenced the Death March that Esther had survived, juxtaposing the voluntary walking of those who chose to take part with the journey she was forced to make. The project thus referenced practices of pilgrimage as a codified journey punctuated by specific narrative events/points of reflection generating and renewing a mnemonic landscape (e.g. Gros;[12] Evans;[13] Solnit[14]).

The project took shape as groups of refugees were being shown on social media and television news walking through the fields of Eastern Europe. Our empathic creative intervention, resonating in the layered juxtaposition of registers walking, seemed an appropriate act of solidarity and witness. Esther was actively involved in developing the project; sadly, she died shortly before the final exhibition opened. Anticipating her passing and the recuperation of survivor testimonies into 'official Holocaust memory',[15] the project

was directed towards developing new ways of working with Holocaust memory and engaging with archive testimony (e.g. Smith;[16] Trezise;[17] Shenker[18]). *Honouring Esther* was billed as:

> A walk about time and the land, exile and belonging, the drift of memory and forgetting: memorialising in an era dense with anniversaries.
> Frome to Bath 2015 on the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Belsen.
> Ovelgönne to Belsen 2016 on the 71st anniversary of its arrival at Belsen.[19]

Fuelled by our creative imperative to challenge prejudice and bigotry our intention was to find new ways of connecting an account of a Nazi Death March into our lives and the lives of those who walked with us. *Honouring Esther* sought not only to bring archive testimony to a new public but, in recognition of Esther's motivation in making the recordings, to engage with its continuing significance. The walk cycle thus involved both a deeply personal family story and a public narrative of resistance and survival retrieved from archive, bringing its resonances into our lives and times seventy years on. This was an embodied process; a re-membering presented as a connected performative participatory walk, on foot or online, along the route that Esther had survived, digitally transposed to the UK, and subsequently returned and retraced in its original location, in Germany.

For the walk in the UK, where Lorna and I live, bringing the route literally as close to home as possible, and walking it, produced a core spatial and temporal disturbance that defines the experience of the project. Repeated in Germany, returning the walk to the actual route, generated further layers of embodied experience. Working with curated dissonance towards generating critical empathic dialogues, *Honouring Esther* echoed the digital mapping/layering tactics in Levine's response to the US bombing of Baghdad[20] and elements of Korman's performative intervention in Holocaust memorial practices.[21] Our intentions were similar but, rather than a website, self-guided app or provocative performance, this was a hosted, participatory, real-time experience on foot and online, leaving networked digital

traces.

summary of activity

Approximately fifty walkers took part in the walks in England, in April 2015, and fifteen in Germany, in February 2016. Each walk took two days covering approximately fifteen miles; our research indicated that Esther and her fellow enslaved Jewish women had also taken two days to complete their journey on foot to Belsen. The walk in England arrived in Bath on the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Belsen, the walk in Germany took place exactly on the anniversary of the Death March Esther had survived. Walkers included second-, and third-, generation Holocaust survivors, second-generation liberators and, in Germany, included second- and third- generation witnesses, possibly grandchildren of perpetrators. Walkers contributed to a Flickr group and a Twitter stream linked to the tracking app Viewranger [22] and presented via Social Hiking[23], additional contemporaneous updates were made through Facebook. Social Hiking, which is no longer active, was an aggregation platform enabling the live tracking and recording of a walk. Unlike Viewranger and other similar platforms, Social Hiking enabled, via a shared hashtag, the aggregation of live social media posts from multiple contributors on a single walk and subsequent interactions with those posts. It also enabled the layering of trails and media produced over time in a single location. Trails thus produced could be followed in real time and as a recording, the route and media represented as a line with icons on a map. The graphic produced with the walkers' geolocated media embedded along the line, I describe as a 'social media trail'. The social media trails from both walks are further discussed as part of the project process below.

The project blog[24], offering commentary, instant reflection and links to the trails, attracted almost three thousand visitors in 2015-16, peaking during the period of the walks at around three hundred visitors per week, with ongoing spikes when work is exhibited. Archive audio

was digitised and played on the walks using Bluetooth speakers, digitised images were presented via iPad and the walk hosts' printed scripts. Geotagged recordings were posted via Twitter to the social media trails using Soundcloud and Audioboom.

The social media trail from the walk in Germany was relayed live to the Mediawall in the foyer of the Commons building at Bath Spa University, generating further interactions as tracked live social media postings progressively appeared. Exhibition/installations/closing events took place in Bath[25] and an extended manifestation continues in the subsequent public presentations, (see Figure 1) and elements of which are available online.[26]

<Figure 1>

Theoretical and methodological contexts

Research-creation

Honouring Esther was part of an ongoing research-creation process, an approach described by Springgay and Truman[27] as 'the complex intersection of art, theory and research'. Research-creation continues to be contested space, but it enables a sidestepping of disciplinary allegiance, and as Loveless[28] argues, 'takes me to the enmeshed thinking-making-doing at the speculative middle of my work'. I embrace the ethical activist imperative of research-creation of 'telling stories-that-matter'.[29] As a socially engaged artist-researcher I am inspired by Springgay and Truman's view that working from the speculative middle, 'You are not there to report on what you find or what you seek, but to activate thought. To agitate it'.[30]

The practice set out here is therefore located where creativity attends to power, where Barrett

argues new processes of becoming emerge.[31] Working from Longhurst's view that knowing, originating in the fluidity and volatility of the body, 'seeps into cerebral knowledge'[32] and Deleuze's suggestion that the body 'forces us to think',[33] I am exploring the catalysing potential of the digital and the somatic. Hansen argues that we process digital information through our embodied being, transforming it to units 'that have meaning for us to the precise extent that they catalyse our affective response'.[34] For Deleuze, according to Bennett, 'affect or emotion is a more effective trigger for profound thought because of the way in which it grasps us, forcing us to engage involuntarily'.[35] *Honouring Esther* was a speculative somatic and digital exploration of these catalysts to affect and knowing. Seeking to 'become answerable for what we learn and see',[36] Lorna and I curated from Holocaust 'archive' towards interventions and provocations contributing to the 'repertoire' of Holocaust memory[37].

Ahmed's work on affect, regarding 'making the return', acknowledging past 'bad feelings' and attending to past injustices that persist in the present[38] further informs the ethical spirit of the processes we employed. The visual layering and echoes of marching boots in the H*onouring Esther* installation film, *Frome to Belsen* explores these ideas (see film still, Figure 2).

<Figure 2>

This forms part of an ethical practice, reaching towards social justice in a renewal of agency in Holocaust memory. Following Barad, I understand ethics as 'entangled materialisations':

> Ethics is … not about right responses to a radically exteriorized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming, of which we are a part. Ethics is about mattering, about taking account of the entangled materializations of which we are part.[39]

As I will set out below, interventions and constructed dissonance form part of this process triggering involuntary thought towards working with such entanglements

walking and the body as knowledge productive

This walking-making-doing practice is informed by the phenomenological premise that 'our whole understanding of the world is grounded in our corporeal nature'.[40] An understanding of walking and movement as knowledge productive has been discussed and developed widely (e.g. Anderson;[41] Sheets-Johnstone;[42] Wylie;[43] Barbour;[44] Formenti et al;[45] Lavery[46]).

Merleau-Ponty classically conceived of the body as an organic system of interconnected senses connecting to embodied memory and knowledge that is 'taken-for granted or unthinkingly available'.[47] For the most part such systems and patterns do not enter our awareness, this creative practice, however, seeks to access such involuntary, embodied thought developing and working with a somatic alertness. Accessing embodied knowledge is an element of many walking arts and performance practice (e.g. Pearson and Shanks;[48] Bailey and Biggs;[49] Sotello;[50] Pujol[51]). Collier describes this as philosophy in action, 'making art as a practical application of phenomenology'.[52] Walking is a rich sensory experience, generating embodied knowings of space, matter, time and depth in which are enmeshed further knowings of memory and affect. This view of the knowledge productive body grounds my creative work in a more-than-representational approach.

From that phenomenological premise this practice is informed by a more-than-representational approach emerging in critical heritage studies and feminist new materialisms foregrounding the body and emotion (e.g. Tolia-Kelly, Waterton and Watson[53]; Wetherell, Smith and Campbell[54]). I recognise instabilities here, nevertheless in the context of a walking

arts and heritage practice, specifically with regard to Holocaust memory and memorialisation, I share Waterton's [55] view that a more-than-representational approach has much to contribute. A more-than-representational perspective in my practice attends to affects and sensations, unsettles static heritage perspectives on the archive and landscape, opening it to fluidity, the corporeal, and the repertoire. The digital elements of this practice extend this further through questioning digital representations of face, voice and memory and attending to the more-than-representational of networked affect, encouraging early reflectivity via social media and live networking. Much of the archive material accessed was from digitised sources, most of the project documentation was generated, and is, stored on digital formats, and digital media was the key technology for installation and exhibition. The live elements of the project were enabled through always-on pervasive computing. The experienced entanglement then was not just between past and present; a walk and their companions; walkers and space; and space and archive, but also technology and all of these elements.

Walking-with

Honouring Esther developed an iteration of *walking-with* (Sundberg;[56] Kelly;[57] Jeffries;[58] Springgay and Truman[59]). The practice references the Zapatista indigenous peoples' liberation movement in Mexico,[60] *Preguntando caminamos*, translated as, 'asking while walking' or 'walking-with', is described as process of walking and asking questions, 'a form of solidarity built on reciprocity and mutuality, walking and listening, talking and doing'.[61] Jeffries describes how *walking-with* in inner city London generated 'new spaces of speaking and listening'[62], spaces where learning happens and new knowledge becomes manifest. *Walking-with,* as derived from the Zapatistas via Sundberg, implies both a critical and sensory alertness, an attunement to nonmodern ways of being and a questioning of power, building empathy and solidarity. The distinctive element developing through *Honouring*

Esther is the interventions using digital content and platforms, through which walkers shared and networked responses, these in turn contributed to social media trails, online informal memory archives and audio visual installations.

Digital Media

from closed locative apps to social media

Digital media was integrated into *Honouring Esther* as a vital embedded element in the live participatory process and in the installation/exhibitions that closed the project. Inspired by the participatory DIY locative media work emerging from HP Lab's Mscape and its successor, Calvium's AppFurnace platform, I had produced locative media apps for previous projects. I worked with crowd-sourced content and social media participation aiming to generate immersive, interactive experiences. My experience on those projects[63] however, resonated with Zeffiro's observation that locative media apps were one-way, required some expertise to build and crucially, once published, became fixed.[64] The apps I had produced successfully integrated social media but they rapidly became unstable and decayed as operating systems and social media app were updated; these amongst other factors contributed to the demise of AppFurnace and most recently, Social Hiking.

With live participation and engagement key factors in my work, as *Honouring Esther* took shape in 2015, Zeffiro's observation remained true. Locative media walking apps produce powerful immersive experiences, however at the time I had not experienced and could not envision being able to produce a satisfactory level of live participation using a bespoke locative app to warrant further development in this context. Rather than pursue an app-based format that closed off active participation at the very moment that the desire to

share and engage was most stimulated, I focused on the live experience of a walk, using smart mobile devices and social media apps. This was an exploration in what has been described by Döveling et al as 'digital affect culture',[65] extending experience beyond the corporeal with the digital and a collaborative adventure in 'always on' mediatised memory.[66]

Accessing the Archive

The project navigated a complex ethical path informed by Shenkar[67] and Kansteiner[68] on the changing agendas of Holocaust testimony and the ways in which that testimony has been harnessed by 'official' or authorised memory as to contain the Holocaust as a historical European human rights catastrophe. The challenge was to honour the original purpose of recording the testimony and to renew their agency. After Taylor's conceptual framework,[69] our intention was to retrieve these items from the 'Archive', engage with and renew their currency, and repatriate and return them as part of a living 'Repertoire'.

Kansteiner describes official Holocaust memory and culture as 'invented in the era of analogue media' and thus 'poorly prepared to participate in meaningful ways in the exciting re-calibration…set in motion by digital culture'.[70] Most of the analogue testimony, maps, photographs and other documentation we sought to access exist as digitised archive files. With family and curatorial support enabling us to access the materials with relative ease, as Kansteiner indicates, the issue for the project was primarily about access and imagination, Esther spoke often of the fundamental act of resistance, 'to survive and tell the story'[71]; as socially engaged artists and family members we set out to re-empower and release her voice from the closed survivor-testimony archive. Accessing the digitised recordings initiated the re-calibration to which Kansteiner refers.

In addition to digitally recorded conversations with Esther and the more formal, now

digitised, oral history recordings held in the Imperial War Museum (IWM) archive, we accessed informal sources held by her family. Other materials were curated for use on the walks as interventions including poetry and song, the testimonies of contemporary refugees and asylum seekers. Curated digital content thus included Esther's voice and other voices as well as maps, photographs and live readings of key texts.

Constructing dissonance: mapping, layering, and folding

Conversations with Esther, networking, and desk research triangulation identified the location of the camp and the Death March route. We established email contact with a teacher/historian who had published an account of the SS slave labour camp,[72] referencing a post-war sketch map identifying the sites of roadside executions along the route.[73] This information was further supported by an amateur military historian who had worked at the site of the former munitions factory at Hambühren in the immediate postwar period and had accessed digitised Wehrmacht maps of the facility including the slave labour camps.[74] Using the digital mapping app, Scribblemaps, I traced the route as a graphic and transposed it to Somerset, (see Figure 3).

<Figure 3>

The scale and compass orientation of the walk was retained. As this line could be digitally transposed anywhere in the world, a social media invitation to take up the model was posted to walking artist networks and supporters. This resulted in other individuals walking in Germany, Scotland, Canada and Italy; accounts of two of these walks are available on the project website, (see Figure 4).

<Figure 4>

Some walkers simply took up the invitation and walked a similar distance mindful of a personal Holocaust connection, others walked in solidarity but a different distance and time frame and some walked at the same time as the walk in England. The route for the walk in Switzerland was devised using the Scribblemaps transposed line (Figure 3). In so far as the transposed line was used it provided an indication of distance or direction. It also offered an open script linking an experience networked with other people in other places. Partly an exercise in affect, imagination and improvisation these 'other' walks took traces of a shared contemporary reflection on the Holocaust and generated embodied experience and a topographic mnemonic in another place. This networked take up of the invitation 'script' beyond the hosted and curated experience in England and Germany was an empathic response from others walking with the specificities of the time, spaces, terrain and landscapes they traversed. It was a powerful indication of the affective attunement the project could inspire, extending its reach and impact, consolidated by Esther's statement for the Anne Frank Centre in New York, circulated on Twitter as walkers arrived at the endpoint of the walk.[75]

routes and stations

As Figure 3 shows, overlaying the transposed route from Germany to England and then identifying a route as close as possible on public rights of way produced an interlocking pair of lines with ten intersections geo-located in both countries. Abstracted, these intersecting lines became the graphic for the project (see Figure 5).

<Figure 5>

The intersections of the digitally transposed and actual routes became the ‘stations’ of *Honouring Esther*, each station was given a theme within a broad narrative of Esther’s story and content was curated around that theme as interventions at those points. The route of the walks thus deliberately disrupted and reconnected local knowledge by, first, walking the transposed line of the historic narrative from Germany onto English footpaths and, subsequently, taking the folded narrative from England to a further present-day walking experience, walking the actual Death March route in Germany.

This constructed folding and unfolding, in addition to the curated content at the ‘stations’, combined whilst following the route to produce experiences of spatial and temporal dissonance. Walking the Death March route transposed to Somerset (UK), was an unsettling of a spring walk in the English countryside; walking towards Bergen-Belsen in Germany in winter, at the same time of year, and on the same route that Esther had survived was disturbingly different. Walking in witness on the Death March route, memory was repatriated and embodied, dissonances of time, space and corporeal comfort generated further affective responses. The curated content inserted specific accounts of resistance and survival, as well as seeding wider human rights resonances. Much of what emerged was messy, entangled and intangible, a knowing that remains embodied and difficult to articulate. Nevertheless, as part of the reflective and resonance-generating strategy of the project, walkers discussed and shared experiences, in text, sound and images, using note taking, mark-making and networked via social media. This content was aggregated using route tracking apps (see Figure 6).

<Figure 6>

Conduct of the walk and curated content

The walks were undertaken in the same compass direction as Esther's 1945 death march; this was not a return, but a *walking-with*, always walking in the same northerly direction as Esther had walked. Each station intervention was signalled by playing back the recorded sound of a shofar, a ram's horn, blown as a Jewish ritual call, a sound that would have been silenced by the Nazis. These points anchored the spatial layers and linked the temporal layers as an uncertain, slippery and temporary 'here'. Each day began and ended with a sharing, opening with a thematic questioning and ending with an act of closure.

<Figure 7>

In Somerset the walk ended at Bath's Old Jewish Burial Ground, and in Germany at the Belsen Memorial site; this intentional juxtaposition of memorialisations of the dead was the anchor point for the end of the line of the Death March route as I transposed it using Scribblemaps. The logic of the transposed graphic, retaining scale and orientation, determined that the walk began in a field by a railway line, just outside Frome, where travellers kept a horse. The point on the route layered with the compound of the SS slave labour camp *Waldeslust* at Hambühren-Ovelgönn. *Honouring Esther* walkers in Germany the following year gathered in that 'same' place, now the car park of a garden centre: the entanglements of time and language providing dissonant spatial irony, its name, resonating as bitter joke, translated as *Joys of the Forest*.

The corporeal experience and empathic thoughts generated on the walk are recalled in walker's feedback, for example,

> RW *How and in what way did the 'interventions' form part of your physical experience, what was going on in your body?*

> All helped me to reconnect with why we were there which brought relief and a sense of meaning to my body. They made me notice how tired I was growing and how much I wanted to sit down at each one. Between the last two on day one, I realised I had blisters that I thought had burst and were bleeding. I thought that if these women could walk in the cold, hungry, scared and exhausted then I could walk on with blisters. (They hadn't burst and weren't bleeding!).
> (Respondent 7: Honouring Esther walker survey 2015)

Materialising practices: notebooks, smart devices and social media

Rather than switching off their mobiles, walkers were encouraged to use them both to record sounds, images, and movies and to share thoughts and media live using an agreed hashtag. I used the different functionalities of Viewranger and Social Hiking to aggregate multiple live social media streams. Sounds, images, and text thus gathered live became part of other online informal archives, searchable and interconnected; individual memories were thereby linked to shared digital memory archives (e.g. Flickr, Facebook etc). Frith and Karlin describe these practices as presenting 'new possibilities for action and behaviour'[76] in this research-creation practice they contribute to an emergent digital sensing.

Short films, soundscapes and stills, on the project's webpages, as social media and as installation media, form the core of the extended manifestation phase of each project. Materialisations of the walks in walkers' notebooks were scanned for publication and the original analogue documents presented in exhibition as documentation (see Figures 8 and 9) alongside the digital media captured and the social media trails.

<Figure 8>

<Figure 9>

<Figure 10>

Installation and exhibition

The short films and soundscapes I produced from the field recordings made use of overlay, shadow, loop, and motion effects to reflect and articulate the experience of the walks. Sonic and visual distortions generated in the edit and retained from the field recordings resonated with the embodied experience of walkers. Constructing an audio-visual spatial ambience for the installation's digital film was distorted by projection in non-traditional places, for example onto the corners and pleated surfaces in the stairwell of a building used as an art gallery in Bath (Figure 10). In the exhibition locations the sound spill from different elements was deliberate and calibrated to generate dissonance and serendipitous sound moments. Movement through the exhibition space was designed to be an experience of journeying through layers and folds, an immersive interpretation of the walks, rather than a linear narrative. The projection onto heritage materials and built environment evoked the conception of heritage itself as a further intangible layer. These installations formed closing and reunion moments for the walks, providing a cathartic experience for some walkers; empathic dialogues were revisited and resonances renewed as part of an extended phase of *walking-with*.

Discussion: ***empathy, affect and the digital***

Honouring Esther produced affective responses generated through the development of sensory alertness, relational intelligence, and affective attunement over a long walk together. After Levine[77] and Bennett[78], I propose that empathy emerges through somatic alertness juxtaposed with the insertion of cognitive awareness, derived in part from the curated content. Walkers were invited to visualise the Death March as we crossed and followed its path, represented as a line on a digital map, questioning themselves and their experience of 'place'. One walker responded:

> It was fascinating how what I saw and heard could transport me to Esther's walk, how the contrast of the weather, the abundant vegetation, the friendliness of the locals emphasised/highlighted the harshness of the death march.
> (Respondent 9 *Honouring Esther* walker survey 2016)

Walking together developed an alertness to sensation and affect and in many instances the somatic and the digital combined to stimulate empathic dialogue. In the discussion that follows I review some elements of the digital contribution to the project.

A Skype call at Belsen

The w*alking-with* approach generated a sensitivity to the sounds of the voices of the witnesses encountered as well as the content of their testimony. The sound of Esther's recorded voice generated empathic responses, especially the voice we heard in the statement recorded for the project, contrasting with the younger voice of the testimony recorded in the 1990s used at the interventions. In Shenker's terms these different voices recorded over time contain an 'embodied history', this distinctive presence transcended the narrative of the death march.[79]

For the 2015 walk on the anniversary of the liberation of Belsen, Esther had recorded a statement for social media distribution via the Anne Frank Center in New York. Esther's powerful statement was played and released via Twitter on our arrival at the Old Jewish Burial Ground in Bath, immediately generating likes and shares worldwide. Pappachrissi describes how affective attunement such as this is afforded by social networks, based on an architecture that 'thrives on, invites and rewards *sharing'*.[80] Many social media postings were picked up in this way responding to the walk and the liberation anniversary, reflecting the observations of Döveling et al, that digital affect culture 'transmits emotions of solidarity'.[81] Pappacchrissi argues these affective gestures of liking and sharing permit people

to ‘feel their way into politics’[82] this was a feature of the online engagement with *Honouring Esther* and resonates with the intent of the project and Esther’s testimony to engage and build solidarity.

Hansen considers the body as the ‘coprocessor’ of digital information[83], Döveling et al share this perspective, arguing that the online is embedded in the offline, proposing ‘practices in these realms as intertwined and mutually constitutive’.[84] Arriving at the Bergen-Belsen camp site, where Esther had so nearly died we had not only heard her digitally reproduced younger voice, we experienced her ‘live’ presence via video link. Affects stimulated digitally and somatically over two days combined in those moments, as Döveling et al and Hansen theorise, to produce an emotionally powerful closing moment for the walking phase. We ‘Skyped’ Esther in her care home in London from the on-site education centre, (see Figure 11), ‘Ah Belsen’, she said, ‘I remember it well’. We had no way of knowing at that distance how ironic she meant the remark to be, but her incredulous sign off, peering over the iPad in her care home and commenting on the technology, ‘Thats what I call magic!’ had the full pathos and humour of her Yiddish Theatre background.

<Figure 11>

Esther’s testimony and other curated content took walkers from mild personal discomfort or the pleasures of a country walk to the thematic considerations we had inserted; from a local experience to a recorded experience distant in time and place, producing a momentary sense of spatial/temporal dissonance. As evidenced by walkers’ documentation, in the feedback and the installation media, *Honouring Esther* folded our contemporary experience with Esther’s testimony to ‘generate imaginative and poetic connections’.[85] In such moments on both projects, walkers connected past and present, the distant and the local; a stimulated imagination and the emergence of empathic dialogues were consistent outcomes. Comments

sampled from walkers offer glimpses of this:

> RW: *Broadly speaking how and in what way did your experience of the walk meet your expectations?*
> It exceeded my expectations. I was unsure how it would pan out and how involved I would feel. I felt it to the depth of my soul. I am still seeing and feeling the ripples expand away.
> (Respondent 9 Honouring Esther walker 2015)

Making the Return

Honouring Esther involved calls to action arising from empathic resonances generated through digital interventions and shared somatic activity. Trezise raises questions about feeling and 'empty empathy' in a critique of the motivations of those undertaking an activity that generates good feelings for the participants about themselves at the expense of feeling for others.[86] Bennett suggests that affective experience combined with critical awareness can be the basis for a more profound empathy, 'a *feeling for* another that entails an encounter with something irreducible and different, often inaccessible'.[87] I recognise that empathy alone is problematic as it does not necessarily lead to changed behaviour, in this context, however, it was a starting point for a diversity of social justice conversations and commitments to action.

Aware that the experience would not be universal either between the online and the offline or between the different walks and different walkers, the role of curator, host and facilitator was essential in drawing out empathic dialogues across these different ways in which the walks were experienced. For many walkers a combination of critical awareness and empathy emerged through the live affective experience. Ahmed refers to 'making the return', arguing that revisiting and acknowledging past injustices is a precondition for social repair, 'to move on, you must make the return'.[88] *Honouring Esther* was an exploration of

what making the return might consist of, a re-membering of past injustice and, as we discovered, an unsettling of local heritage narratives. *Honouring Esther* attended to the silences and absences in local authorised heritage narratives of the Holocaust. An intra-connected embodied and digital process attending to 'bad feelings' in this way begins a process of healing and re-evaluating collective memory, acknowledging the presence of past injustice in the present begins social repair. In these terms and referencing Zembylas' work on 'pedagogies of discomfort'[89], I offer *Honouring Esther* as an example of an emerging pedagogy of social repair.

Provocations to involuntary thought

The interventions and juxtapositions towards creating dissonance described above were creative attempts to provoke involuntary and embodied thought. In comments resonating with Zembylas' pedagogies of discomfort, Witcomb discusses the use of curated provocations in heritage contexts, these sensory 'shocks' are considered to lead towards 'a more inquisitive approach to received narratives'.[90] With a similar provocative intent Levine[91] observes the emergence of empathic dialogues in the resolution of spatial dissonance generated by her art work. Spatial and temporal dissonance was generated on the *Honouring Esther* cycle primarily through curated moments of affective encounter intended to stimulate the curiosity Witcomb describes and the empathic dialogues to which Levine refers. I researched and digitally transposed documents, routes and memory from their archive settings to new times or locations, referencing, or juxtaposed to their original purpose. Levine's artwork transposed and layered map locations to produce dissonance, whereas *Honouring Esther* used the intersections of a single transposed route as a scaffold on which to hang those curated materials. The digital enabled this preparation and pervasive computing was a vital element in the execution of the walks and dissemination of the experiences. I suggest, however, that

this was more than shared and networked experience but one in which embodied affective responses to digital content was an essential element.

Place-based digital memory

Hoskins review of memory and the connective turn explores 'always on' memory and the development, via smart devices, of a 'continuous, accumulating dormant memory'.[92] As noted above and as Rieser[93], Farman[94] and others indicate, the 'new' socio-technical practices afforded by hand-held smart devices and their potential in opening ways of knowing and connecting continue to be explored in creative work. Zapp attends to the participatory potential of the networks and relationships generated in the 'growing data space in the local community'.[95] In the context of walking, Jørgensen's[96] commentary on the use of GPS and that of Ash et al.[97] opens new questions about the epistemological experience of landscape. Focused on particular acts of witness, solidarity and memorialisation, *Honouring Esther* was a speculative exploration in this space.

Frith and Kalin note how the recording and tagging of moments and places build up shareable digital memory archives. The twin practices of 'checking in' and 'route tracking', build 'a digital network memory that connects the past to the present, thus inventing new possibilities for action and behaviour'.[98] This is a heritage process, a new form of sedimentation and accretion of story layers around a location as an informal site of memory. Drawing on Myers commentary on guided walks[99] and notably her collaboration with Dane Watkins and Wildworks[100] using social media, practices deployed in *Honouring Esther* can be seen as a practice of place-based digital memory. Locations and experiences were commented on, notated, recorded and the media posted to networked digital archives; these postings, aggregated, produced social media trails. The aggregation of geo-tagged content using social media through 'route tracking' formed part of the speculative strategy for

repatriating memory and giving it new agency. The co-created social media trails and the 'dormant memory' they network from offer an emergent, ephemeral, 'multimodal hypernarrative'.[101]

There is a growing collective familiarity in generating and archiving located content using mobile devices; *Honouring Esther* accessed this towards developing the affective attunement to which Pappachrissi refers.[102] Although this is not on the scale of the circulation of affect Döveling et al describe with reference to terror attacks,[103] I argue that this project has contributed to an emerging digital affect culture in the repertoire of Holocaust Memory. The activity was place-based, embodied and networked, re-membered and reconnected. As Frith and Karlin observe:

> Practices of place-based digital memory mobilize both memory and place, offering new ways to remember and to give meaning to their location history as an active force in their everyday lives. [104]

Embodied memory and digital traces combine to produce particular resonances and memory triggers. The social media trails hold a decaying memory both of the Death March Esther survived and the *Honouring Esther* walks including some of the curated materials and some of the responses to it. Each aggregated social media trail holds a unique set of observations and comments on the Death March Esther survived, the wider Holocaust story, and contemporary issues of asylum and exile. The 'mnemonic' landscapes of the Death March in Germany and where the route was transposed to, thus also has an augmented digital cartographic echo, that can be used to 'virtually' walk the route again. These social media trails are unique multi-media texts, extended manifestations of the work in time and format, a complex layered assemblage, each trail indexical of new knowledge and understandings generated.

An emergent hybrid walking and multi-media arts practice

Honouring Esther explored an emergent digital/somatic hybrid, a digitally connected *walking-with,* attending to the abject and dissonant, unsettling authorised heritage accounts, generating new knowing, engaging with time, memory and the past in the present. As a walking arts approach it created and holds open new learning spaces for critically informed empathic conversations and materialises the practice through social media, analogue and digital recording, producing an assemblage of multiple partial perspectives and situated knowledge. The process repatriated Esther's testimony, generating new resonances such that her experience and reflections became part of the embodied experience of a new generation. As a public witness of the Holocaust her archive testimony was explicitly made as a contribution to continue that witnessing of resistance and survival after her death. Online and on foot *Honouring Esther* reasserted the original purpose of the testimony, honouring Esther's intention. Reclaiming it from the archive for the repertoire others now retell and connect the story to their experiences.

becoming story carriers

For those who participated in the cycles of *Honouring Esther* walks, whether walking the streets of Bath, through a Somerset wood or the marshland on the edge of the pine forest near Belsen, memories are rich and complex. Given changing social media habits and its ephemeral nature, it is important not to overstate the lasting significance of this element. The curated files and installation media continue to be accessible but the social media trails from the project have already decayed, their once much clicked posts are gone. Shared media content in the convivial archives has become a ripple of knowledge and experience expanding away from those moments walking. Nevertheless, the process of instant reflection, questioning and renewing the archive was essential to the Honouring Esther project. Walking

was the fundamental shared somatic experience generating relational intelligence and alertness. Walking-with participants became open to, and experienced, involuntary thought and developed abilities to reflect on it. The affective experiences of *Honouring Esther* responding to Esther testimony and other curated materials generated a commitment to carry and retell; Holocaust memories were literally re-membered through walking.

In addition to this, new memories were generated from empathic conversations in particular places defined by the transposing of the routes, walkers' own embodied memories became part of the retold and renewed stories. Levine notes that the activity of, 'bringing hidden stories and stories of place to the surface… transform[s] participants into story bearers',[105] I embrace the spirit of the comment but prefer 'carrier' to bearer as it both removes the metaphoric burden of bearing and introduces the more epidemiological notion of agency in carrying, infection and viral distribution of ideas and subaltern accounts. Walkers report on taking up and sharing their experiences, a walker on the *Honouring Esther* project comments on how all the layers of experience connected,

> Emotionally I am still in touch with the pain and sorrow of the past but am more and more angry with the present and future. I am much more likely to step up and say no and be counted in expressing my resistance. The project continues to echo through my life on a daily basis.
> (Respondent 11, *Honouring Esther* walker/visitor survey 2017)

Honouring Esther is a walking art contribution to critical heritage work on the Holocaust using memory and the body, specifically referencing the register of coerced walking. The walks invoked a 'remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present'[106] such that walkers become story carriers. *Honouring Esther* brought memory of the Holocaust and its resonances into current experience generating further layers and folds enabling new learning and new contemporary resonances to be made. The build of trust, solidarity and

dignity of this somatic and digital iteration of *walking-with* offers learning experiences involving the mobilisation of other ways of knowing and other heritage narratives building confidence towards social repair.

Conclusion

Working with survivor testimony, *Honouring Esther* activated and renewed agency in Holocaust memory at a time when it is at risk of becoming disembodied and disconnected in the archive. In engaging the particular Bundist, Yiddishist perspective of Esther Brunstein, the cycle of walks re-connected an internationalist social justice voice of significance to contemporary social justice issues. The creative strategy of folding past and present, and England with Germany using curated content at key touch points were of value in making a space for that testimony, generating new memory and creating new learning spaces. The *walking-with* approach, with its focus on the somatic and the intangible, developing solidarity and dignity in questioning and critical sensing, facilitated rich responses to the curated materials and other serendipitous encounters.

The practices of creating and walking routes, generating live tracks seeded space, place and time with stories and comments, affording networked engagements with other digital memory archives and other networked users. Combined with contemporaneous blog commentary this offered networked others an as-live perspective on the walk and an opportunity to participate remotely. In this way new spaces were opened up, learning from Esther and the *Honouring Esther* walkers.

Social media and text from multiple contributors structured around the trace of a walk route demonstrate the potential to enrich, personalise and become response-able for this cultural heritage narrative as part of a walking arts practice. Along with the dissonant,

discomforting affective experiences in the present and the corporeal activity of walking, the process of reflective materialisation contributes to an emergent pedagogy of social repair. The re-membered story of Holocaust resistance and survival encouraged walkers to think with their whole bodies towards their own accountability and response-ability in the present.

The productive somatic experience of this project spatially and temporally linked, and juxtaposed with, specific Holocaust survivor testimony and perspectives on resistance and solidarity generated significant new learning experiences. New understandings, insights and resonances are manifest in the media generated, embodied in the walkers' experience, and materialised in the work presented in exhibition. Neither a re-enactment nor authorised heritage memorialisation, the work was an active, participatory, and critical re-engagement of the past in the present producing rich, critical empathic dialogues on foot and online. In a time of fear, growing inequality and prejudice, and as an emboldened far-right gains electoral respectability it may be that further iterations of this *walking-with* approach in particular heritage and social justice context can contribute to processes beginning social repair.

Acknowledgements

All photographs and artworks are copyright of the author except where noted in the caption. I claim fair use of Google data and Social Hiking maps, this is agreed with the latter. Permissions were obtained from individuals photographed, as part of project registration as was an understanding that notebooks would become part of the extended presence of the project. Additional walker comments are drawn from a survey immediately after the walks conducted by the author for PhD research, comments are anonymised for publication as agreed with the participants.

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Figure List and captions

Figure 1: *Joys of the Forest*, 2016. Installation. Beaumont Gallery, Wiltshire (2018) Documentary photograph. Courtesy of author.

(digital film available at: https://doi.org/10.17870/bathspa.12005622.v1

Figure 2: still from *Frome to Belsen*. 2016. Installation video. Courtesy of author.

(digital film available at https://doi.org/10.17870/bathspa.12005547.v1)

Figure 3: *Honouring Esther*, entwined routes. 2015.

Screen grab from Scribblemaps desktop. Map data©Google

The red line is the transposed line of the Death March, the green and blue lines represent the planned walking route using public rights of way.

Figure 4: Screen grab from project blog (White and Brunstein 2017). Photograph. Courtesy of author. Sample report of response to the invitation made via Walking Artists Network to walk the transposed route. A walk in Scotland in 2015 by artists Claudia Zeiske and Stuart MacAdam. Available here: https://forcedwalks.wordpress.com/scotland/

Figure 5: centre spread of project flyer, 2015. Courtesy of author.

Figure 6: Social media trail, *Honouring Esther* walk in Germany, 2016. Screen grab Aggregated social media using Social Hiking. Map data@Google. Each blue icon indicates at least one social media posting via Twitter, Flickr or Soundcloud. Social media stream in right hand column Available at http://www.shareyouradventure.com/map/62660/walknowlive/Honouring-Esther-Germany-2016

Figure 7: walkers discussion at the intervention themed on Justice, 2015. Documentary photograph. Somerset, UK. Courtesy of author.

Figure 8: Walker's note book, pressed flower and poetry. Honouring Esther walk, intervention theme Hope, 2015. Scan of sample pages. Courtesy of author.

Figure 9: Honouring Esther installation, 2018. Documentary photograph. Corsham Court cellar. Courtesy of author.

Figure 10: Honouring Esther gallery installation projection, 2017. Documentary photograph. 44AD Artspace Bath. Courtesy of author.

Figure 11: Skype call with Esther Brunstein from the Bergen-Belsen Memorial education centre, 2016. Documentary photograph. Courtesy of author.

NB: Additional digital films and soundscapes generated are available here:

https://doi.org/10.17870/bathspa.11990385.v1

Notes

1. Barad, *On Touching – The Inhuman That I Therefore Am*, 215
2. Ahmed, *Happy Objects*
3. Pappachrissi, *Affective Publics: Sentiment Technology and Politics*, 23
4. Ibid. p126
5. White, Pretty, and Gorka, *White Horse Walks.* Available at: http://whitehorsewalk.co.uk/ (Accessed: 20/09/2018).
6. Papadimitriou, N. *Scarp.*
7. White and Brunstein, *Forced Walks.* Available at https://forcedwalks.co.uk/ (Accessed 12/4/20)
8. Ibid
9. Wienecke, *Special Incidents Unknown*.
10. Gilbert, *Atlas of the Holocaust.* See also Kushner, *Journeys from the Abyss.*
11. Cole, *Holocaust Roadscapes*.
12. Gros, *Philosophy of Walking*, pp 107-120.
13. Evans, *Art of Walking*, pp 64-93.
14. Solnit, *Wanderlust*, pp 45-64.
15 Kansteiner, *Transnational Holocaust Memory, Digital Culture and the End of Reception Studies*, 306
16. Smith, *Making Memory.*
17. Trezise, *Grave Dancing.*
18. Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony*.
19. White and Brunstein, *Forced Walks.* Available at https://forcedwalks.co.uk/ (Accessed 12/4/20)
20. Levine, *On Common Ground - Here as There.* See also O'Rourke, *Walking and Mapping*, 181-3
21. Trezise, *Grave Dancing.* pp176-181
22.Viewranger enables live public route tracking with social media from a single user. Available here: https://www.viewranger.com/en-gb
23. Social Hiking drew on Viewranger, the combi-map feature aggregated multiple trails in the same geographical area and multiple users on the same walk/time frame. Formerly available here: http://www.shareyouradventure.com/
24. White and Brunstein, *Forced Walks.* Available at https://forcedwalks.co.uk/ (Accessed 12/4/20)
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