

# Abstract

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## **The Virtual (Re)Construction of History: Some Epistemological Questions**

In recent years, some historians started to experiment with computer-generated virtual environments as a new medium for representing spatial history beyond the written language unfolding new potentials for understanding &#97;&#110;&#100; representing history. The new medium introduces often neglected sensory modalities &#97;&#110;&#100; the exposition of some aspects of history that may otherwise go unnoticed. It affords the use of phenomenology &#97;&#110;&#100; semiotics as theoretical lenses for interpreting the past in ways not possible in traditional media. It also often employs symbolic realism (the use of perspectival constructions that emulate everyday experience) to enable new forms of individual &#97;&#110;&#100; social engagements with the past. In doing so, it raises new epistemological questions not typically encountered by historians using traditional media. This paper aims to clarify some of the assumptions &#97;&#110;&#100; premises at work in reconstructing the past using computer-generated virtual environments. It examines some epistemological concerns with the use of phenomenology &#97;&#110;&#100; semiotics as theoretical lenses. It also explores the potentials &#97;&#110;&#100; limitations of symbolic realism &#97;&#110;&#100; its offshoots: the suspension of disbelief &#97;&#110;&#100; the suspension of imagination.