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Harbored: Like Museums, Videogames Aren't Neutral

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HARBORED: LIKE MUSEUMS, VIDEOGAMES AREN'T NEUTRAL

by

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B.A. May 2013, Old Dominion University

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ABSTRACT

HARBORED: LIKE MUSEUMS, VIDEOGAMES AREN'T NEUTRAL

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Old Dominion University, 2019
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There are three primary components to be reviewed: (1) an essay (2) a videogame design document and (3) a prototype. The following essay is comprised of: (1) an analysis of scholarship and contemporary works regarding videogames and museums that demonstrate the theory and method behind this project, (2) research regarding an historic maritime event that will serve as the subject matter for the proposed videogame, and (3) a conclusion that summarizes the game design. The historical research at the heart of this project surrounds the *SS Quanza*, a steamship that in September of 1940 carried Jewish refugees from Portugal to the US and Mexico only to be faced with the possibility of a return trip to Nazi Europe. Elevating the voices of the *Quanza*'s refugees and their advocates exposes a lack of a maritime perspective in Holocaust studies broadly, as well as, demonstrates a popular and empathetic regard for those fleeing Nazi Europe. Comparing videogames and museum exhibitions provides invaluable insights that are new to both game studies and museum studies. This endeavor suggests that game space and exhibit space have many similarities and that museum visitors and gamers are not dissimilar. We can consider videogames to be cultural and social artifacts in the likeness of museum collections. Gamers and museum visitors are likely to be the same audience, hence the efforts of the museum world to incorporate new technologies and game-based programming. But what if videogames can offer meaningful experiences for the gamer-visitor audience outside of

the museum? Ultimately this project incorporates academic research into meaningful videogame design and considers the social epistemological dimensions of videogames.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe.¹

Elie Wiesel

Marginalized communities and activists are challenging the power that corporations, governments, museums, and academia have over knowledge, skills, culture, collective memory and public history. The conflicts ranging from inclusivity, ownership of artifacts, and offensive interpretations of history to absences of representation have expanded discourse around the ethical dimensions of museums and inspired movements like “Museums Are Not Neutral” and “Decolonize This Place” that call for museums to atone for their failings. Though battles are often lost, and serious issues continue to arise, such efforts of dissent are fostering collaboration between the public and our cultural institutions. Rather than the institutions holding onto power over cultural representation and public history, some institutions are moving towards inclusivity through increased access to collections and information, the co-authorship of knowledge, and the democratization of resources. It is with awareness and accessibility that communities can critique a museums ethics and inaccuracies. In reviewing the vast array of literature from museums online and social media presence, conferences, blogs and online publications, podcasts, and scholarship it is clear that great changes are being made to our cultural institutions via their ideologies, practices, and community engagement. There is much to be done, however, as recent

¹ Katie Reilly, “Action is the only remedy to Indifference,” *Time*, July 2, 2016, Accessed March 3, 2019, <http://time.com/4392252/elie-wiesel-dead-best-quotes/>.

² Jasmine Weber, “Whitney Museum Director Pens Letter After Vice Chair’s Relationship to Weapons Manufacturer is Publicized,” *Hyperallergic*, December 3, 2018, Accessed March 3, 2019, <https://hyperallergic.com/474176/whitney-museum-director-pens-letter-after-vice-chairs-relationship-to-weapons->

events can attest to the lingering inability for some larger institutions to adhere to popular ethical and moral expectations.

The Decolonize This Place movement, for example, organized a protest in December 2018 at the Whitney Museum for the museum's connections to a tear gas manufacturer that provided supplies for the recent gassing of immigrants at the US-Mexico border. The museum director, Adam Weinberg, responded to the controversy with a letter to the museum's staff and trustees:

Like many contemporary cultural institutions, the Whitney Museum has always been a space for the playing out of disparate and conflicting ideas. Even as we are idealistic and missionary in our belief in artists—as established by our founder Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney—the Whitney is first and foremost a museum. It cannot right all the ills of an unjust world, nor is that its role. Yet, I contend that the Whitney has a critical and urgent part to play in making sure that unheard and unwanted voices are recognized. Through our openness and independence we can foreground often marginalized, unconventional and seemingly unacceptable ideas not presented in other sites in our culture...

We at the Whitney have created a culture that is unique and vibrant—but also precious and fragile. This “space” is not one I determine as director but something that we fashion by mutual consent and shared commitment on all levels and in many ways. As members of the Whitney community, we each have our critical and complementary roles: trustees do not hire staff, select exhibitions, organize programs or make acquisitions, and staff does not appoint or remove board members. Our truly extraordinary environment, which lends such high expectations, is something we must preserve collectively. Even as we contend with often profound contradictions within our culture, we must live within the laws of society and observe the “rules” of our Museum—mutual respect, fairness, tolerance and freedom of expression and, speaking personally, a commitment to kindness. It is so easy to tear down but so much more difficult to build and sustain.²

Including such an extended selection of this letter is critical because it reveals far more than the director's position on the issue at hand. Beyond the activist's demands and the director's appeal for “mutual respect, fairness, tolerance,” this response reflects the long-established mentality of larger museums to remain neutral despite pressures to take the side of social justice. Museums

² Jasmine Weber, “Whitney Museum Director Pens Letter After Vice Chair's Relationship to Weapons Manufacturer is Publicized,” *Hyperallergic*, December 3, 2018, Accessed March 3, 2019, <https://hyperallergic.com/474176/whitney-museum-director-pens-letter-after-vice-chairs-relationship-to-weapons-manufacturer-is-publicized/>.

aren't neutral, and as Elie Wiesel famously professed, to take the side of neutrality is to side with the oppressors. Even in Weinberg's attempts to downplay the museum's controversial ties to the weapons manufacturer— Warren B. Kanders, a leading board member— he acknowledges the many ways in which a museum is obligated to uphold ethical and moral standards that are determined by social needs and demanded by the public that they serve. His argument deflects from the issue at hand with a list of the other ways the museum operates within the parameters they are being judged. This excusatory tone demonstrates how museums absorb popular sentiments in attempts to control and suppress them. That the museum doesn't take sides— maintaining a separation between the board and staff only to emphasize the museum's "inability" to disassociate with the board member— the director reinforces the infrastructures that not only support the museum's controversial partnership but also the larger systems that are in play.³ He suggests the museum is a space to play out provoking ideas and to elevate marginalized voices, prefacing that this is the idealistic and purportedly progressive ideology that informs the museum's practice.

Decolonize This Place responded to his letter pointing out that their "friends, families, and communities" are the museum's stakeholders emphasizing further that they "have been on the receiving end of the products made and marketed by Safariland and its numerous subsidiaries like Defense Technology." The response continued:

We consider Weinberg's apparent decision to stand with Kanders a line in the sand. That line is unacceptable to us, and now the entire institution of the Whitney faces a broad crisis of legitimacy.

Weinberg celebrates the museum as a 'safe space for unsafe ideas.' Yet by standing with Kanders and Safariland, he affirms that the museum is a safe space for those profiting from state repression, settler colonialism, white supremacy, and anti-black violence.

³ Aubrey Anable, *Playing with Feelings: Video Games and Affect*, Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota, 2018. Anable developed a useful formula for analyzing social structures and in the case of this essay the formula is fitting for a discussion of the power struggles between cultural institutions, the public and marginalized communities.

These are the forces that create systematic unsafety and perpetuate death in the very communities the museum claims to serve, communities to which many staff at the Whitney belong ... We have a responsibility to hold all of our institutions accountable...⁴

Decolonize This Place points to the museum's culpability, questionable legitimacy as a cultural institution, and unethical position in a larger system deemed unjust. Their refusal to accept the director's response in turn provides compelling connections between the museum's social obligations as collectors and exhibitors to much broader social and historical issues.

Controversial board members aside, communities past and present have voiced concern over a variety of issues, often contesting exclusivity and inaccuracies of museum collections and exhibitions.

The Florida Museum of Natural History presents another example of systemic issues perpetuated by exclusivity and arrogance. The museum opened an exhibit in 1990 called "First Encounters" coinciding with the anniversary of what was commonly known as the Discovery—the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. This exhibit interpreted history surrounding the first interaction of Native Americans and Europeans. Native American groups protested the exhibit because they felt the narrative constructed by the museum through textual labels and archaeological finds was inaccurate. The curators essentially responded to the protest by telling them that if they didn't like this exhibit, they should go make their own.⁵ This sort of response does a disservice to both the public and marginalized communities as well as the institution itself. The exclusion of Native American voices through the design process as well as the incredibly dismissive response of the museum resulted in an inadequate, inaccurate, and controversial exhibition of otherwise authentic archaeological objects. The museum failed to

⁴ Jasmine Weber, "Decolonize This Place plans action at the Whitney Opposing Tear Gas Manufacturer on Museum Board," *Hyperallergic*, December 7, 2018, Accessed March 3, 2019, <https://hyperallergic.com/475016/decolonize-this-place-plans-action-at-the-whitney-opposing-tear-gas-manufacturer-on-museum-board/>.

⁵ Lonnie Bunch, "Embracing Controversy: Museum Exhibitions in the Politics of Change," *The Public Historian* vol. 14, 3 (summer 1992).

transform their exhibit space into a meaningful place. The suggestion to create their own exhibit by a museum that actively collects artifacts found in the very communities that the activists represent is unsettling to say the least. The museums response ignored the social epistemological dimensions of the marginalized community and failed to acknowledge absences in scholarship and interpretation. A community effort to create a museum exhibit in response to established institutions is an ambitious endeavor—possible though incredibly challenging—but today museums are relying more than ever on community contribution and participation. Additionally, museums are recognizing that they need to adopt a more inclusive and responsive ideology in order to design experiences that are more compelling and accurate.

Diversity in content and representation is crucial to improving the ethical standards of exhibition and to do so requires incorporating diverse creators and content. It also requires collaborating with various cultural institutions such as academia and museums. Some museums are making efforts to be more inclusive not only regarding their content but also with their staff and programing. For instance, the Penn Museum recently began hiring immigrants and refugees for the position of Global Guide to interpret the history and culture of the Middle East (this program is soon to also include exhibits on Mexico, Central America, and Africa). One reviewer explains how the program affords guides like Moumena Saradar, a Syrian refugee, “a safe space to narrativize their own stories.”⁶ In other words, the museum program creates a space within public history for refugees to relay their personal testimony in relation to the history on display. This is not only an opportunity to elevate marginalized voices of the past and present but an interactive and compassionate moment for visitors.

⁶ Olivia Jia, “Refugees Connect Their Personal Stories with a Museum’s Ancient Artifacts,” *HyperAllergic*, February 19, 2019, Accessed May 25, 2019, <https://hyperallergic.com/484835/global-guides-program-penn-museum/>.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D. C. exhibit, “Remembering the Children: Daniel’s Story,” is an example of immersive exhibitions designed for a more meaningful visitor experience by recreating scenes and experiences of Holocaust Victims (see note for link to corresponding video).⁷ Throughout the exhibit visitors hear a voice that presents itself as that of Daniel’s who is reading from his diary thereby taking visitors on a tour. Initially he is reminiscing on his life before moving to events of WWII and the Holocaust. The museum defines the exhibit space as a “realistic environment” which includes not only artifacts from Daniel’s life and the history that contextualizes his story but also physical simulations of significant places such as his house but also the infamous deportation trains, ghettos, and camps. In addition, there are recreated noises such as the sounds of dishes in the kitchen, the fire that burned his community synagogue, and the trains. Clearly the museum endorsed a highly creative design to better articulate this evocative history and to enhance the visitor experience.

The practices that museum professionals are implementing to address industry problems can inspire the videogame industry to effect positive change. Additionally, collaboration with organizations, like the Anti Defamation League, can help game companies adopt ideologies and implement practices conducive for social well-being. The ADL, now an advocate for serious games and their creators, was once vehemently opposed to videogames. In 2010 the ADL responded to a controversial game called *Sonderkommando Revolt* with sharp criticism and an all-encompassing statement that “[t]he Holocaust should be off-limits for video games.”⁸ Since

⁷ “Remember the Children: Daniel’s Story,” *USHMM*, Accessed December 14, 2017, <https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/museum-exhibitions/remember-the-children-daniels-story#>. You can view a video of the exhibit here.

⁸ Brian Crecente, “Anti-Defamation League Slams ‘Fun’ Holocaust Video Game as Horrific and Inappropriate,” *Kotaku*, December 11, 2010, Accessed March 31, 2019, <https://kotaku.com/anti-defamation-league-slams-fun-holocaust-video-game-5712163>.

then the ADL has taken a much different approach to videogames. In recent years they used their platform to stir conversations with the game industry, as well as, learn from and empower those in the industry who want to instigate change. The ADLs efforts to collaborate with the game industry elevates developers who want to combat hate but who do not receive the necessary support. For instance, the ADL found that one developer tried to create and enforce community guidelines for their online game the company “could only keep one designer on staff and they chose the one who built the battle maps, weapons, and avatars, instead of the one who was building community.”⁹ Additionally, in 2017 the ADL announced that they were organizing a Game Jam in which they would gather game developers to collaborate in the development of serious videogames that would confront hate in game content and culture. Crucially, the winners of the contest were featured at the “Never is Now” conference—a conference dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism and hate.¹⁰ ADL’s Daniel Kelley explained, “[w]e were a little concerned that we would get a lot of Nazi-punching games...”¹¹ The use of a specific theme of anti-bullying, as well as, criteria for winning game design, the ADL equipped the developers with the tools needed for meaningful creativity. Establishing specific expectations can be limiting but, as the ADL example demonstrates, articulating community values and implementing inclusive practices can harness compassionate creativity through empowering game design. As Kelley explains, “We should have a national conversation not just about the negative impact of video

⁹ “What’s a Game Jam and Why is ADL doing one?” *ADL: Fighting Hate for Good*, October 20, 2017, Accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/blog/whats-a-game-jam-and-why-is-adl-doing-one>.

¹⁰ “Never is Now: The Summit on Anti-Semitism and Hate,” *ADL*, Accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.neverisnow.org/>.

¹¹ Charlie Hall, “The Anti-Defamation League Hosted it’s First Game Jam,” November 10, 2017, Accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.polygon.com/2017/11/10/16633826/anti-defamation-league-game-jam-winner>.

games, but also how we can best promote games to fight hate and prejudice.”¹² Through collaboration, creativity, and activism we can foster a new perspective that appreciates the significance of the videogames as cultural documents. By furthering access to knowledge, skills, and technology to misrepresented and marginalized communities we can challenge those who maintain power and dominance over digital space. Co-authorship over the medium will encourage diversity and inclusivity in content and culture.

Cultural institutions and the gaming industry have work to do in order to address the ways they perpetuate structures of exclusion and injustice, but they also share many positive qualities and have the potential to push exhibition beyond what it is today. Examining the ways museums and videogames have confronted serious social issues, as well as, the ways they encourage social engagement on and offline suggests that their use of design moves content and audiences beyond their respective spaces. Culturally and academically it is time that videogames are appreciated as more than supplemental educational tools or museum interactives. Critical application of cultural studies and game studies is one means of recognizing the significance of videogames. But videogames are often critical themselves. Cultural institutions have struggled to adequately integrate digital technologies often concluding that such initiatives are impractical or awkward.¹³ Recognizing the ways in which cultural institutions are already using elements of videogame design equips museum professionals with an empowering perspective, however, as game studies scholar Aubrey Anable emphasizes, videogames are cultural documents that

¹² “ADL Statement on White House Meeting About Video Game Violence,” *ADL: Fighting Hate for Good*, March 8, 2018, Accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/adl-statement-on-white-house-meeting-about-video-game-violence>.

¹³ Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015; Erika C. Shugart, “How to Avoid Digital White Elephants in your Museum,” *Exhibitionist* (Fall 2013): https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58fa260a725e25c4f30020f3/t/594c2e0dcd0f6836c04cd88d/1498164772786/17+EXH+f13+Nuts+and+bolts_Shugart.pdf; Halina Gottlieb, “Interactive Adventures,” *Digital Technologies and The Museum Experience: Handheld Guides and Other Media*, Loïc Tallon and Kevin Walker, eds., New York, NY: Altamira Press, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008: 167-177.

embody complex social and emotional systems.¹⁴ Central to the thesis of this project is that videogames offer epistemological contributions capable of exploring serious social concerns past and present.¹⁵ They can be inclusive and collaborative when interpreting history and adapt scholarship in ways that evoke compassion and understanding. They are designed spaces which afford wider audiences' access to knowledge and each other. The emotional and social dimensions of videogames and game culture afford designers the opportunity to empower their audience above and beyond the game. A carefully crafted and thoughtful game design can offer its audience a place to collaborate and to contend with serious social issues. Whether they share their knowledge of gameplay online, analyze the meaning of the game, develop their own games, participate in charity livestreams, spark up conversations at the local game store, or travel to a national convention—gamers are organizing within their communities and interacting with the world around them. To this point, scholars coming from varied backgrounds are gamers and game developers. Students of all disciplines are gamers and game developers. Too often academic knowledge isn't accessible to the broader public and when it is it is through limited means—public programming or other community efforts, for example, require public awareness of said opportunities, not to mention the ability to travel to and attend events. How often has popular discourse emphasized “hidden history” or “forgotten history” when that history is widely explored in academia?¹⁶ Adapting scholarship to public history via our cultural institutions is one

¹⁴ Aubrey Anable, *Playing with Feelings*:

¹⁵ Linda Marin Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” *Cultural Critique*, 20 (Winter 1991-92): 5-32; Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. University Press Scholarship Online, 2007; Namita Goswami, “Thinking Problems,” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26, 2 (2012): 189-199; Charles W. Mills, “White Ignorance,” *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*, Ithaca, NY: SUNY Press, 2007.

¹⁶ Eric Tabach, “I Found the Hidden Place My Great-Grandfather was Murdered In the Holocaust,” *Buzzfeed*, December 11, 2018, Accessed May 25, 2019, <https://youtu.be/AygiTMCL5kM>. Again, this is something worth expanding perhaps in another project but this is based on personal observations. Television and movies emphasize this idea of mysterious and concealed knowledge, for instance. Social media and online conversations reveal suspicions that border on outrage when discussing “ignored” histories. For instance, a recent BuzzFeed video

way of making academic knowledge more accessible. Much to the extent that museums must adhere to ethical standards in the treatment of culture and history—and like videogames there are museums that range from controversial and offensive to profound and evocative—videogames can work within similar ethics. Just as museums are rewriting their code of ethics in response to popular demands, the videogame industry needs to develop an ongoing and articulate ethical standard when confronting social issues or exhibiting serious subjects such as history. Not all videogames offer deeply critical experiences, but for the game designers that want to contribute serious games, understanding videogames as meaningful cultural documents will not only empower current developers but also invite new perspectives and talent into the industry. Exhibiting culture and history via the museum exhibit or a videogame requires adopting new ideologies and practices that are actively confronting inequality within the industry and in society. Videogames can not only interpret scholarship, making it available to wider audiences, they can also expand academic knowledge, offering unique perspective on serious issues. This essay will review academic and popular discourse, several indie games, museum exhibitions, and aspects of public history and game culture that encourages co-authorship and co-ownership of culture and history as well as demonstrate the capacity for videogames to appeal to compassion.

Author of *Playing with Feelings: Video Games and Affect*, Aubrey Anable, makes the case throughout her work that rereading the history of videogames through affect theory illuminates the social structures that oppress women in videogames, the industry, and socially. She demonstrates how frustrating gameplay and humorous narrativity in videogames can empower gamers through sudden awareness of a corrupted system. The gameplay structures of

suggested that the atrocities at Babi Yar are not well-known and further demonstrates how the site itself is overgrown and “hidden.” The great-grandson of a Holocaust victim conveys serious concern about preserving this history. But there is a vast archive of knowledge about this tragedy as well as discourse about memory and commemoration of such sites. So why does he feel like no one knows about it and that it will be forgotten?

repetitive failure in videogames are an apt metaphor for the infrastructures preventing progress socially. At the heart of my proposed videogame, *Harbored*, is a refugee's testimony. As a woman recounting her childhood memories and grappling with trauma, Malvina Parnes' testimony is simultaneously an evocative account of history and poignant in its relevance today regarding women's testimony, as well as, other structures of social injustice such as racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-immigration. Holocaust survivor, author, and activist Elie Wiesel once said, "Whoever listens to a witness, becomes a witness."¹⁷ In sharing Parnes' testimony this project is more than a collection and interpretation of history. This is an effort to embrace a widely-popular medium for its abilities to instigate change and to house both the scholarship and archival materials in an empathetic and serious space.

This project also recognizes the systemic marginalization of a maritime perspective of WWII and the Holocaust, as well as, the overshadowing of meaningful games in academia and the gaming industry. To start, I first learned of the *Quanza* story at the Virginia Holocaust Museum.¹⁸ It was an inconspicuous, small text panel tucked in a corner between two historical giants: the *St. Louis* and the *Exodus*. Beyond the fact that the *St. Louis* and *Exodus* stories have received ample scholarly and public attention, as large-scale exhibition elements they direct the museum visitor's attention away from the story of the *Quanza*. The *Quanza* story is an exhibited footnote highlighting a local event. Researching the *Quanza* reveals bits of information scattered across the country, as well as, internationally. From various community and state archives in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, and Illinois, the available fragments of history tell a surprising story not only about the *Quanza* and its refugees, but also regarding public history

¹⁷ Katie Reilly, "Action is the only remedy to Indifference," *Time*, July 2, 2016, Accessed March 3, 2019, <http://time.com/4392252/elie-wiesel-dead-best-quotes/>.

¹⁸ Observations are based on a visit conducted in 2014.

and social epistemological contributions.¹⁹ Outside of the contemporary media attention—well-documented in numerous newspapers including *The Virginian Pilot*, *Portsmouth Star*, and the *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*—it seems the majority of primary archival material was collected and interpreted by the family of one of the central figures of the Quanza story, Jacob Morewitz. David and Stephen, Morewitz’s son and grandson, worked diligently to see the story of the Quanza brought to light. They reached out to and collaborated with museums and institutions, participated in radio programs and public speaking events, and made copies of their collection which was then sent to various archives in hopes of making the history widely accessible. Additionally, Stephen Morewitz co-authored, "The Saving of the S.S. Quanza in Hampton Roads, Virginia on September 14, 1940: A Prelude to the Nazi Holocaust," an essay, as well as, “Steamship Quanza,” a play.²⁰ The most crucial element of this bottom-up history is the audiovisual recordings and transcribed interviews. There are a few scholars who have briefly mentioned the Quanza story, as well as, other adaptations including a novel, and a recent documentary all of which rely on creativity, archival materials, and scholarship.²¹ Beyond this invaluable contribution to historical research and public history, the efforts to bring to light the plight of the refugees have also excavated Jacob Morewitz’s crucial historical perspective as an American maritime lawyer and refugee advocate. This perspective is unique and one that can bring to light new questions and new information in a careful reexamination of WWII and Holocaust history.

¹⁹ Anable, *Playing with Feelings*, 5.

²⁰ Stephen J. Morewitz and Susan B. Liberman, "The Saving of the S.S. Quanza in Hampton Roads, Virginia on September 14, 1940: A Prelude to the Nazi Holocaust", c. 1990, Collection relating to the SS Quanza, 1995-2000, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Mary Shen Barnidge, “Steamship Quanza,” *Chicago Reader*, June 20, 2001, Accessed March 22, 2019, <https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/steamship-quanza/Content?oid=877827>.

²¹ Gene A. Plunka, *Staging Holocaust Resistance*, New York, NY: Pelgrave MacMillan, 2012, 135-154; Victoria Redel, *The Border of Truth*, New York, NY: Counterpoint, 2007; “Nobody Wants US,” *Seltzer Film and Video*, Accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.nobodywantsus.com/excerpts-from-nobody-wants-us>.

In reframing Holocaust history in search of the elusive maritime perspective, Tim Cole's *Holocaust Landscapes* provides an exemplary intersection of ideas relevant to this project.²² Throughout the book, Cole emphasizes two crucial points: (1) the need to reexamine Holocaust history with the perspective of space and place and (2) how many significant details about individual and collective experiences are brought to light with this new perspective. For *Harbored* this means two things: (1) the role of space and place is something that can be environmentally interpreted in a digital space (2) the details of a maritime experience can be brought to light in ways never before examined. In other words, this project thinks about the ways in which scholarship has not yet examined the maritime experience such as that of the *SS Quanza*, her passengers, and their advocates, but also the ways in which a videogame space can elucidate new understandings about such an experience in ways scholarship can't.

²² Tim Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes*, New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2016.

CHAPTER 2

MUSEUMS AND VIDEOGAMES

Just like any form of media, video games have tremendous influence over whether this bias and hate is challenged or normalized.

Anti-Defamation League²³

Since at least the 1970s museums have recognized the pedagogical capabilities of videogames despite ongoing anxieties about them and advancing technology.²⁴ Unfortunately, museum interpretation, programs, and interactives have concentrated primarily on school-aged audiences, or families, which has alienated young adults. Likewise, videogames deemed educational, and therefore appropriate for the museums and schools, also largely target K-12 students. Almost in tandem with the museum world's current initiatives for a visitor-centric model and their ongoing emphasis on designing experiences versus relying on traditional pedagogy, videogame discourse has grown in academia as scholars, educators, and museum professionals have turned their attention away from the educational games trend of the past. Their attention has turned to the recurring phenomenon of wildly popular and financially successful videogames like *Halo*, *Call of Duty*, *Assassin's Creed*, *Pokémon Go*, *Wolfenstein*, and *Fortnite*, as well as, so-called social or casual games like *Farmville*, *Words with Friends*, and *Candy Crush*, the enormous growth of the gaming industry broadly, and still it is controversy that dominates popular discourse.²⁵ *Pokémon Go*, for instance, as an astoundingly popular—at

²³ “What’s a Game Jam and Why is ADL Doing One?” *ADL: Fighting Hate for Good*, October 20 2017, Accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/blog/whats-a-game-jam-and-why-is-adl-doing-one>.

²⁴ Jeremy Zhen, “The History of Educational Games,” *Immersed Games*, Accessed February 28, 2019, <http://www.immersedgames.com/the-history-of-educational-video-gaming/>.

²⁵ Andrea Jones, *Peak Experience Lab*, Accessed March 1, 2019, <http://www.peakexperiencelab.com/blog>; Andrea Jones, *Peak Experience Lab*, January 4, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/peakexperiencelab/>. Andrea Jones is a consultant, educator, and blogger. Her work synthesizes the scholarship and developments of the museum world and she promotes a progressive, inclusive, and trend-savvy approach to museum design. On her January 4, 2018 Facebook post she suggested, “If the video game Fortnite is popular, think about what human need is being met by the game. That becomes your clue about how to translate to a museum setting.” As a professional that balances both

least initially—mobile game was quickly enmeshed in a number of controversies such as instances of contested spaces, among other serious safety concerns.²⁶ Where some cultural institutions saw an opportunity to capitalize on a potential boom in visitors, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, for example, rejected the superimposed gamification. The museum’s commemorative space was subjected to competition with the AR game and concerns about insensitivity abounded, rightly so.

The negative connotation associated with videogames persists despite recent scholarship that emphasize their incredible cultural significance and though they are familiar with adaptations of historiographical scholarship in other forms—exhibitions, simulated experiences in the museum, and digital museum interactives—some scholars, museum professionals, and educators have yet to fully realize the epistemological nature of videogames.²⁷ There are numerous educational games and online archives that are designed for children K-12—a couple of examples would be US Mission and Playing History—and cultural institutions broadly are dedicating portions of their own physical and digital space to games (often termed ‘interactives’ in the museum world. Museum professionals and educators look to these educational games and the related supplemental materials to carefully craft lesson plans—more often than not there are pre-made lesson plans available, as cultural institutions are heavily invested in education and collaborative partnerships with public education. Above and beyond the desire to teach via new

museums and education, her elevation of popular culture, especially a videogame like Fortnite, as a critical access point for museums to appeal to the public is interesting.

²⁶ Andrea Petersen, “Holocaust Museum to Visitors: Please stop Catching Pokemon Here,” *The Washington Post*, July 12, 2016, Accessed March 4, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2016/07/12/holocaust-museum-to-visitors-please-stop-catching-pokemon-here/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.72e6a310f175.

²⁷ “Standards for Museum Exhibits Dealing with Historical Subjects,” *American Historical Association*, 2017, Accessed February 28, 2019, <https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-standards-and-guidelines-of-the-discipline/standards-for-museum-exhibits-dealing-with-historical-subjects>.

media, maintain relevance, and succeed financially, many cultural institutions are now working to design experiences for older audiences that compete with other forms of cultural engagement. They are doing this in various ways such as developing interpretive styles inspired by today's cultural, social, and political trends, as well as, interactive programming, incorporating new technologies, and adopting more inclusive, transparent ideologies and practices. Museum professionals and educators are attempting to confront perceived limitations and inaccuracies of content, methods, and practice. But what they are failing to appreciate is that museum spaces are already game spaces.

Prior to such contemporary controversies, Nintendo and The Louvre collaborated on a game called, "Nintendo 3DS Guide: Louvre," which is meant to mediate visitor experiences in an otherwise overwhelming museum space, but also to invite gamers into the museum space, as well as, dedicate space for museums in gaming culture and the industry.²⁸ The mutual respect between Nintendo and the Louvre resulted in a partnership of layered meaning and implications for both industries. The simulated works and environment, conversational audio commentary, and interactive opportunities contextualize the digitized works of art. The game was first designed as an exclusive rental option at roughly six US dollars but was soon released to the public for purchase via their own Nintendo 3DS at twenty US dollars. Outside of the museum the game costs twenty dollars which is significantly more, however, much more affordable than having to travel to the museum. Interestingly, in a promotional video for the game available in the 3DS eShop, a Nintendo representative explains that there are hard copies available only through the museum's gift shop, as he explains, for those who want to purchase the game as a

²⁸ "Nintendo 3DS Guide: Louvre," *Nintendo, The Louvre Museum*, August 8, 2014, Accessed March 27, 2019: <http://louvreguide.nintendo.com/>; Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: 225-226*; Peter Tieryas, "How Navigating the Louvre with a Nintendo 3DS Made Me Rethink the Future of Gaming, Art, and Virtual Reality," *Tor*, March 27, 2015, Accessed March 27, 2019: <https://www.tor.com/2015/03/27/how-navigating-the-louvre-with-a-nintendo-3ds-made-me-rethink-the-future-of-gaming-art-and-virtual-reality/#comments>.

souvenir. The idea of the physical copy of the game being considered a museum souvenir is multifaceted because it emphasizes the perceived value of the game and game experience as synonymous with the visitor's experience of the museum and its exhibited works. It suggests that the Nintendo brand itself is at least as renowned in that either the visitors who purchase the physical copy want to add the game to their collection or that they might be encouraged to purchase their own 3DS. Additionally, the design of the carefully curated tours—limited in scope but various and heavily detailed—invites visitors to return to the museum and the game so that they can experience all the available tours. Moving beyond the brand, its appeal to nostalgia, and its history of design, the Louvre Guide by Nintendo is sophisticated for a 2013 technology, but its design is far more in line with traditional, didactic museum experiences. Reviewers noted the most attractive feature is the audiovisual navigation which helps to orient the visitor in the museum space. Again, this is particularly useful for a museum like the Louvre due to its expansive and complicated space. But the simulated works and environments in the game are augmented by the consoles capabilities of 3D graphics and simulated within the digitized museum space—not in their historical context.

Assassin's Creed Odyssey draws heavily on history and culture in ways that purport a hyperreality and historical accuracies observed to be unusually sophisticated for a digital space.²⁹ *Assassin's Creed* has a history of being a massively successful game series which recently made news for its collaboration with academics and museum professionals to develop its educational tools and simulation of Ancient Egypt. A professor from the University of Mississippi, Nicolas

²⁹ Matt Ferguson, "Assassin's Creed Odyssey Review," *Scholarly Gamers*, October 22, 2018, Accessed February 28, 2019, <https://www.scholarlygamers.com/review/2018/10/22/assassins-creed-odyssey-review/>; April Holloway, "New Assassin's Creed has the Most Realistic Reconstruction of Ancient Egypt Ever Produced," *Ancient Origins: Reconstructing the Story of Humanity's Past*, October 29, 2017, Accessed March 1, 2019, <https://www.ancient-origins.net/news-general/new-assassin-s-creed-has-most-realistic-reconstruction-ancient-egypt-ever-produced-021686>.

Trépanier, began using an earlier iteration of *Assassin's Creed* in his history course in 2014. He explains:

Many of us have had this experience: a question pops up about some historical tidbit encountered in a video game, and we instructors cannot offer much of a reply except to list all the things the game got wrong. That's assuming we know the game in question, of course.

I got tired of being stuck in such a dismissive mode, especially because I know that many students come to college interested in history precisely because they've played historically themed video games. A course about the Crusades, the American Revolution, or the Napoleonic wars might sound especially interesting for one who has *been* there. As teachers of history, doesn't that give us something to work with?³⁰

Trépanier's observation is enlightening for a few reasons. One is that in recognizing the entanglement of videogames in the lives of his students to the point that he believes a videogame like *Assassin's Creed* might inspire a student to explore history academically. Furthermore, when he says that students have "been there" he is referencing immersivity and simulation.

Additionally, he unknowingly points to what would only recently be described by Anable as a videogame's affectivity. The student's feelings that are tied to both the game and academia are complicated by society's "mode of dismissal" towards videogames. Trépanier wants instead to reject the social structures and conditioning that cultivated this "dismissive mode". In the remainder of his article, Trépanier argues that academia ought to embrace videogames as more than their inaccuracies, but he largely focuses on how to use their inefficiencies as opportunities for critical analysis and methodological training (ie. to get to the heart of what makes it inaccurate). Videogames were initially designed to be "computers' ambassadors to the general public" in order to combat anxieties and introduce them to computers through play but, and this is significant, without any expectations for the public to "comprehend fully how they worked."³¹

³⁰ Nicolas Trépanier, "The Assassin's Perspective: Teaching History with Video Games," *Perspectives on History* (May 1, 2014), Accessed February 28, 2019, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2014/the-assassins-perspective>.

³¹ Anable, *Playing with Feelings*, 24.

As Anable concludes, we must expose the structures that underestimate and undermine society to overcome hate.

Scholars, museum professionals, and game developers need to adopt a perspective that appreciates videogames as cultural documents. This perspective will continue to bring to light the videogames that contribute meaningfully—this is with the understanding that not all videogames are serious or intended to confront social issues but *all* are cultural documents. By adopting transparent, inclusive, and empowering practices academia, museums, and the videogame industry can better collaborate, as well as, extend access to knowledge, skill, and resources. This project considers how videogames exhibit serious subjects and historiographical scholarship by adapting original research, artifacts, and oral history regarding the *SS Quanza* and refugees who fled the Nazis in 1940. Additionally, this project presents a complex thesis regarding the maritime history of the Holocaust in order to demonstrate how videogames as a medium can develop insights and contribute knowledge in unique ways. More than pedagogical uses, videogames are also under appreciated for their epistemological and anthropological contributions. Examining videogames with an emphasis on indie games reveals a wide range of bottom-up creativity and insight often overlooked by professionals, academics, and gamers alike. By combining cultural studies and game studies this project will help to redefine videogames as a medium, an industry, and culturally. Incorporating marginalized creators, videogames, and content will expand discourse for game studies and museum studies beyond major games and the handful of successful indie games that have garnered attention. The examination of indie games is an apt place to start reexamining videogames broadly. This will demonstrate how videogames are legitimate and meaningful—to borrow a concept from Anable—*cultural documents*.

Museums and videogames both utilize their space to encourage meaningful experiences using curated culture and “fragments of history.”³²

To demean videogames as an inappropriate space for the meaningful exhibition of history or any critical subject matter is to minimize the abilities of makers and consumers of this cultural form and exclude their anthropological and epistemological contributions. It is to fail to recognize videogames as a cultural site of struggle for power over meaning—a space in which makers and consumers can collaborate and contribute meaningful insights about the world outside of the game space—whether that be the physical exhibit or digital. This project will focus on the content of videogames but with the perspective that makers and consumers are transforming digital space into a meaningful place. This is not to overlook the controversies of the gaming industry and its culture—nor is this argument ignoring concerns regarding the mistreatment of history or any serious subject matter—it is the view of this author that the negativity should not define videogames nor those who make or consume it. By uplifting the videogames that creatively and respectfully confront serious subjects we can articulate the ethical and moral obligations of the industry, as well. This project is an ideal opportunity to not only demonstrate the capabilities of videogames to interpret sensitive subjects such a Holocaust history, it is an opportunity to use the videogame space to ascertain new ideas and contribute knowledge to Holocaust studies and various interdisciplinary fields. In addition to this essays question about videogames being the best medium to tell this history, what can we learn about this history as interpreted through videogames that we might not experience through other forms? In order to emphasize the meaningful interpretation of history and scholarship via videogame the next chapter will examine the experience of the Quanza refugees and the historical moment that surrounds them.

³² Anable, *Playing with Feelings*, 5. The concept of the fragments of history was coined by Laine Nooney.

CHAPTER 3

THE *QUANZA* STORY

[My father] left at the end of '39. It was the first time in my life I saw my father crying. He was trying to hide it from me, standing at a window. I remember it was December. It was winter, and he's standing there crying. I knew he was going so that we could eventually leave.³³

Malvina Schamroth Parnes

When Malvina Schamroth Parnes describes her experience of the Second World War and the Holocaust, she begins with memories of her childhood in Antwerp, Belgium. She says going to school was “an awful ordeal” and that she “threw up every morning... The primary reason for my anxiety,” she explained, “was that I was surrounded by anti-Semitism in school, ranging from insults to physical abuse...”³⁴ Her father, David Schamroth, left Belgium in 1939 “for the United States with the intent of having his wife and children immigrate to America at a later time.”³⁵ She explains that it wasn't until May 1940 that she and her family were able to obtain visas. She remembers that on May 10th “the radio announced that Germany had attacked Belgium, Holland, and France.”³⁶ She was 11-years old when she left home with her mother, Annette, and younger sister, Annette, towards the busy port of Lisbon, Portugal. They faced great obstacles. “It never failed,” she lamented, “every city we hit, that was their first bombardment, we brought it along.”³⁷ In an area just outside of Boulogne, France, Parnes and her family met some British soldiers who warned them that the Germans would be there soon and further implored that she and her family ought to “flee with them to England via a flotilla of

³³ Malvina Parnes, Interview, ca. 1999, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Illinois.

³⁴ Parnes, Interview.

³⁵ Parnes, Interview.

³⁶ Parnes, Interview.

³⁷ Parnes, Interview.

fishing boats.”³⁸ For various reasons including her mother’s fears of traveling in the small boats, Parnes’ and the other refugees in her group decided not to go with the British soldiers. Instead, after narrowly escaping another bombardment, they had no choice but to return home to Belgium. Eventually the wife of an Italian consul, a client of Parnes’ father, arranged for a bus to carry them to Lisbon, Portugal where they boarded the *S.S. Quanza*. At their early-August departure, Parnes, her sister, her mother, and her aunt left Europe expecting their visas to lead them to Mexico. Parnes could not have known with any certainty that they were destined to reach America and be reunited with her father in a series of unforeseen events that took them to Norfolk, Virginia.³⁹

This brief story of the *SS Quanza* and the trauma endured by the Parnes’ family is compelling, and it reaches from the past with poignant lessons and relevancy in the present. The following section of this essay will present scholarly research that contextualizes Parnes’ experience. The *Quanza* story is a fitting inspiration for an empathetic videogame due to a variety of elements including space and place, the refugee’s journey, and details about the refugee’s ordeal, their agency and that of others who came to their aid. The one-dimensional nature of the available archival materials is adaptable to the three-dimensional environments of videogames that can contextualize them in a simulated historical space. Adapting the *Quanza* story to a videogame design demands a more interdisciplinary perspective. The emphasis on oral testimony and memory works in tandem with the environmental storytelling that simulates both the history and the thesis at work: *Harbored* provides a meaningful place to examine this maritime history and its scholarly discourse, as well as, to recognize the structures at work that

³⁸ Parnes, Interview.

³⁹ Malvina Schamroth Parnes, “The Saga of the *S.S. Quanza*: A Prelude to the Holocaust,” April 30, 2000, Northern Hills Synagogue Congregation B’Nai Avraham in conjunction with The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, SS *Quanza* Papers, Peninsula Jewish Historical Society, United Jewish Community of Virginia Peninsula, Newport News, VA.

hide the meaningful contributions made in academia, public history, the gaming industry, and game culture. For academia, history is traditionally published as scholarship which is often adapted to the museum exhibit. Museums are increasingly designing their exhibits and programing in ways that are not unlike game design or that incorporate aspects of game culture. But adapting such scholarship to videogame design can reveal new information that monographs, and exhibits can't. Videogames as a sophisticated technology and extensive social network can construct, visualize, and articulate details of history that involve time, space and place, interactivity, and emotion in an experience that is only rarely replicated by other mediums. *Harbored* will simulate the landscapes of memory and emotion at the heart of the Quanza story, and crucially, it will visualize and make interactive the physical and social dimensions of history.

The *SS Quanza*, built in 1929 and weighing 6,636 tons, stopped first in New York where many of the over 300 refugees disembarked.⁴⁰ Port officials denied the ship entry into its next stop, Vera Cruz, Mexico. The *SS Quanza* then stopped in Norfolk, Virginia on September 11, 1940 where the ship was to refuel before returning to Europe. The remaining 89 passengers, on board the ship for over a month, desperately reached out to their friends, family, and other advocates in America in hopes of staying. A September 12, 1940 article of the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot* included an image of Malvina Schamroth Parnes pictured alongside her mother and younger sister, onboard the ship while her father reached up to the small port window from the dock.⁴¹ Many of the passengers, who were unable to disembark, yelled from the deck of the ship to a sympathetic reporter on shore. A reporter quoted one woman as pleading, "Do what you can to get us ashore even if only until the war is over."⁴² Another refugee, Hilmar J. Wolff,

⁴⁰ "Portuguese Liner Coming: Quanza Due Here Today From Lisbon with 196 Passengers," *New York Times*, August 19, 1940, 33.

⁴¹ "Family Separated by Stern laws of the U.S.," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, September 12, 1940, Last Page.

⁴² "Pitiful Scene Enacted Here By Refugees," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, September 12, 1940, Last Page.

“took a chance on reaching America by swimming through the waters of the Hampton Roads, because if he was forced to return Belgium,” he lamented, “his life would be forfeit.”⁴³ One Army official regretfully explained, “we would have been happy to give assistance but we were powerless.”⁴⁴ Newport News’ admiralty lawyer Jacob Morewitz came to the aid of one of the families onboard, the Rand’s. He filed a libel against the ship’s captain thereby temporarily preventing the ship from leaving the Norfolk harbor. As a result, the refugees and their advocates, as well as, members of the federal government had enough time to successfully pursue temporary visas. The *Quanza*’s history reveals a fascinating local, national, and international narrative regarding the complex dimensions of refugee migration.

The story of the *SS Quanza* demonstrates a transnational maritime history of “the ‘long’ Second World War (1936-1948).”⁴⁵ The authors of *Outcast Europe* argue that a refugee is largely defined as someone who experiences a transformative journey. This journey is one that is geographical as well as psychological. There are internal and external struggles as well as unknowable but expected obstacles in the search for refuge. Such a journey is described by Malvina Parnes who came to the United States aboard the *SS Quanza*. In another recent work, *The Last Utopia: Human Right in History*, author Samuel Moyn argues against the traditional collective and historical belief that the development of human rights was a direct reaction of the democratic world to the horrors of the Holocaust. He suggests that that after the Second World War and during the rise of the Cold War leading nations as well as relief organizations largely failed to assist DPs and refugees. This was in part because of the idealistic and empty rhetoric of the UN which only masked the political agendas of competing nations. In other words, the

⁴³ “Pitiful Scene Enacted Here by Refugees,” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, September 12, 1940, 13.

⁴⁴ “Pitiful Scene Enacted Here by Refugees,” September 12, 1940, 13.

⁴⁵ Germie, Sharif and Fiona Reid, Laure Humbert, with Louise Ingram. *Outcast Europe: Refugees and Relief Workers in an Era of Total War, 1936-1948*. New York: Continuum, 2012.

humanitarian efforts and talk of human rights which followed the war were only words that would not become a reality until the 1970s when social movements around the world challenged the political nature of rights in favor of a morally driven guarantee for all individuals everywhere. These works challenge the intentions of the state and other organizations, instead recognizing change as emanating from the bottom up. Their perspective emphasizes the agency of relief workers, soldiers, refugees and their advocates.⁴⁶ A comprehensive maritime history of the Holocaust does not exist. As a result, pioneering a maritime perspective requires incorporating works from a variety of interdisciplinary scholarship and other perspectives such as the policies of States, the activities of Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), refugees, journalists, and popular discourse.

Examining the historiography of the Holocaust through a maritime perspective yields a somewhat disjointed chronology and instead requires a more thematic organization: 1) Historians have focused predominantly on *immigration efforts and state policies in the aftermath of the war*; 2) They have contributed a handful of case studies which discuss well-known maritime events especially the *St. Louis* and the *Exodus*. There are many scholars who have explored this, drawing a connection from Holocaust survivors to the state of Israel. Works such as *DP* (1998), *Escaping the Holocaust* (1990), *Post-Holocaust Policy* (2001), *In War's Wake* (2012), and *FDR and the Jews* (2013) are comprehensive interpretations of the immigration policies of the U.S., Britain and other nations as well as the impact of these policies on refugees and DPs. These works tend to focus on the leading political figures as well as the interaction of governments and organizations. These works also tend to emphasize the failure of the Allies to intervene during the Holocaust, setting moral standards, and criticizing the callous nature of the DP camps.

⁴⁶ Germie, Sharif and Fiona Reid, Laure Humbert, with Louise Ingram. *Outcast Europe: Refugees and Relief Workers in an Era of Total War, 1936-1948*. New York: Continuum, 2012; Samuel Moyn. *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010, Kindle Edition.

Scholars have also focused on specific organizations which assisted Jews after the war to escape from the postwar antisemitism in Eastern Europe and the DP camps. Yehuda Bauer, in his 1970 work *Flight and Rescue: Brichah*, places emphasis on the underground organization known as Brichah as well as the movement of Jews following the war. He recognizes postwar migrations as distinct from movements before and during the war and acknowledges the need for historians to look to the “antecedents of Brichah” as “[t]hese precursors of the postwar migrations merit attention in their own right.”⁴⁷ Although Bauer does not embark on this potentially critical endeavor, he argues that what motivated migration before the end of the war and then after is largely different and although he emphasizes this distinction his work focuses predominantly on the latter, only beginning in 1944 and ending in 1948. Bauer’s study is centered largely on the solidification of a Jewish desire to migrate away from DP camps, as represented by leading individuals of political and social organizing as well as a handful of underground organizations working to assist in efforts of migration. His book presents the Brichah movement as an inevitable and successful one as Jewish displaced person who grew increasingly frustrated by the inefficient and inhospitable conditions in the camps and some postwar European cities such as those in Poland, persevered until they were able to dismantle the rigid postwar DP camp and migration policies. Although not all Jews sought migration to Palestine, Bauer suggests that it is the official founding of the state of Israel that brought an end to the movement. He further suggests that it was public opinion that finally pressured the United Nations to act.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah*, New York: Random House, 1970, xii-xiii.

⁴⁸ Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, 320. Interestingly, Bauer ends his study with a very brief account of the *Exodus*. This is a common feature of historical works exploring DPs. The refugee ship became symbolically linked to the creation of Israel as “the ship that launched a nation.” (The phrase may have become famous after author Ruth Gruber, who witnessed and reported on the events surrounding the *Exodus*, published her book, *Exodus 1947*. The book was originally published in 1948 and then republished in 1999. Her work is discussed below.)

Another common subject for historians concerned with WWII immigration is the role of NGOs such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, JDC, also referred to as the Joint. Yehuda Bauer's *My Brothers Keeper* (1974) and *American Jewry and the Holocaust* (1981) present an exhaustive examination of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, JDC, or "the Joint." The latter suggests a move away from examining the policies of the U.S. government towards Jews—the author subscribes to the interpretation that the U.S had an "obvious lack of interest in the fate of the Jews..."—in an effort to demonstrate the lack of support from American Jewry and to ultimately emphasize "the story of Jewish efforts at self-help..." during the war.⁴⁹ Bauer examines the activities of the JDC in Europe, arguing that the New York office had a minimal role, and suggests that underground organizations and illegal activities on the local level were a result of the political obstacles preventing efficient aid to Jews. He also recognizes the increasingly futile and often tragic emigration efforts which led to members of the JDC and affiliated organizations to cooperate clandestinely with the illegal operations. He mentions briefly the *Struma* disaster and although without much detail explains that the ship was sunk sometime after being denied entry into Istanbul. The sinking of the *Struma* and death of all but one of the refugees onboard did not gain popular attention but was symbolic for the underground operations. Often these works relegate any mention of ships and maritime migration to only a few undeveloped lines, irrelevant to the dominant discussion at hand.

The *Quanza* story expands the maritime aspect of this history well beyond the two prominently recognized events involving the *St. Louis* (1939) and the *SS Exodus* (1947).⁵⁰ There were hundreds perhaps thousands of maritime efforts via boats and ships that were repurposed or

⁴⁹ Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1981, 20, 13.

⁵⁰ Gemie, *Outcast Europe*, 5.

chartered in order to engage in the migration of thousands of refugees. These ships and their passengers faced a harsh political climate and were denied entry upon reaching their destinations. “The Epic of Aliyah Bet (“Illegal” immigration) to Palestine, 1945-1948,” by Nana Sagi (1971) is one of the earliest studies which demonstrate the potential for a maritime perspective on the Holocaust. It is, however, limited to the activities of Aliyah Bet (the illegal movement of displaced persons and refugees to Palestine) in Italy in the years after the war leading up to the creation of Israel. Sagi explains, “71,000 immigrants and 65 ships took part in this movement. Their task was to break the British blockade which closed Palestine to the survivors of the Holocaust...”⁵¹ Sagi continues, “...the movement did succeed. The ships kept coming despite the efforts of the British to stop them. Moreover, this movement aroused public opinion all over the world against British policy.”⁵² Using documentation of the activities of the “34 ships which carried 22,000 immigrants... from Italian ports and coasts,” Sagi describes the acquisition of funds and ships, the immigrants, the crew, the sometimes cooperating and sometimes competing underground organizations of illegal immigration, and the precarious condition of the ships themselves as well as conditions on board. In describing the voyage of the ships and the DPs, Sagi illuminates the meticulous planning and calculated efforts of the Aliyah Bet movement despite the volatile political atmosphere and the perilous nature of maritime migration. Refugees faced a variety of obstacles such as naval blockades, torpedo attacks, and disastrous weather in their search for a new home. Parnes, for example, explains how she suffered from terrible seasickness and uncomfortable accommodations aboard the ship, as well as, frightening encounters with submarines, and a “hurricane-like storm” on her voyage across the Atlantic.⁵³ Sagi’s analysis is as comprehensive in detail as it is limited in scope. Yet it uses the history of

⁵¹ Nana Sagi, “The Epic of Aliyah Bet (“Illegal” immigration) to Palestine, 1945-1948,” *Midstream*, 17 no. 3, 29.

⁵² Sagi, “Aliyah Bet,” 29.

⁵³ Parnes, “The Saga.”

illegal immigration from Italy as part of a greater maritime history that remains to be clearly defined. Reviewing existing literature, archives, and collections with this maritime perspective will expose these overlooked or minimized details.

While to date there is no definitive maritime perspective, there are two recent works which reflect the potential and significance of such a focus: *Death on the Black Sea: The Untold Story of the Struma and World War II's Holocaust at Sea* (2003) and *Countrymen: The Untold Story of How Denmark's Jews Escaped the Nazis* (2013). *Death on the Black Sea*, is both the history surrounding the refugee ship the *Struma*, which is largely centered on the oral testimony of David Stoliar, the only survivor of the 1942 *Struma* disaster in which more than 700 refugees were killed, and the transformative expedition of Gregory Buxton, who attempted to recover the sunken ship in 2000. In the end, the wreckage of the *Struma* was not found. The authors, Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins, explain that “[t]o Buxton, it seemed that the same political self-interests that had condemned the *Struma* in 1942 had thwarted his expedition.”⁵⁴ The authors later quote Buxton as concluding:

“We didn’t find the *Struma*, but we found the memories of the people on it. The *Struma* turned out not to be a physical pile of metal and steel plates in the seabed. It is the politics that caused the sinking and the unfulfilled ambitions of all the people who were going to a new land...”⁵⁵

Author Bo Lidegaard begins his work, *Countrymen*, by recognizing the limitations Holocaust historians often must overcome in that many survivors did not document or talk about their experiences. Lidegaard uses the recorded history of the Danish Jews in their escape from the Nazis with the understanding that there is much to their history that remains untold. However, Lidegaard successfully presents a collective history through the diaries, letters,

⁵⁴ Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins, *Death on the Black Sea: The Untold Story of the Struma and World War II's Holocaust at Sea*, New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003, 279.

⁵⁵ Frantz, *Death on the Black Sea*, 282-283.

correspondence, and other contemporary materials of many individuals. Lidegaard argues that minimized antisemitism and unwavering pride in their fellow countrymen and in their national community that inspired the massive Danish rescue effort which saved the majority of their Jews. He concludes:

“[t]hey [The Danes] saw them [the Jews] as distressed countrymen, as families harmed by injustice and misery, as elderly people, women, and children who were experiencing what no one ought to experience; as neighbors, colleagues, and relatives, as countrymen who through no fault of their own were suddenly hit by a crime instigated by the occupying power. Therefore they perceived it as both a human and a national duty to take personal responsibility, to assist in the exodus—without regard for personal consequences...”⁵⁶

The Danish response to the October 1943 German action was a massive maritime effort. In the weeks and days prior, the Danish mobilized a steadily rising transport of 7, 742, nearly all of the Danish Jews and their families across the water to Sweden. Lidegaard’s account reflects the significant cooperation of fisherman and others in the temporary migration of the Jews by what he describes as a “flight by sea.”⁵⁷

Two years before the *Quanza* set sail from Lisbon, the *St. Louis*, another passenger liner whose story is well known, left Germany in May of 1939 with over 900 Jewish refugees headed for Cuba where they were denied entry amid growing anti-Semitic, popular, and political opinion. Despite several attempts, most notably negotiations initiated by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the US denied entry to the *St. Louis*’s refugees, and they were forced to return to Europe. This occurred just before the outbreak of WWII but with the increase in exclusion and expulsion in Germany, advocates for the refugees worked successfully to find them refuge in nations outside of Germany. Tragically, many of these refugees nevertheless ended up in extermination camps where they died, unable to escape the Nazis. The saga of the

⁵⁶ Bo Lidegaard, *Countrymen: The Untold Story of How Denmark’s Jews escaped the Nazis*, New York, NY: Alfred A Knopf, 2013, 352.

⁵⁷ Lidegaard, *Countrymen*, 329, 337.

St. Louis is widely known and has been thoroughly examined by scholars and presented as popular history. In one of the earliest studies, *Voyage of the Damned* (1974), authors Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan Witts present a chronological narrative of the events surrounding the refugee ship based predominantly on oral interviews and presented from the perspective of the crew and surviving passengers. The authors emphasize the inevitable tragedy that would befall many of the passengers. They point to the global economic crisis which created government and public opinion in favor of strict immigration policies and limited aid to refugees. They also suggest that from the start of the voyage Nazis officials such as Hermann Goering and Joseph Goebbels had sinister intentions and determined control over the fate of the German Jews. The authors explain that not only could the Nazis strip the fleeing Jews of their wealth, they could use the ship's "freedom" as a means for propaganda, an opportunity to show the world that "Germany was allowing Jews to leave unharmed and unimpeded."⁵⁸ The authors' then explain ominously, "[a]nd so it was that in May 1939, the S. S. *St. Louis* sailed into a sea of uncertainty, one of the last ships to leave Nazi Germany before Europe was engulfed in war."⁵⁹ The authors' historical narrative ends with the last of the passengers returning to Europe, unaware of the tragedy that would befall them in the future as Nazi Germany continued its war against Jews. The authors end their narrative cynically, "[a]fter forty days and forty nights of wandering on the high seas, the last passengers from the *St. Louis* had found their Promised Land."⁶⁰ In this early interpretation of the *St. Louis* and its refugees, the authors recognize first the control of the Germans and second the powerlessness of the passengers.

⁵⁸ Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan Witts, *Voyage of the Damned*, New York, NY: Stein and Day Publications, 1974, 19.

⁵⁹ Thomas, *Voyage*, 19.

⁶⁰ Thomas, *Voyage*, 204.

In comparison to the perspective of Thomas and Witts, Ruth Gruber's work, *Exodus 1947: The Ship that Launched a Nation* (1970), presents an account of the most famous refugee ship of the maritime history of the Holocaust. Gruber's work is the result of a political undertaking by the American journalist and remains a popular history which captured the contemporary mood. Gruber witnessed and documented the events surrounding the Exodus first hand through photographs, interviews, and conversations with significant political, military, and NGO leading figures as well as the refugees of DP camps, underground organizations, and those aboard the Exodus. Gruber uses her personal experience as a journalist and war correspondent in presenting the events of the Exodus. She also develops historical context and focuses on the many invaluable photographs. Although Gruber's narrative is historically based, her perspective is one of emotion and urgency as she presents the Exodus and its American crew as the heroes of the refugees who sought to escape the horrible DP camps. Gruber emphasizes the agency and perseverance of Jews in the aftermath of the Holocaust when she writes,

“[t]hey knew they could no longer live in the towns and the villages they had dreamed of [their former homes in Poland and Eastern Europe], so they left and went west again, to Germany, to the death land, because the Americans were there and the Americans had big hearts and maybe the Americans would help them to go to Palestine.”⁶¹

Gruber then recognizes the significance of maritime migration in the experience of refugees and DPs following the war as she explains further:

“And when they began to lose faith even in the Americans, when the quotas were never open, the visas never given, the gates forever shut, they crawled out of the degradation of the DP camps, and went down to secret ports in Italy and France, and climbed on leaky fishing boats or the *Exodus 1947*, and they ran the whole British blockade. Sometimes they escaped the British, and jumped off the ships and mingled with the Jews in Palestine, who rushed to the shore to help them land. More often, their ships were caught and they were sent to Cyprus. There they waited.”⁶²

⁶¹ Ruth Gruber, *Exodus 1947: The Ship that Launched a Nation*, New York, NY: Times Books, 1999, 83.

⁶² Gruber, *Exodus 1947*, 83-84.

Gruber's historical narrative is captivating in its empathetic treatment of and admiration for the refugees and DPs in facing the perceived callousness of the post-Holocaust world. She focuses primarily on the voices of women and children and uses the history of the Exodus as a lens to interpret the dramatic nature of postwar migration.

The Exodus Affair (1998), author Aviva Halamish recounts the story of the refugee ship, the *SS Exodus*, in great detail.⁶³ She describes the history of the ship itself, its crew, its involvement in the underground organization of migration, and the experience of the refugees on board during its most famous maritime event in which the British Navy boarded the ship in July 1947. There was a scuffle aboard that left three dead while the remaining passengers were forced to return to Germany. The story of the *Exodus* is in some ways tied to the US—the ship was an American one fitted out in Norfolk, Virginia, a good number of its crew were American volunteers and organizers—but the story of the *Exodus* is one that is significantly tied to post-war migration to Palestine.

Beyond the famous *St. Louis* and the *Exodus*, historians explored many key relief organizations and post-WWII efforts and policies globally, but they have yet to truly broaden the scope of refugee maritime. A great deal of the historiography of refugee migration is focused on efforts of the Zionist movement, illegal migration such as Aliyah Bet, and organizations like the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee or the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency. The focus of this history, however, minimized the maritime perspective. The perspective of the earlier refugees complicates the history of migration surrounding the long Second World War and expands historiography. The *Quanza's* refugees communicated profound insight in their historical moment with implications for our present moment and the

⁶³ Aviva Halamish, *The Exodus Affair: Holocaust Survivors and the Struggle for Palestine*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998.

future. For instance, in a letter written after reaching Norfolk, one of the passengers of the *Quanza* explained how after reaching Vera Cruz, several passengers could disembark when “something suddenly went wrong.”⁶⁴ The author of this letter further states, “We [the remaining passengers] are very desperate. Now we have a new trouble—we don’t know how we will be received in Lisbon because we no longer have entry visas.”⁶⁵ In confronting his fears, he writes, “There was a momentary ray of light... and everything turned dark again... I don’t want to lose my courage no matter what—I don’t want to give up. I’ll start again, perhaps we’ll succeed in escaping somewhere...”⁶⁶ After his signature, as new developments arose regarding the situation of the *Quanza* in the Norfolk, he concludes that “There is talk that it’s possible the boat will be held here for a few days to conduct an investigation—perhaps.”⁶⁷ This letter reflects on the anxieties and awareness of the *Quanza*’s passengers and their efforts of communication, via letters and telegraph, as they exhausted every possibility to find refuge. Through the perspective of this letter, the plight of refugees, the emotional, mental, and physical anguish that they experienced in their tiresome journey adds a human element that is crucial to understanding this broad history. The story of the *SS Quanza* presents an opportunity to expand the history of Holocaust-related migration to the US and Latin America, as well as, focus on the time period between the *St. Louis* and the *Exodus*.

One of the aims of this research is to analyze the historical literature regarding maritime efforts of refugee rescue and migration from the period 1936-1948. There are many ships used in rescue efforts throughout this period whose stories reflect a need for a maritime perspective, such as the *Patria* (1940) and the *Struma* (1942). The *Patria*, a repurposed French cargo ship,

⁶⁴ Leybl, Letter- Quanza Coal Pier 2, Norfolk, Virginia, September 11, 1940, SS Quanza Papers, Peninsula Jewish Historical Society, United Jewish Community of Virginia Peninsula, Newport News, VA.

⁶⁵ Leybl, Letter.

⁶⁶ Leybl, Letter.

⁶⁷ Leybl, Letter.

was one of many refugee ships stopped by the British before reaching their desired destination in Palestine in 1940. Several leaders of the underground operations of illegal refugee immigration to Palestine attempted to disable the *Patria* with explosives to prevent its forced deportation to Mauritius. Tragically, however, “the quantity of explosives required was overestimated; the vessel was too old and rusted through, and started sinking rapidly shortly after the explosion, drowning 202 souls.” The *Struma* was a repurposed cattle barge carrying roughly 800 refugees, mostly Jewish, from Romania to Palestine in 1942. Shortly after embarking on its journey into the Black Sea the *Struma*’s engine stopped working. The ship was assisted by a Turkish tugboat which “towed the *Struma* into Istanbul harbor.” For ten weeks the refugees were not allowed to leave the ship as the *Struma* “remained politically marooned in the middle of one of the world’s busiest harbors.” Eventually, the British and Turkish officials decided to set the ship “adrift in the Black Sea.” The next day a torpedo from a Soviet submarine was fired on the *Struma*, killing all but one of the passengers.⁶⁸ Interpretation of the many unique stories of the refugee ships and voyages within the context of a more cohesive narrative offers an invaluable perspective on migration and maritime history tied to the Holocaust. The broader picture of this maritime history must include exploring of the numerous histories that surround the boats and ships used to help the refugees to evade the Nazis and their collaborators. An understanding of this maritime migration also requires identifying the various organizations and individuals behind the efforts to move refugees, as well as, the migratory experience of the refugees themselves. This also includes recognizing where the refugees migrated to and from and the response of the societies and governments that addressed their arrivals. Researching the significance of the *SS Quanza* is an opportunity to grapple with the complexities of maritime law and immigration

⁶⁸ Dalia Ofer, “The Rescue of European Jewry and Illegal Immigration to Palestine in 1940—Prospects and Reality: Berthold Storfer and The Mossad Le-Aliyah Bet.” *Modern Judaism* 4, No. 2 (May 1, 1984): 177; Alan Guggenheim, “Doomed from the Start.” *Naval History* 18, No. 1 (February 2004): 46-51.

policies in the US, Mexico, and Portugal. The *Quanza*'s history is also tied to local admiralty law and the court system used in Norfolk, Virginia that gave the refugees and their advocates more time to find refuge.

Articles from *the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot* and the *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch* present the legal matters, popular opinion, and the political climate. On its way to Norfolk, some of the refugees and those advocating for them in the US reached out to local lawyers, local organizations like the National Council of Jewish Women, as well as, other leading political figures such as Eleanor Roosevelt. Fortunately, a Newport News admiralty lawyer, Jacob Morewitz, acted and did so by engaging the ship's captain in a legal battle. Morewitz was able to forestall the ship's departure from Norfolk where it had stopped to refuel before heading back to Europe. During the time in which the refugees were unable to leave the ship they received visitors from the press, local organizations, and authorities who were able to gain some insight into the anxieties of the refugees. These visitors were able to conduct interviews and to provide the passengers with food. The conditions on the ship during travel and in port are delineated in this history. Questions arose as to what the refugees knew as far as legal and political developments, as well as, how they communicated onboard and abroad. Many of those interviewed in the newspapers exclaimed with excitement their plans to visit New York and enjoy their temporary stay in the US. Mrs. Parnes, for example, explains how her family remained in New York and how she "was accepted to the high school of music and art..." and exclaims that "[f]rom then on, I loved school. School in America was really great. I did well, teachers liked me..."⁶⁹ This is a social, affective, and pedagogical contrast to her educatory experience in Belgium. She explains further that "after high school, I married my husband, Saul Parnes... he and his family were among Hitler's first victims. They fled Germany in 1933 and

⁶⁹ Parnes, "The Saga."

lived in Spain until 1944, when they came to America.”⁷⁰ She proudly explains that “I became a U.S. citizen one week before my daughter, Linda, was born... I have had a good life since then.”⁷¹ Parnes story exposes the complexities of migration during the long Second World War and reveals the many transnational interactions that were created as a result. Where the *Exodus* was purposed for illegal refugee migration, the *Quanza* was a legally operating passenger ship, though allegedly carrying passengers with illegally obtained or insufficient papers. The experience of refugees fleeing Europe before and during the war met with very different frustrations and obstacles than those who came after.

The efforts to free the refugees depicted by newspapers reveals a popular and political opinion of concern and sympathy for refugees fleeing Hitler’s Nazis. But many countries such as the US, Cuba, and other Latin America nations that were confronting refugee ships developed an isolationist or xenophobic response towards the refugees. In the case of the *SS Quanza*, the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot* ran an article with the telling subtitle, “Immigration Authorities, However, Are Making Careful Check of Those Who Seek Entry and Some, It is Reported, May be Held Undesirables,” on September 14, 1940. This article quotes an immigration officer as suggesting that “there may be persons aboard the ship who might be agents for foreign countries, seeking a means to enter America or even Mexico for purposes of stirring up trouble.”⁷² These attitudes were combined with harsh immigration policies and quotas, as well as, anti-Semitism which often made laws more strict when it came to Jewish migrants. But as the *Quanza* story and the case of the Danish Rescue demonstrate, there were popular, bottom-up efforts to harbor Europe’s refugees.

⁷⁰ Parnes, “The Saga.”

⁷¹ Parnes, “The Saga.”

⁷² “Most of Refugee Passengers on *Quanza* May Land Today,” *The Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, September 14, 1940, Last Page.

The history surrounding the *Quanza* complicates the greater narrative of harsher popular opinion and immigration policies. The court case that stalled the ship in Norfolk, Virginia presents an unusual circumstance in which the refugees were able to harness state and non-state sympathies and enter the US. In January 1943, more than two years after the *Quanza* reached Norfolk, Virginia, Judge Way issued the closing verdict on Admiralty case No. 6594 of “Moritz Rand. Et Al. versus Steamship *Quanza*.” In the decision, Judge Way dismissed the claims against the *Quanza*, but acknowledged the humanitarian efforts of the libellants lawyer:

“[I]f the libels had not been filed against the QUANZA, that vessel would very probably left this jurisdiction with the libellants on board. Where the vessel would have proceeded thereafter, and what libellants’ fate would have been, no one can say, but through these proceedings the vessel was detained here five days and during the delay the State Department allowed the libellants and others on the QUANZA to go ashore and remain in the United States... But, as already observed, the outstanding fact is that after libellants and interveners got ashore and left this jurisdiction they were not interested further in the proceeding. Their conduct and all the evidence heard point to the fact that they had finally obtained the relief they really sought, namely, the privilege of going ashore and remaining in the United States and not having to go back to Europe, from which continent they were refugees fleeing to save their lives... The Court has been impressed with the earnest argument of counsel for the libellants, but, unfortunately, as observed several times during the course of the proceedings, his [Jacob Morewitz] services rendered the libellants occupy a much higher plane than do the merits of any of the claims made by the libellants.”⁷³

While the Newport News lawyer lost his case, he was recognized as having worked admirably on behalf of his clients and the other refugees aboard the *Quanza*. These refugees were a fortunate but small minority in regard to the many refugees who were turned away from the US and other nations. Understanding how in 1940 this relatively small group of people from several countries including Belgium, France, Romania, and Switzerland were able to enter the US complicates the history of US policy, of migration, and WWII refugees.

⁷³ “Opinion from the Bench,” Moritz Rand at al V STEAMSHIP “QUANZA,” In Admiralty No. 6594, January 22, 1943, SS *Quanza* Papers, Peninsula Jewish historical Society, United Jewish Community of Virginia Peninsula, Newport News, VA.

Scholars have thoroughly explored WWII and Holocaust history without developing a coherent maritime perspective. The result is that the voices of refugees and their advocates remain fragmented and marginalized. Reviewing Holocaust historiography with a maritime perspective is a difficult endeavor but one that has great potential to illuminate the many marginalized details that are found within existing scholarly works. Tracing these marginalized aspects of the ill-defined maritime history of the Holocaust will offer a more cohesive narrative and historical approach. This will generate the much-needed historical space for the recognition of maritime efforts and migration that were so significant during the Holocaust and the long Second World War.

The research presented here is a synthesis of archival materials and scholarship. Outside of newspapers and official records, most of the available archival materials consist of curated photographs, documents, interviews, memos, personal letters and correspondence. Largely comprised of facsimiles, the archival materials were copied by the descendants of Jacob Morewitz who donated the collection to archives around the country with the hope of reaching a wider audience. Many of the originals proved to be allusive in this research endeavor. However, considering the transcribed testimony, the numerous newspapers and online resources, the government records, the efforts in the late 1990s and early 2000s to share this oral history with the public, its fragmented historiography, its existence as facsimile in museum space, and its various other cultural and creative forms (theater, literature, and film), the Quanza story—as fragments of history *and* a fragmented public history—provokes an array of interdisciplinary, multi industry possibilities.

The USHMM digital exhibit “Americans and the Holocaust” presents an excellent example not only about the trajectory of scholarship and public history but also of how museums

are working to expand access to the archives, exhibits, and experiences through digital media.⁷⁴ However, this online exhibit—an extension of the physical exhibit—demonstrates the limitations of museum space and traditional exhibit design. The digital exhibit element called “Refugee Ships at Sea” is embedded in traditional website format wherein the user can scroll up or down and expand the text panels, view videos, and examine digital artifacts. The animated graphic component is a map with over a thousand ships that follow generalized ocean voyages meant to portray the massive migration activity between 1938 and 1941. The audio that coincides with the ships moving across the map—sounds of inaudible voices, the ocean, and ship horns—creates a sort of soundscape of loosely related sounds that might immerse users into the historical narrative. This follows a chronological format with two brief, narrated video breaks dedicated to the “atypical voyages made by the *MS St. Louis* and the *SS Quanza*.”⁷⁵ The Quanza segment is comprised of government records such as ship manifests as well as newspaper articles and photographs, and telegrams. Crucially, they spliced archival footage of the New York harbor into the video as visual and historical context as well as environmental story-telling. Not only did this segment not include the transcribed testimony or audiovisual recordings available—and despite the fact that the USHMM recognizes the *St. Louis* and the *Quanza* as “atypical” histories-- the story of the refugees is largely from a top-down approach. For the Quanza story, the segment is focused on how the US and Mexico government’s responded negatively to the refugees. The overall video is focused on the period from 1938 and 1941 which is interesting because it is so brief and centered on New York, but, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, the maritime history of the Holocaust suggests a much more complex and transnational effort. This is likely to emphasize that New York is a close to home connection for American audiences. Considering

⁷⁴ “Americans and the Holocaust,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, Accessed March 11, 2019, <https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/main/refugee-ships-quanza-st-louis>.

⁷⁵ “Americans and the Holocaust,” Accessed March 11, 2019.

that the artifacts consist of documents, newspapers, and photographs, this digital exhibit element relied on generic audiovisuals, carefully curated footage that is indirectly related, and an overall creative design to overcome “the problem of paper.”⁷⁶ In other words, the archival material available is not necessarily conducive for today’s museum’s interactive and immersive design goals. One can see the dilemma in exhibiting this history in any traditional format, though, particularly when museums are competing with popular trends in technology and innovative experiences, such as those available in videogames. Though primarily focused on the Quanza and Malvina Parnes’ experience, this project is meant to inspire ongoing contributions to cultural studies, Holocaust history, and game studies. *Harbored* is meant to demonstrate how videogames can serve as a platform for public history through meaningful design, as well as emphasize the need for empathetic and empowering contributions to an expanding videogame archive.

⁷⁶ Stephanie Hawthorne, “A Digital Solution to the Problem of Paper,” *American Civil War Museum*, <https://acwm.org/blog/digital-solution-problem-paper>.

CHAPTER 4

PLAY

I want to learn all the things!⁷⁷

-Mark “Markiplier” Edward Fischbach, *Let’s Play*

Serious game design has the potential to reveal essential features about philosophy, science and other serious academic subjects. The reason is that those subjects already exhibit ludic aspects.⁷⁸

-Hector Rodriguez, *Game Studies*

Markiplier, a popular YouTuber, is in the midst of an eleven episode “Let’s Play” series when he expresses his frustration with the indie game *Knock Knock*.⁷⁹ Markiplier spent much of his time learning the mechanics and exploring the narrative that is purportedly at work when he realizes that the narrative is not coming together in any discernible way. He says earnestly that he wants to learn through this gaming experience. Often in his playthroughs and livestreams he involves his audience in the comments as a way of figuring out the games, he also occasionally researches online for helpful hints and walkthroughs that are composed by gamers. Game studies scholar Hector Rodriguez would likely argue that to treat the subject matter seriously *Knock Knock*’s design relied on the ambiguous “boundary between play and life.”⁸⁰ Further, Rodriguez argues that this design—for what he might recognize as an experimental game—“[encourages] players to engage in a collective discussion about the nature of their community.”⁸¹ Though Rodriguez’s point of application for his theory is the abstract boundary between a game and the physical world—especially games that are imposed on the physical world like PGo, for

⁷⁷ Mark Edward Fischbach. “Knock Knock # 1-10.” *Markiplier Let’s Play*. October 2013. Accessed June 26, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wETipGnqSEo>.

⁷⁸ Hector Rodriguez. “The Playful and the Serious: An Approximation to Huzinga’s Homo Ludens.” *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Based Research* 6, No. 1 (December 2006): <http://gamestudies.org/0601/articles/rodrigues>.

⁷⁹ “Knock Knock,” Ice Pick Lodge (Developer), *Steam*, Accessed June 27, 2018, <https://store.steampowered.com/app/250380/Knockknock/>.

⁸⁰ Rodriguez, “The Playful and the Serious.”

⁸¹ Rodriguez, “The Playful and the Serious.”

example—this idea about collective discussions inspired by the ambiguous boundary of play and life is incredibly insightful for videogames broadly because it suggests that games such as *Knock Knock* get the game community interacting outside of the game in meaningful ways. The popularity of this game might well be the fact that its ambiguous narrative and challenging gameplay fostered sociality—a place for gamers to interact and contribute to their community. As Rodriguez observes, serious games are an opportunity to explore serious subjects, specifically academic subjects. This community space—afforded by the videogame—is comparable to the ambitions of museum space and exhibition design. The work of museum professionals is also by nature ludic and serious as they too are working with an ambiguous boundary of play and life.

Beginning around the early 2000s and coinciding with the growing availability of multimedia technologies and social media, the discourse and literature contributed by museum professionals exhibited their relevance within the community as well as the museums’ abilities to adapt to the social and cultural changes happening around them. Museum professionals published works arguing for a museum without walls and a visitor-centric museum model that would open up the museum and respond to the concerns and needs of the community.⁸² They are making concerted efforts to write less exhaustive, more succinct exhibit labels and facilitate engaging, meaningful connections between the visitor and the collection all to encourage engaging experiences.⁸³ In the past we have seen the museum world recoil at the imposition of

⁸² ‘Museum without walls’ is now commonly used phrase that was coined by André Malraux; ‘visitor-centric model’ is a concept that is also commonly used but I have specifically picked it up from John Falk; lastly, opening up the museum is also used in many places but I believe credit belongs to Nina Simon, at least in the case of this essay.

⁸³ Kim Bear and Karen Wise, “The Role of Information Design in Sparking Visitor Interest, Engagement, and Investigation.” *Exhibition – Intentionally Designed Spaces*. Spring 2014. Accessed June 26, 2018, https://www.name-aam.org/s/12-EXH-SP-14-Baer_Wise_-The-Role-of-Information-Design.pdf; Steven Bitgood, “Exhibition Design that Provides High Value and engages Visitor Attention.” *Exhibition – Intentionally Designed Spaces*. Spring 2014. Accessed June 26, 2018, https://www.name-aam.org/s/4-EXH-SP-14-Bitgood_Exhibition-Design-that-provides-High-Values.pdf; Judy Rand, “Less is More. And More is Less.”

technology perceived as invading their space and interrupting their interpretative narrative. They were particularly baffled about how to grasp and maintain the attention of young adults—to some extent they are still struggling with this.⁸⁴ According to a 2013 Smithsonian study, adults between the age of 20 and 45 with an average of 36, are actually the primary museum goer.⁸⁵ Still, the museum world refers to the ‘elusive millennials’ as a hard-to-please group, largely focusing the on-site didactics and exhibit elements for traditional experiences that target k-12. But the Institute of Museum and Library Services argued in 2009 that adults, particularly those beyond the higher education age, seek out opportunities such as museums to continue to learn and stay connected to society and culture.⁸⁶ Beyond capitalizing on the mobile phone and tablet trend, museums are now ramping up programming efforts to counter their traditional, slow-to-adapt exhibitions. These programs branch out from the traditional lectures and symposiums to include thematic programs targeted to young adults as well as regular social events and outdoor or off-site experiences. The shift towards a visitor-centric model involved developing an understanding of the potential museum visitor as far more complex, trustworthy, and capable than previously considered. This also meant testing new design techniques based on research and interdisciplinary knowledge, as well as, observing and measuring experiences of visitors in the

Exhibition – The Power of Words: Written, Spoken, and Designed. Spring 2016. Accessed June 26, 2018, https://www.name-aam.org/s/11_Exhibition_LessIsMore.pdf.

⁸⁴ Michael Cannell, “Museums Turn to Technology to Boost Attendance by Millennials.” *The New York Times*. March 17, 2015. Accessed June 26, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/19/arts/artsspecial/museums-turn-to-technology-to-boost-attendance-by-millennials.html?_r=0; An additional example prime for another essay, the very recent Pokémon Go phenomena, though short lived, sparked much controversy and concern for museums. Particularly in that museums had been hesitant to incorporate mobile technologies for years and finally started to do just that when the trend actually started to decline. This resurgence of mobile users through the game caused a panic and a resurgence of interest on the part of the museums to revisit technological integration.

⁸⁵ Samir Bitar, Andy Pekarik, and Jennifer Renteria, “Visitor Experience Summary Report, Year One, 2013,” *Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History*, 2013: 1-2.

⁸⁶ Institute of Museum and Library Services. “Museums, Libraries, and 21st Century Skills.” July 2009. Accessed February 8, 2017, <https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/21stcenturyskills.pdf>.

museum space.⁸⁷ Recognizing that visitors are not only capable of critical and evocative content but are expecting challenging experiences is inspiring increasingly creative approaches to design. Museums now are working towards inclusivity in content and audience through the incorporation of digital technologies and new media or through a creative use of ambiguous and abstract storytelling techniques. The following will examine two examples that demonstrate adapting serious history to digital spaces and creative, interactive experiences.

The Equal Justice Initiative—founded by lawyer Bryan Stevenson, the EJI has now opened *The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration*—partnered with the Brooklyn Museum in 2017 to design an art exhibition centered on the history of slavery and lynching in America. One of the artists included was Kara Walker and her silhouette diorama, “Burning African Village Play Set.” According to reviewer Michael Friedrich for *Hyper Allergic*, Walker’s diorama presents a devastating commentary on the “...white vision of blackness: violent, exaggerated, hypersexual. A dizzying tableau of weapons wielded, belles protected, and black bodies assailed, the piece has the odd effect of skewering and serving its stereotypes at once.”⁸⁸ This succinct and vivid analysis of the work reveals the depth and meaning of the artist’s work in its use of history and appeal to social justice. The title reads as though a series of conceptual labels from left to right aligned with the diorama that together paint a grim and intensely chaotic though searing picture of slavery, racism and racial violence in America. The silhouette figures and structures are an abstract and ambiguous storytelling technique that are also a powerful adaptation of the history and a provoking criticism of the present.

⁸⁷ Jean-Francois Léger, “Shaping a Richer Visitors’ Experience: The IPO Interpretive Approach in a Canadian Museum,” *The Museum Journal* 57, No. 1 (January 2014): 29-44.

⁸⁸ Michael Friedrich, “At the Brooklyn Museum, New Research on Lynching in America Dialogues with the Art,” *Hyper Allergic*, October 2, 2017, Accessed March 16, 2019, <https://hyperallergic.com/403214/at-the-brooklyn-museum-new-research-on-lynching-in-america-dialogues-with-the-art/>.

Returning to the title, “Burning African Village Play Set,” the work serves as an allusion to modern children’s play sets—the mass-produced toys that generally simulate real-world scenes, people, and aspects of society all of which are manipulated by the child according to their imagination or attempts at mimicry. This is a profound design in its ambiguous boundary of past and present and the works overarching narrative positioning the reality of African lives having been manipulated as if just a play thing—the artist conveys this through her own *playful* adaptation of history. It emphasizes the desensitized attitudes of Americans that dehumanized Africans and reveals the atrocities of forced enslavement. She animates the racist fears and structures of prejudice used to characterize and perpetuate African enslavement. She then lists a “Big House” or plantation and one can see the silhouettes of the women in their full dresses who appear to be rather animated/excited or potentially frightened. From a modern perspective this appears to suggest that the women are afraid of the approaching slave presumed to be dangerous. This is followed by “Lynching” which presents a tree, a rope, and a man on horseback. This scene alludes to the violent murder of slaves and African Americans by plantation owners who “take justice into their own hands.” In other words, in the guise of punishment but, a vicious, prejudiced, and violent display of power. Walker’s diorama reflects on the mystified history of the antebellum south in a way that bridges the past and present in a social criticism of racism and the legacies of slavery.

Museums are designing experiences that elevate marginalized histories through innovative and immersive exhibitions that foster meaningful connections to and conversations with marginalized communities. The erasure and silence of marginalized groups is a reality that translates into what is made visible in and what is absent from museum spaces. Interpreting the history of slavery, for instance, requires recognizing that there are enormous deficits in archives

and collections. Museum professional Richard Rabinowitz emphasizes the power and responsibility of the museum in interpreting their collections to be inclusive of what is not available, highlighting the contradictions inherent in museums and archives that have to contend with the absence of “material evidence of African presence...”⁸⁹ According to the chief historian of the exhibit, “Slavery in New York” as stating, “Slavery was not a side-show. It was the main event.”⁹⁰ Rabinowitz and his team worked creatively and thoughtfully in constructing a narrative based on scholarship to address the absences and decided to design an exhibition that would “do more than illustrate historical concepts.”⁹¹ Thus the exhibit presented an evocative narrative that would immerse visitors in a meaningful experience. Using design techniques such as “dynamic text” and “clusters” that draw from scholarship and archival records the team also incorporated a variety of “interpretive media” and technology in order to overcome obstacles in presenting a cohesive and engaging exhibit. In an attempt to inspire an interactivity with documents from the archives, or what Rabinowitz calls “real accessibility,” the team’s tech consultant designed a digital “transcription and translation device,” that allows visitors to manipulate and delve deeper into the significance of archival materials as reproduced digitally while the “original document rested regally in a case nearby.”⁹² Additionally, Rabinowitz’s vision for an investigation of “imperfect archives and historical imaginations” led his team to devise a truly innovative digital presence throughout the exhibit. Like the above-mentioned digital device, another digital interpretive media incorporated into the narrative situates visitors within the history itself. The exhibit element is called “Eavesdropping on the Well,” and its video portrays African American

⁸⁹ Richard Rabinowitz, “Eavesdropping at the Well Interpretive Media in the Slavery in New York Exhibition.” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 35, 3 (August 2013): 11.

⁹⁰ Rabinowitz, “Eavesdropping at the Well,” 10.

⁹¹ Rabinowitz, “Eavesdropping at the Well,” 13.

⁹² Rabinowitz, “Eavesdropping at the Well,” 30-31.

New Yorkers standing around the well interacting with one another. The visitor can listen in and watch the historical actors as if peering through a portal linking the present to the past.⁹³

The above examples are what Danielle Carter with the *Thinking Museum* would argue is an interpretive space conducive for play even beyond any carefully constructed interactivity of the exhibit narrative. According to Carter, an artist's adaptation of scholarship and history for her work or the exhibit designers' interpretive techniques are forms of play as is the visitors own experience. As she explains:

Play in itself is a fluid concept: it can be interpreted and applied in countless ways in countless spaces. In their compilation on museum education, Elliott Kai-Kee and Rika Burnham expand upon the idea of interpretive play. In their discussion of play in the art museum, interpretation itself becomes a mode of play: the conclusion is unclear during the process of interpretation; interpretive play 'allows for the continuous emergence of unexpected insights and interpretations.' There is a fluidity to this process that allows for a playful approach in the art museum space.

There is, however, also the needs for a certain amount of structure to play. As Johan Huizinga, a Dutch philosopher and historian who is the thought leader on the conceptualisation of play, explains, play requires rules and it can often be very serious. This also goes along with the oft-cited idea from Nina Simon (The Participatory Museum) that scaffolding is required in order to elicit effective participation in the museum space. Even as educators may guide interpretive play, they must also participate in it as well...⁹⁴

Defining play as having fluidity and structure makes for an effective strategy in designing museum experiences through serious play. The structure that a museum can provide through its knowledge and objects, rules, and interactive prompts. The fluidity of immersion and experiences that make more effective and impactful the structured narrative which can be accessed as the visitor pleases.

⁹³ "Eavesdropping at the Well," *National Council on Public History* 35, 3 (August 2013). Accessed April 30, 2018, <http://ncph.org/phc/rabinowitz-exhibit/>.

⁹⁴ Danielle Carter, "Working with Families: Thinking Outside of the Box with Play," *Thinking Museum*, Accessed June 26, 2018, <https://thinkingmuseum.com/2017/05/30/working-families-thinking-outside-box-play/>.

The traditional view of technology in the museum is to scoff at mobile phones and social media users who are looking at or perhaps through, their phones and devices rather than the objects on display. In recent years however, ideas about how technology in the visitors' pocket can be harnessed by the museum to mediate experiences has become popular. For instance, Stacey Mann, Moses, Jennifer and Matthew Fisher wrote:

As much as it may be eroding attention spans and traditional forms of communication, digital engagement may also be fostering a new set of intellectual and social skills that often mystify the non-digital native. They include a greater flexibility to make quick, lateral connections; an increased consciousness of oneself within a larger social context; more familiarity with local, national, and global perspectives; and a stronger feeling of empowerment to voice their ideas. We believe there is a balance to be found in this digital landscape by anchoring museum technologies in traditional interpretive methods, while capitalizing on new digital abilities.⁹⁵

In countering the traditional skepticism of the significance of technology, the authors suggest that as technology changes so too does society and their capabilities and expectations. They are not to be undervalued and if museums want to stay relevant, they must design with purpose and understanding that fosters relationships with visitors. More recently, museums are hiring game studies scholars and videogame designers to collaborate and redesign their spaces and experiences. That said, there are significant challenges in balancing structure and fluidity in purposeful exhibit design. One obstacle is to realize that games are not always about fun or trivial experiences. In fact, Ian Bogost argues that if we see play in everything, as the manipulation of things in the world, then:

The ultimate lesson games give is not about gratification and reward, nor about media and technology, nor about art and design. It is a lesson about modesty, attention, and care. Play cultivates humility, for it requires us to treat things as they are rather than as we wish them to be. If we let it, play can be the secret to contentment. Not because it

⁹⁵ Stacey Mann, Jennifer Moses, and Matthew Fisher. "Catching Our Breath: Assessing Digital technologies for Meaningful Visitor Engagement." *Exhibition – Transforming Museums, Exhibitions, and Visitors*, Fall 2013, Access June 26, 2018, https://www.name-aam.org/s/4-EXH-f13-Catching-Our-Breath_Mann_Moses_Fisher.pdf.

provides happiness or pleasure—although it certainly can—but because it helps us pursue a greater respect for the things, people, and situations around us.⁹⁶

Bogost’s theory of games and play is an interesting perspective when applied to designing a game space—and to clarify, at this point in the essay, exhibit design and videogame design are parallels—because it recognizes the potential for any space to be transformed into a meaningful place. In other words, the museum’s knowledge and information, their ideas, people, objects, and physicality, demonstrate a structure that can be filled with play opportunities that are tangible and intangible. Bogost’s theory of play further demonstrates the ambiguous boundary between play and life emphasizing the positive impact play can have outside of the game. For Bogost, an ideal playground implores “a greater respect for the things, people, and situations around us.”

Bogost is not alone in his sentiment about the power of play when play is recognized as capable of both serious and novel exploration. When he argues that games are the aesthetic form of play, he recognizes the limited understanding of play as restricted to games. But games are also a pioneering avenue for equipping players with the context and tools needed to confront social concerns. If we take Bogost’s theory of playgrounds and Mary Flanagan’s concept of critical play, as well as, Huzinga’s ideas about fluidity, and reexamine the museum we can see how blurred the boundaries of play and life can be. As Mary Flanagan writes, the key is in thoughtful design:

Whatever the message, serious games are among the most challenging to design. These play spaces must retain all the elements that make a game enjoyable while effectively communicating their message. Either component can be lost in the attempt to manifest the other, resulting in a game that is dull and didactic, or entertaining but hollow. In the worst case the game is both dull and hollow. Games are frameworks that designers can use to model the complexities of the problems that face the world and make them easier for players to comprehend. By creating a simulated environment, the player is able to step away and think critically about those problems.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Ian Bogost, *Play Anything: The Pleasure of Limits, the Uses of Boredom, and the Secrets of Games*, New York: Basic Books, 2016.

⁹⁷ Mary Flanagan, *Critical Play: Radical Game Design*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009: 249.

In addition to Flanagan's conclusion that videogames are an opportunity for gamers to think critically, Miguel Sicart's notion about the signaling of play through objects or space as it was a pivotal inspiration for this essay. Sicart writes:

How do we know that a particular context is a context for play? Often there are cues embedded in objects that signal that a space, thing, or collective are there to play. Masks and disguises, merry-go-rounds, and computer controllers all point to the idea that play is possible in that context. Players interpret spaces and situations as potentially open to play when they perceive those cues... Artificially created objects or situations, then, can signal play. Play happens mostly in contexts designed for that activity. It is important to understand that play, unlike other forms of expression, can be designed... designed as mediated by things created to facilitate the emergence of play.⁹⁸

Critical play and serious games, then, depend on the design's ability signal to gamers the context of the activity. One common thread throughout literature regarding the redesign of our cultural institutions is that museums ought to, as Nina Simon says, open up the museum. Simon's suggestion sounds abstract yet simple, and it is. She is speaking to the long-standing power relation between the museum and the visitor wherein the museum wants to retain the power and showcase their curated culture to the public who is the passive observer and ought to offer respect and admiration in the presence of such displays of culture. However, Simon wants museums to recognize that this culture belongs to the visitors and the visitor is more than an observer, they are capable collaborators in museum experiences and ought to be trusted and empowered. She explains:

I believe that everyone has the ability to contribute something powerful, and everyone also has the ability to be an idiot. The difference in what we contribute is in the design of the invitation conferred onto us. At the MAH, we carefully design invitations to participate to convey a high level of respect and value for what visitors bring to the table. They sense that respect and respond by bringing their best selves forward, sharing powerful creative work and personal stories. The result makes our museum more vibrant and multi-vocal, and it creates a powerful sense of ownership in our community.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Miguel Sicart, *Play Matters*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014, 7.

⁹⁹ Nina Simon, "Opening up the museum," *Tedx Santa Cruz Talk*, November 14, 2012, Accessed March 29, 2019, <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2012/11/opening-up-museums-my-tedx-santacruz-talk.html>.

In other words, Simon is arguing for new ways of including visitors in meaning-making and allowing them to direct the museum experience with personal and practical engagements with the collection. Museums should trust that by thoughtful designs and offer demonstrations of trust so that visitors can safely interact with exhibitions rather than be removed from them. In other words, if you show that you appreciate visitors by offering them tangible opportunities to engage with the stuff of your museum, they will in turn treat that stuff with appreciation. Nina Simon's pivotal ideas about the tools offered to museum visitors are applicable to designers of videogames in that they must provide the proper context for the desired experience. If a videogame designer develops a critical play context for the gamer and equips her with the proper tools, she can contribute meaningfully through play not only in the gaming community but in all of life's interactions.

Several theorists and museum professionals have in recent years developed enlightening philosophies demonstrating the potential for transformative serious play. They also demonstrate the complicated relationship between play and objects which can be applied to both the physical and digital spaces. Additionally, they emphasize that serious games and serious play are legitimate opportunities to engage social issues, promote critical thinking, and empower players with the values and knowledge necessary to effect change. Blending game studies and museology is fascinating in that we no longer recoil at the thought of play and technology in exhibit. While many of these theorists recognize the potential for play that surrounds us daily, museums can and should incorporate critical play design into their overall ideology. Collectively, the theorists discussed in this essay offer profound evidence and compelling support for videogame design to reach the adult audience that "wants to learn all the things." What is

commonly referred to as interactivity and immersions in the physical or digital space is transformed by this new perspective on play.

CHAPTER 5

HARBORED

Almost always, the creative dedicated minority has made the world better.¹⁰⁰

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

Much of the controversy over whether games can meaningfully portray the Holocaust revolves around videogame giants such as *Call of Duty* and the recent *Wolfenstein 2*.¹⁰¹ Criticism for Holocaust themes being represented in videogames suggests an overwhelming agreement that major games fail to present the Holocaust properly and are largely offensive. There are major videogames, though, that present emotional and profound experiences and that foster a meaningful community. The indie game market demonstrates a greater potential for pioneering meaningful interpretations of the Holocaust and many other difficult subjects.

Videogame scholar Leil Liebovitz, for instance, recognizes the work of indie games responding to the question, “Can the Medium Address the Holocaust?” In response to his own question he effectively concludes that videogames can and should address difficult subjects such as the Holocaust because they can afford audiences a more enriching and poignant experience that other mediums cannot. He mentions another award-winning indie game, *Attent 1942*, which more closely resembles a Holocaust history in that it draws on actual research, survivor testimony and more. He writes:

[A] stellar indie game... [c]alled *Attentat 1942*... looks at the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia by weaving together archival footage, testimonies from civilians who

¹⁰⁰ Clark Mindock, “Martin Luther King Jr Day 2019: 50 quotes from the civil rights leader who inspired a nation,” *Independent*, January 21, 2019, Accessed March 18, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/martin-luther-king-jr-quotes-mlk-day-2019-a8733601.html>.

¹⁰¹ Liel Liebovitz, “A New Video Game Raises a Thorn Question: can the Medium Address the Holocaust?” *Tablet*, November 10, 2017, Accessed December 10, 2017, <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/249092/call-of-duty-and-the-holocaust>. Kirk McKeand, “Videogames’ portrayal of the Holocaust does a disservice to both players and victims,” *PCGamesN*, September 20, 2017, Accessed December 10, 2017, <https://www.pcgamesn.com/jewish-opinions-on-nazis-in-videogames>.

lived under German occupation, interactive comics, and other innovative forms that make gameplay not only entertaining but edifying.

In video games, then, like in cinema, the future seems bittersweet, with a glut of big and loud titles that numb the eye, the mind, and the soul interspersed with a few daring exceptions that help us ponder the question great art has always addressed, which is: What does it mean to be human?¹⁰²

Attent 1942 is part of the interdisciplinary creator project, *Czechoslovakia 38-89*, which is developing an entire series of simulations which are akin to indie games.¹⁰³ Their aim is to design games that educate and connect players with digitally represented materials and people from history (and other disciplinary subjects in science and math). *Attent 1942* is successful its interpretation of Holocaust history and interwoven materials which are both original and true-life. This is not without controversy but the obvious attempts to harness accurate information and promote a compassionate connection with actual Holocaust Survivors established a binary opposite to the game giants mentioned above.

In addition, Liebovitz discusses the success behind the emotional indie game *Papers, Please*, which situates the player as the perpetrator in charge of processing immigrants who can or cannot enter a fictional community. The game draws heavily on historical concepts of the bureaucratic Nazi or Nazi collaborator. He continues:

A good game moves us because it inspires us to consider our choices and contemplate not only the decisions we've made but the ones we haven't. That's why *Papers, Please* is so emotionally jarring, and why games can teach us moral lessons in ways that, if tried on film or on the page, would seem stilted and dull.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Liebovitz, "A New Video Game."

¹⁰³ Vít Šisler, "About the Project," *CS 38-89*, November 29, 2014, Accessed December 13, 2017, https://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?depth=1&hl=en&prev=search&rurl=translate.google.com&sl=cs&sp=nmt4&u=http://cs3889.cz/article.do%3FarticleId%3D1148&usg=ALkJrhgoTV3yy6EwaIVZ4uedKNPP04eIUQ. See Also, Vít Šisler, "Contested Memories of War in Czechoslovakia 38-89: Assassination: Designing a Serious Game on Contemporary History," *Game Studies*, Vol. 16 No. 2 (December 2016), Accessed December 13, 2017, <http://gamestudies.org/1602/articles/sisler>. This article is immensely enlightening to the inclusion of history in games that are intended for education.

¹⁰⁴ Liebovitz, "A New Video Game."

Imagination is the Only Escape was another promising project that has spent more than eight years attempting to achieve the support, financially and critically, needed for development. The creator, Luc Bernard, ran into the all too common problem of *labels* determining perception. Though he reached out to cultural institutions for assistance in designing an accurate portrayal of history he found that because he wants to pioneer a game, rather than a simulation or education-based interactive, few are willing to offer support because a *game* is perceived as an ineffective and offensive medium. In 2016, the Center of Jewish History in New York was willing to participate in the project offering access to their collection and archival materials so that Bernard could be as accurate as possible. But Bernard is not creating a simulation game that attempts to portray the Holocaust as realistic as possible because he doesn't want the game to feel educational at all. As he explains, "You can't really understand the horror of something like this when you learn about it in school... But if you can somehow interact with this history – become involved in it somehow – it starts to sink in. You become attached, you learn from it."¹⁰⁵ One article explains:

The game stars a young boy named Samuel during the Nazi occupation of France in 1942. When things take a turn for the worse during the Vel' d'Hiv roundup, Samuel spends much of his time in a nearby forest, and retreats into his own mind to shield himself from the reality of what's happening. In this fantasy world he befriends a talking fox named Renard who takes him on a series of adventures. Much of the game takes place in this fantasy realm, which Bernard believes will heighten the emotional impact of some of the more powerful scenes that take place in the real world.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Laura A. Parker, "Inside Controversial Game That's Tackling the Holocaust," *Rollingstone*, August 31, 2016, Access December 14, 2017, <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/news/imagination-is-only-escape-controversial-holocaust-game-w437456>.

¹⁰⁶ Andrew Webster, "Imagination is the Only Escape' Looks at the Holocaust Through a Child's Eyes," September 3, 2013, Accessed March 17, 2019, <https://www.theverge.com/2013/9/3/4689536/imagination-is-the-only-escape-holocaust-through-childs-eyes>.

Bernard further emphasizes, "Every time reality comes back... it sort of just slaps you in the face."¹⁰⁷ In the end, the game did not meet its crowdfunding goals nor did any publisher offer support. Perhaps if the ethical standards and models for design were made clearer as well as more appreciative of the contributive nature of games and game developers, and access to the knowledge, artifacts, and tools necessary for a serious game continues, the future of videogames could change the negative perception altogether. One must wonder if it is a lack of understanding of the social epistemological contributions made possible through videogames and persistent negativity of videogames and gamers that prevents such meaningful games from development. This new perspective of gaming culture might open up the industry— and the museum— in ways that are far more inclusive and empowering. Though Bernard's proposed game is a work of creativity and fiction, history and empathy are at its core. We need to develop inclusive, interdisciplinary design models for and an appreciation of such works so that developers can meaningfully navigate ethical and moral obstacles.

Harbored is a videogame that articulates the maritime history of the Holocaust and the story of the *SS Quanza* making meaningful connections to Malvina Parnes and other aspects of the historical moment. The story of the *Quanza* and its passengers will inspire a personal connection to history and the medium provides an opportunity for an immersive and artistic storytelling than that of a traditional museum exhibit element. *Harbored* is a story of Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis in 1940 via the *SS Quanza*. Due to the people, artifacts, and history central to this story and in considering the ongoing debates regarding representing or recreating aspects of the Holocaust in any medium, the use of "game" to describe this project might cause

¹⁰⁷ Webster, "'Imagination is the Only Escape.'"

discomfort or outright controversy.¹⁰⁸ Game Studies is working to expand our understanding of games and their ability for meaningful experiences. *Harbored* is meant to be both an empathetic videogame and digital exhibition.

The result of this projects research and design is the recognition that including a videogame such as *Harbored*, which interprets Holocaust history, shouldn't be controversial. But a narrative-based adventure game requires more time than traditional exhibit elements demand in order to take deep dives into historical significance and for a player to develop connections to the story and its characters. I can see how this videogame would make a fully developed standalone game with hours of gameplay and I believe it would be much more effective on its own. However, museums are interested in incorporating technologies and experiences that connect with wider audiences and a videogame is an excellent option. Having the simplified videogame amidst the fully developed narrative that exists outside of the game via the museum's exhibition can offer visitors an immersive space with layered information across various mediums.

¹⁰⁸ I wanted to do some research/analysis here on representing the Holocaust. There are many works that deal with cultural representations, but it's been a while since I looked into this and it may be an unnecessary tangent considering the project compares museum and videogame space not so much film/literature/art to videogames

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This project is a culmination of a variety of inspiring efforts that I encountered over the course of my academic career. One such inspiration is NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* Her poem is an evocative and creative historical study and a contribution to social epistemology which challenges the authority of museum and academia. It is also one of the inspirations for this project. *Zong!* is essentially an exercise in the realm of public history and a consideration of the limitations of scholarship and absences in literal archives, as well as a reexamination of Foucault's concept of the archive. Philip is a lawyer and a poet with a meaningful emphasis on social concerns past and present. In *Zong!* she uses an actual eighteenth-century historical document regarding what is known as the Zong Massacre as a social commentary, an effort to deconstruct language, and a memorial to the slaves who were silenced forever in life and in death. She explains:

My intent is to use the text of the legal decision [Gregson v. Gilbert] as a word store; to lock myself into this particular and peculiar discursive landscape in the belief that the story of these African men, women, and children thrown overboard in an attempt to collect insurance monies, the story that can only be told by not telling, is locked in this text. In many silences within Silence of the text. I would lock myself in this text in the same way men, women, and children were locked in the holds of the slave ship *Zong!*¹

This abstraction of physical and metaphysical space contextualizes Philip's endeavor to examine the book as an exhibit space, as well as, the archive and the *Zong* itself. In contemplating the significance of silence—the lives, voices, and experiences of the individuals murdered at sea—she profoundly recognizes that those who have no recorded history are still present within the very text of the existing document which oppresses them. As one reviewer describes:

The legal account is one version of what happened, a happening couched in official language that Philip gradually dislodges through the poetic excavation and untelling of the legal text. Reworking the legal document (“Gregson v. Gilbert”) the story is untold through fugal and counterpointed repetition to create a complex weaving of memories,

polyphonies, and cacophonies, which respond to and [suggest the sounds of] the Zong massacre.¹⁰⁹

Her poem is a creative exhibition of history and a textual soundscape. *Zong!* uses only the text available in the document by destroying it and resurrecting what is absent. By making the document itself unrecognizable she unveils the oppressive structures at work, both past and present, rejects the privileged voices, and elevates those who were silenced. The poem elucidates social injustice and atrocity through its purported oral history. It is through her creativity that Philip delivers an empathetic interpretation of the history of the Zong. This contribution to social epistemology expands knowledge and ways of relating to history and historical artifacts.

The Legacy Museum is on the forefront of creative, empathetic treatments of social issues past and present. Mentioned in Chapter 1, this museum started as a legal initiative wherein the founder dedicated his career to fighting mass incarceration and inhumane treatment of prisoners. This grew to a public history effort that traces racial injustice back to slavery. The new museum incorporates interactive technology and creative designs that evoke understanding, compassion, reflection, and action. The Equal Justice Initiative describes their design techniques as:

...[employing] unique technology to dramatize the enslavement of African Americans, the evolution of racial terror lynchings, legalized racial segregation and racial hierarchy in America. Relying on rarely seen first-person accounts of the domestic slave trade, EJI's critically acclaimed research materials, videography, exhibits on lynching and recently composed content on segregation, this museum explores the history of racial inequality and its relationship to a range of contemporary issues from mass incarceration to police violence.

Visitors encounter a powerful sense of place when they enter the museum and confront slave pen replicas, where you can see, hear, and get close to what it was like to be imprisoned awaiting sale at the nearby auction block. First-person accounts from enslaved people narrate the sights and sounds of the domestic slave trade. Extensive

¹⁰⁹ Paul Watkins, "We Can Never Tell the Story of Slavery: In Conversations with M. NourSe Philip," *The Toronto Review of Books*, April 30, 2014, Accessed March 18, 2019, <https://www.torontoreviewofbooks.com/2014/04/in-conversation-with-m-nourbese-philip/>.

research and videography helps visitors understand the racial terrorism of lynching, and the humiliation of the Jim Crow South. Compelling visuals and data-rich exhibits give visitors the opportunity to investigate America's history of racial injustice and its legacy, drawing dynamic connections across generations of Americans impacted by the narrative of racial difference.¹¹⁰

This intersection of past and present, traditional and innovative is made possible by digital technology and design that is not unlike game design. Without losing sight of the ethical dimensions, the Legacy Museum provokes powerful empathy and contemplation of space and place.

Like Philip's poem and The Legacy Museum's digital interactives, videogames can involve collaborative, inclusive, and critical methods. There are innumerable opportunities in scholarship, archives, and collections for videogame designers to better incorporate serious history and cultural studies. With the increasing availability of technology and resources, people who have no training can create their own games. Just as we need to continue inclusive practices in academia, museums, and the videogame industry, we need to encourage access to programming and technology. We can inspire more people to contribute their creativity and perspective. We can also further democratize skills such as archival research and coding, and we can appreciate videogames as cultural documents. Serious games can adopt qualities of design which blend structure and emotion, seriousness and play—working within ethical and moral obligations similar to that of museums and academia. Videogames are reaching wider audiences and encouraging contributions to knowledge and culture in ways museums cannot easily accomplish due to inherent limitations of their technological capabilities, physical locations, and pedagogical orientation—this is not to disparage museums but to recognize videogames as a medium that can expand archives and collections in meaningful ways. Videogames are a

¹¹⁰ “The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration,” *Equal Justice Initiative*, Accessed April 9, 2019, <https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/museum>.

wonderful way to provide an interactive exhibit element that is in close proximity to objects. But truly evocative games require time and attention that a museum visitor doesn't have.

In recognizing videogames as cultural documents and serious spaces capable of exhibiting history we must also acknowledge the need for diversity in content and creators. If we consider videogames to be spaces of cultural conflict and power struggles then we need to be articulate about what values make up our ideological approach to design, as well as, what the expectations for in-game and social interaction are. On the surface, inclusivity, diversity, accessibility, and democratization are concepts that easily convey a sense of concern for the well-being of marginalized individuals and communities. When subjected to critical examination such concepts can move beyond idealistic rhetoric to effect change. We need to re-examine the medium and its potential for empowering experiences. We can do this by a thorough exploration of videogames past and present. Looking critically through the vastness of indie games can elevate the medium and creators who have already contributed meaningful interpretations of history and culture. Their creative and thoughtful designs can help to overcome inequality and exclusionary structures in the industry and society. Collaborative and interdisciplinary projects will foster inclusive ideologies and encourage institutional investments in scholarly attention, accessibility, and financially. Throughout this essay I wanted to highlight the work of women who have inspired this project. Women who are scholars and educators, museum professionals and programmers, poets and artists, lawyers, activists, and refugees. Many if not all are gamers. As an aspiring scholar, museum professional, and game designer, I look to their efforts in considering the popular phrase "representation matters." Being a student of the Humanities means being empowered and compassionate. It means having a sense of clarity in purpose. That

purpose is to confront injustice and instigate social change. That effort is achieved in a variety of ways whether scholarly research, public history, or videogame design.

Some of the indie games that have influenced my perspective on videogames include *Prey* (2017), *Soma* (2017), *Inside* (2016), *Limbo* (2010), *Hello Neighbor* (2017, 2018), *Oxenfree* (2016), and *Little Nightmares* (2017). I have watched hundreds of playthroughs on YouTube of lesser known videogames that need attention but that I have yet to play. Exploring the implications of Let's Plays and livestream gaming communities in addition to searching through the videogame archive for meaningful contributions is a necessary next step for academic research in cultural and game studies.

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APPENDIX

GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT

The following Game Design Document is an overview of the proposed videogame, *Harbored*. I am not a trained game designer, nor do I have the skills necessary to fully develop a videogame--not yet, anyway. This outline is meant to demonstrate the potential for videogames to adapt scholarship, interpret history, and exhibit artifacts. *Harbored* is an interdisciplinary project that recognizes the epistemological nature of creativity and collaboration often evoked by videogame design. With the proper team and resources this project would implement practices of inclusivity and transparency that are crucial for empowering gamers and transforming digital space into a meaningful place. Please refer to the artifact guide attached at the end of this document. These digitized artifacts are the basis of the game. Players will explore the SS Quanza in search of these artifacts to unlock the historical narrative at work. They will curate their collection of artifacts in order to exhibit them in their own gallery accessible from the main menu. Please refer to the guide often throughout the document in order to better understand the game design and context. Lastly, this project started as a traditional one with Microsoft Word and Excel but in exploring the digital humanities I tried to transfer the project to other digital resources such as Google and Twine. This has been both problematic and rewarding. If you encounter any bugs please let me know so I can try to resolve them.

Title

Harbored has a double meaning. This game is centered on an historical maritime event in which a ship carrying Jewish refugees traveled to many harbors: leaving Lisbon, Portugal for New York, New York, then Vera Cruz, Mexico and eventually Norfolk, Virginia. This is very

much a story about the harbor in Norfolk where journalists, families of the refugees, their advocates, relief workers and other organizations, as well as government officials were actively involved in determining the outcome of the situation. The six-day ordeal in which the ship was legally bound to the dock while the refugees were forbidden from disembarking saw much media attention and controversy in the local and national news. Additionally, while docked, one passenger fearing a return to Europe jumped overboard and attempted to swim to shore but was rescued and detained. Clearly the harbor as a setting is of great significance to this story. But the other significance of the title to infer is in the harboring of the ship and the refugees onboard, as well as the eventual granting of entry to the United States thereby giving the refugees a home—thus their advocates and the US *harbored* them. The audience should come away from the game having transformed their understanding of harboring— which has a predominantly negative connotation as in, for example, “harboring a fugitive”— to a more compassionate understanding about refugees and global migration.

Goals

1. Through creativity and use of immersive storytelling techniques *Harbored* adapts scholarship and archival materials into a digital space that fosters compassion and understanding.
2. The audience will empathize with the historical figures at the heart of the narrative.
3. The audience will unlock the historical narrative through interactive exploration of the digital space and the embedded artifacts. Gathering the historical information will propel the story forward leading to a compelling conclusion that reflects on contemporary social issues.

Story

The *SS Quanza*, built in 1929 and weighing 6,636 tons, stopped first in New York where many of the over 300 refugees disembarked.¹¹¹ Port officials denied the ship entry into its next stop, Vera Cruz, Mexico. The *SS Quanza* then stopped in Norfolk, Virginia on September 11, 1940 where the ship was to refuel before returning to Europe. The remaining 89 passengers, on board the ship for over a month, desperately reached out to their friends, family, and other advocates in America in hopes of staying. A September 12, 1940 article of the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot* included an image of Malvina Schamroth Parnes pictured alongside her mother and younger sister, onboard the ship while her father reached up to the small port window from the dock.¹¹² Many of the passengers, who were unable to disembark, yelled from the deck of the ship to a sympathetic reporter on shore. A reporter quoted one woman as pleading, “Do what you can to get us ashore even if only until the war is over.”¹¹³ Another refugee, Hilmar J. Wolff, “took a chance on reaching America by swimming through the waters of the Hampton Roads, because if he was forced to return Belgium,” he lamented, “his life would be forfeit.”¹¹⁴ One Army official regretfully explained, “we would have been happy to give assistance but we were powerless.”¹¹⁵ Newport News’ admiralty lawyer Jacob Morewitz came to the aid of one of the families onboard, the Rand’s. He filed a libel against the ship’s captain thereby temporarily preventing the ship from leaving the Norfolk harbor. As a result, the refugees and their advocates, as well as, members of the federal government had enough time to successfully pursue temporary visas. The *Quanza*’s history reveals a fascinating local, national, and

¹¹¹ “Portuguese Liner Coming: Quanza Due Here Today From Lisbon with 196 Passengers,” *New York Times*, August 19, 1940, 33.

¹¹² “Family Separated by Stern laws of the U.S.,” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, September 12, 1940, Last Page.

¹¹³ “Pitiful Scene Enacted Here By Refugees,” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, September 12, 1940, Last Page.

¹¹⁴ “Pitiful Scene Enacted Here by Refugees,” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, September 12, 1940, 13.

¹¹⁵ “Pitiful Scene Enacted Here by Refugees,” September 12, 1940, 13.

international narrative regarding History and Characters As this game attempts to expand on both the scholarship and historiography of the Holocaust it also expands on the story of the Quanza with characters and details that are true. The characters in Harbored are meant to complicate the players/observers understanding of who refugees are as the passengers on the Quanza demonstrate a range of individuals. Passengers onboard are largely self-sufficient in that they have money and provisions of their own. Purchasing their visas and passage from Europe to the Americas was not cheap and the Jewish refugees were forced to purchase return tickets before boarding because the ships' captain doubted that their visas were legitimate and assumed they'd be forced to return to Europe. In Norfolk, the media presented the passengers sympathetically on account of their long journey to escape the Nazis and they emphasized that they wouldn't be a burden on society as they had means of supporting themselves. The passengers are also made up of non-refugees who are either returning to America or visiting as a means of fleeing Europe.

In a letter written after reaching Norfolk, one of the passengers of the Quanza explained how after reaching Vera Cruz, several passengers were allowed to disembark when "something suddenly went wrong." The author of this letter further states, "We [the remaining passengers] are very desperate. Now we have a new trouble—we don't know how we will be received in Lisbon because we no longer have entry visas." In confronting his fears, he writes, "There was a momentary ray of light... and everything turned dark again... I don't want to lose my courage no matter what—I don't want to give up. I'll start again, perhaps we'll succeed in escaping somewhere..." After his signature, as new developments arose regarding the situation of the Quanza in the Norfolk, he concludes that "There is talk that it's possible the boat will be held here for a few days to conduct an investigation—perhaps." This letter reflects on the anxieties of the Quanza's passengers and also alludes to the efforts of communication, via letters and

telegraph, as they exhausted every possibility to find refuge. Through the perspective of this letter and similar contemporary accounts, the plight of refugees, the emotional, mental and physical anguish that they experienced in their tiresome journey adds a human element that is crucial to understanding this broad history.

Contemporary articles from the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot and the Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch provide great insight into the legal matters, popular opinion, and the political climate. On its way to Norfolk, some of the passengers and those advocating for them in the US reached out to local lawyers, local organizations like the National Council of Jewish Women, as well as, other leading political figures such as Eleanor Roosevelt. Fortunately, a Newport News admiralty lawyer, Jacob Morewitz, took action and did so by engaging the ship's captain in a legal battle. Morewitz was able to forestall the ship's departure from Norfolk where it had stopped to refuel before heading back to Europe. During the time in which the refugees were unable to leave the ship they received visitors from the press, local organizations, and authorities who were able to gain some insight into the anxieties of the refugees. These visitors were able to conduct interviews and to provide the passengers with food. The conditions on the ship during travel and in port are delineated in this history. The battle to free the refugees depicted by the newspapers revealed a popular and political opinion of concern and sympathy for refugees fleeing Hitler's Nazis, but also anxiety and suspicion. Many countries such as the US, Cuba, and other Latin America nations that were confronting refugee ships developed an isolationist or xenophobic response towards the refugees. In the case of the SS Quanza, the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot ran an article with the telling subtitle, "Immigration Authorities, However, Are Making Careful Check of Those Who Seek Entry and Some, It is Reported, May be Held Undesirables," on September 14, 1940. This article quotes an immigration officer as suggesting that "there may be persons

aboard the ship who might be agents for foreign countries, seeking a means to enter America or even Mexico for purposes of stirring up trouble.” These attitudes were combined with harsh immigration policies and quotas, as well as, anti semitism which often made laws stricter when it came to Jewish migrants.

As a result of the delayed departure Eleanor Roosevelt was able to intervene. As a result the federal government had time to grant the remaining refugees temporary visas, allowing them to disembark. Not long after the Quanza episode, the United States, like many other nations, increased their rigid and strict immigration policies, largely because of the anti immigration tendencies of Breckenridge Long who was angered at the admittance of the Quanza refugees. The court case that stalled the ship in Norfolk, Virginia demonstrates the unusual circumstance in which the refugees were able to harness state and non-state sympathies and gain entry into the US. In January 1943, more than two years after the Quanza reached Norfolk, Virginia, Judge Way issued the closing verdict on Admiralty case No. 6594 of “Mortiz Rand. Et Al. versus Steamship Quanza.” In the decision, Judge Way dismissed the claims against the Quanza, but acknowledged the humanitarian efforts of the libellants lawyer:

“[I]f the libels had not been filed against the QUANZA, that vessel would very probably left this jurisdiction with the libellants on board. Where the vessel would have proceeded thereafter, and what libellants’ fate would have been, no one can say, but through these proceedings the vessel was detained here five days and during the delay the State Department allowed the libellants and others on the QUANZA to go ashore and remain in the United States... But, as already observed, the outstanding fact is that after libellants and interveners got ashore and left this jurisdiction they were not interested further in the proceeding. Their conduct and all the evidence heard point to the fact that they had finally obtained the relief they really sought, namely, the privilege of going ashore and remaining in the United States and not having to go back to Europe, from which continent they were refugees fleeing to save their lives... The Court has been impressed with the earnest argument of counsel for the libellants, but, unfortunately, as observed several times during the course of the proceedings, his [Jacob Morewitz] services rendered the libellants occupy a much higher plane than do the merits of any of the claims made by the libellants.”

While the Newport News lawyer lost his case, he was recognized as having worked admirably on behalf of his clients and the other refugees aboard the Quanza. These refugees were a fortunate but small minority in regards to the many refugees who were turned away from the US and other nations. Understanding how in 1940 this relatively small group of people from several countries including Belgium, France, Romania, and Switzerland were able to enter the US complicates the history of US policy, of migration, and WWII refugees.

the complex dimensions of refugee migration.

Timeline of Events¹¹⁶

Early August 1940 - Schamroth family reaches the SS Quanza in Lisbon, Portugal

August 9, 1940 - Difficult Journey at sea including seasickness and bad weather

August 19, 1940 - SS Quanza arrives in New York only some 100 of the passengers were allowed to disembark

August 30, 1940 - SS Quanza arrives in Vera Cruz, Mexico only 35 passengers were allowed to disembark

September 11, 1940 - SS Quanza arrives in Norfolk, Virginia no passengers allowed to disembark

September 17, 1940 - SS Quanza passengers allowed to disembark on temporary visas. Many moved on to the countries they were travelling to or stayed in the United States. Some return to Europe when safe. Malvina and her family were reunited and moved to New York.

Interactive Exhibit/ Videogame

This project started out as an in-exhibit interactive that might be a template for any museum looking to incorporate digital technology. I was thinking about the ways in which archival materials are sometimes under utilized and inaccessible to the public primarily because of their fragility but also because they are so numerous and 2D they are difficult to exhibit. One

¹¹⁶ “SS Quanza,” *Wikipedia*, Accessed May 27, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Quanza.

way to address this is to digitize the materials which not only keeps the originals safe it increases interactivity and offers more control to the visitor over the experience. This then led me to the idea that because visitors today are searching for compelling and sophisticated experiences, which are often found outside of the museum, digital experiences in the museum ought to be more than a touchscreen or digital text-panel.

There are many components which make videogames an opportunity for the publication of historical research and creative exhibition. Time is essential for the audience to relate to and reflect on the subject matter. Videogames are ideal in that the audience can spend as much time as they need interpreting the narrative and gameplay. The sociality of the game is another component. While this game is a single-player game, community is at its core with the ability for players to share in-game content, to collect and share game content from the main menu, and the awareness of other players online and via social media. The audience is diverse and their interpretations of the game as well as original content produced in response to the game are a means of co-authoring the experience and collaborating with the audience. Cost is another component of videogames that compares to traditional exhibitions and collections in that crowdfunding and crowdsourcing are utilized options. Grants and donations are also often used to generate financial support for projects. Like a museum with low cost or no cost admittance fees, independent videogames are often low cost or free. *Harbored* is not intended to make profits it is ideally a publicly supported and/or grant funded project that would be made available on all platforms for free or minimal cost.

Videogames are controversial when it comes to serious subject matters but after an intense amount of interdisciplinary research I found that the time has come that we appreciate videogames as much more capable than previously thought. Not only can videogames provide

serious and compelling experiences they can reach wider audiences than an exhibit element or interactive. More than a sophisticated interactive or designated digital space on a museum's website, videogames are available across a multitude of platforms. Much of the controversy over whether games can meaningfully portray the Holocaust revolves around videogame giants such as *Call of Duty* and the recent *Wolfenstein 2*. There is much criticism for Holocaust themes being represented in videogames and an overwhelming agreement that major games fail to present the Holocaust properly and are often seen as offensive. Indie games, though, are doing a much better job of pioneering meaningful interpretations of the Holocaust and many other difficult subjects. Videogame scholar Leil Liebovitz, for instance, recognizes the meaningful work of indie games responding to the question, "Can the Medium Address the Holocaust?"¹¹⁷ In response to his own question he effectively concludes that videogames can and should address difficult subjects such as the Holocaust because their interactive and immersive nature can afford audiences a more enriching and poignant experience that other mediums cannot.

Vision Board/ Inspirational Indies

Harbored is based on true events and individuals from history. This game is based on the research and analysis presented in a proposed thesis project called the "Maritime History of the Holocaust, 1936-1948," and it has been reviewed by a few faculty members at Old Dominion University.

This project is pioneering a collaboration of scholarship and public history in the design of a videogame. The thesis, scholarship, and contextual history that influence *Harbored* posit a

¹¹⁷ Liel Liebovitz, "A New Video Game Raises a Thorny Question: can the Medium Address the Holocaust?" *Tablet*, November 10, 2017, Accessed December 10, 2017, <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/249092/call-of-duty-and-the-holocaust>.

historiographical critique and introduce new historical research. Reviewing the historiography of the Holocaust reveals the absence of a cohesive maritime perspective. Though there are hundreds if not thousands of maritime efforts and events related to this period of history, there are only a few episodes that are discussed by historians, and even more alarming is that there are only two stories that dominate scholarship. Rather than adopt a transnational maritime perspective, Holocaust scholars have only analyzed this period with two lenses of analysis: (1) the immigration policies of nations that largely failed the migrants and refugees and (2) the illegal immigration efforts of refugees and Displaced Persons that were so prevalent after WWII until 1948 with the establishment of Israel. The first perspective looks to political and legal policies as well as non-governmental organizations and their activities wherein the latter looks to the national governments and militaries in their response to postwar migration to Palestine. Additionally, each perspective has adopted its own significant maritime events. The first revolves around the ST. Louis which carried nearly 1000 refugees from Germany to the Americas in 1939—prior to the start of WWII—only to be denied entry due to states' strict immigration policies as well as growing culture of xenophobia. States were increasingly suspicious of incoming refugees because of the looming World War. The second event jumps to the postwar illegal immigration via the refugee ship, the Exodus, which carried nearly 5000 suffering DPs from their deplorable camps in Germany to Palestine. The ship was intercepted by the British and after a violent struggle onboard three people were killed and the refugees refused to disembark. The ship was eventually forced back to Germany and the refugees back to their camps. This caused global outrage in the wake of media attention and awareness of the atrocities of WWII and the Holocaust leading many to pressure the United Nations to establish Israel.

We can see the significant contributions historians have made in developing these narratives but we must also recognize that these are limited perspectives. Scholarship thus far has developed a top-down approach with states, institutions, policies, and international events at the center. However, there are many marginalized events and as a result not only is the narrative incomplete and underdeveloped, but the people that are at the heart of this history are largely marginalized as well. To correct this scholarship moving forward should work to incorporate the events and details regarding individuals, their experiences, agency, and obstacles throughout the period known as the Long Second World War, a period from 1936 to 1948. Historians must reexamine Holocaust history by adopting a bottom-up approach and a transnational maritime perspective. This will bring to light new historical concepts and meaningful understandings of the past that can help us to analyze the now.

Harbored will demonstrate the compassion and understanding for the people who should be at the center of this history by demonstrating the significance of the individual characters' experiences onboard a refugee ship largely unknown to the world. By using a beautifully crafted gamespace with a gorgeous aesthetic that sets the digital representations of real-world artifacts within the creative art style of the environment, Harbored will provide the means of illuminating a cohesive history as it provides the continuity and inclusiveness through its various narrative devices that is lacking in scholarship.

Audience

The game is safe for any age as either players or observers will recognize significant historical concepts and themes. The game is likely to be more appealing to teens and adults who have some experience with computer games and gamepads. Additionally, the game is designed

to be most effective for adults who are largely left out of the educational game market. Many adults want to continue their education and often explore history through cultural institutions such as museums for that purpose. But for a game to be truly engaging and for it to provide a meaningful experience for adult audiences that game should rely on subtly, allowing for moments of critical thinking that culminate in powerful realizations. The game ought to present the story, its history and artifacts, and its characters in a way that allows that audiences to develop connections through which every player/observer finds something of interest and meaningful to them. Museums and historians alike often try to demonstrate to audiences how they can relate to the information personally and even more to see themselves in the story. In this way adults will be able to look beyond the mechanics of the game as they engage the story without feeling too didactic or simplified.

Game Flow

Players are motivated to analyze and interact with the gamespace in order to locate a variety of artifacts that advance the story and open new rooms for exploration. This includes artifacts that are actually in the surrounding exhibit as well as supplemental material that add to the exhibit experience. Players can locate photographs, artifacts, cut scenes, recordings, and dialogue with other characters. Players can collect memories that are recalled by the main character along her journey. There are multiple memories to unlock based on the testimony of the main character, Malvina Schamroth Parnes.

Players will be rewarded by unlocking additional achievements.

For Example:

- Discovered 3 artifacts

- Found 3 Photographs
- Found 3 Newspaper clippings
- Listened to at least one radio broadcast
- Spoke to at least three passengers
- Discovered at least one drawing
- Discovered all the drawings

Look and Feel

The game's look and feel is inspired by: *Among the Sleep*, *Imagination is the Only Escape*, *Oxen Free*, and *Little Nightmares* for their brilliant environments, storytelling, and gameplay that feels appropriate in conveying the tragedies of history and reflects the fears, tensions, and anxieties of the refugees. The mechanics of the game are also ideal for *Harbored* as the player must deal with the swaying of the ship which affects the environment. These games demonstrate a binary of happy versus scary in its visuals, sound, and dialogue. *Harbored* should be seen as artistically beautiful and it should evoke a meaningful connection to the characters and their story but it should emphasize the anxiety of the refugees whose fate is uncertain. The game should focus particularly on expressing the emotions of the main character on her journey through the ship. The game will have a simple gameplay design with a variety of narrative devices including the background art, environment, music and sound, interactive objects, and audiovisual artifacts as well as dialogue with other visitors. Less is more is the motto for text and other design elements in exhibitions and that too will be applied to this game so as to keep audiences engaged but not exhausted or frustrated. They should feel as though they are participating in the story by identifying with their characters journey (without having to actively

think about the mechanics at work) to uncover her past and present with the hopes of finding a happy ending.

Players can move through the game and develop crucial insight into the story without having found all of the artifacts or engaged all of the interactive game elements. There is therefore a central linear story model with extending avenues of exploration. The longer a player is able to invest in the game the more likely they are to develop a truly immersive and evocative experience. However, players who are time-pressed and navigate the central story line can still interpret a meaningful conclusion. Additionally, those who simply explore the game for its hidden artifacts and other interactive qualities will add to their overall exhibit experience as the game offers a sort of digital curation of historical objects and archival materials—a curated exhibit of its own, so to speak.

I have spent the majority of my life as a gamer. When I was younger my family got our first console system, a Nintendo, and a computer, an NEC with AOL. We mostly played videogames and computer games, surfed the web, and chatted with friends on instant messenger and eventually myspace. My grandmother had a Sega and my uncle had a Playstation. Essentially my whole family spent time together playing videogames and although games are but one aspect of our lives, they have significant meaning and have inspired countless meaningful moments. Just as my family's relationship with videogames evolved, videogames themselves are evolving, too. Videogames today are diversifying in content, game play, and audience, and crucially, the creators behind videogames. The result is that games are beginning to confront serious subject matter with thoughtful and creative design. While most are fictional, many indie games demonstrate the potential for nonfictional narratives.

Opening Cinematic

The game will open with an elaborate cinematic that synthesizes the testimony of Malvina Schamroth Parnes regarding her journey prior to boarding the SS Quanza. The following selection summarizes the events beginning with her father leaving for the United States in 1939 in hopes of bringing his family to safety. The cinematic will set the tone for the game, as well as, serve as the invitation for the player to further explore the story with a critical and compassionate perspective. This cinematic provides the historical background and context necessary for the player to build an understanding of the past and its relationship with the present.

Selection:

[My father] left at the end of '39. It was the first time in my life I saw my father crying. He was trying to hide it from me, standing at a window. I remember it was December. It was winter, and he's standing there crying. I knew he was going so that we could eventually leave.¹²²

Malvina Schamroth Parnes

When Malvina Schamroth Parnes describes her experience of the Second World War and the Holocaust, she begins with memories of her childhood in Antwerp, Belgium. She says going to school was “an awful ordeal” and that she “threw up every morning... The primary reason for my anxiety,” she explained, “was that I was surrounded by anti-Semitism in school, ranging from insults to physical abuse...”¹²³ Her father, David Schamroth, left Belgium in 1939 “for the United States with the intent of having his wife and children immigrate to America at a later

¹²² Malvina Parnes, Interview, ca. 1999, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Illinois.

¹²³ Parnes, Interview.

time.”¹²⁴ She explains that it wasn’t until May 1940 that she and her family were able to obtain visas. She remembers that on May 10th “the radio announced that Germany had attacked Belgium, Holland, and France.”¹²⁵ She was 11-years old when she left home with her mother, Annette, and younger sister, Annette, towards the busy port of Lisbon, Portugal. They faced great obstacles. “It never failed,” she lamented, “every city we hit, that was their first bombardment, we brought it along.”¹²⁶ In an area just outside of Boulogne, France, Parnes and her family met some British soldiers who warned them that the Germans would be there soon and further implored that she and her family ought to “flee with them to England via a flotilla of fishing boats.”¹²⁷ For various reasons including her mother’s fears of traveling in the small boats, Parnes’ and the other refugees in her group decided not to go with the British soldiers. Instead, after narrowly escaping another bombardment, they had no choice but to return home to Belgium. Eventually the wife of an Italian consul, a client of Parnes’ father, arranged for a bus to carry them to Lisbon, Portugal where they boarded the *S.S. Quanza*. At their early-August departure, Parnes, her sister, her mother, and her aunt left Europe expecting their visas to lead them to Mexico. Parnes could not have known with any certainty that they were destined to reach America and be reunited with her father in a series of unforeseen events that took them to Norfolk, Virginia.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Parnes, Interview.

¹²⁵ Parnes, Interview.

¹²⁶ Parnes, Interview.

¹²⁷ Parnes, Interview.

¹²⁸ Malvina Schamroth Parnes, “The Saga of the *S.S. Quanza*: A Prelude to the Holocaust,” April 30, 2000, Northern Hills Synagogue Congregation B’Nai Avraham in conjunction with The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, SS Quanza Papers, Peninsula Jewish Historical Society, United Jewish Community of Virginia Peninsula, Newport News, VA.

Interface

After the opening cinematic the player will see and hear a thematic video through a porthole. This video will be looped. This main screen will have a clickable “*Harbored*.” After clicking on the game title, players will see the main menu which will include: Start, New, Continued, Gallery, Archive, and Credits. The game has autosave so whenever the player unlocks artifacts they are automatically curated into their main menu gallery and this secures their place in the unfolding story. The archive section is where players can find additional resources outside of the game. This might include libraries, museums, and online resources that expand the history of the game and encourage players to be engaged in public history and contemporary social issues. This will be updated every few months and incorporate feedback from the games community.

Unlockable Content

Harbored is a game in which the story is unlocked incrementally as the player collects more artifacts. The more the player explores interactives and objects throughout the ship the more they will be able to piece together the historical narrative. Those who wish to collect every possible artifact and fully explore the story will have the option to replay the game. After completing the main story arch, replay offers hints to the whereabouts of the remaining artifacts.

Tone

The tone of *Harbored* simultaneously fosters curiosity and seriousness.

In defense of the videogame medium, let’s look at two adaptations of the Quanza story. The first is a short clip from a documentary called *Nobody Wants Us*. The tone from the title

alone is one that evokes sympathy, as does the videos somber music. In the video you will hear Malvina Parnes sister, Annette, describing her sisters' fears. But when the voice actor speaks for Malvina and the visuals presented are artist renderings of the event the tone of the documentary moves towards empathy. The second clip is from the Virginia Historical Society. This video emphasizes significance of artifacts in this case the model of the SS Quanza. The story splices in images that are relevant to the story but that are not directly related such as images of the New York harbor and the Old Dominion coal line in Norfolk, Virginia.

Environment

The Quanza story begins long before the refugees purchased passage to the Americas. Parnes' testimony takes us back to years before her family's journey abroad. More research and resources are required to fully research and replicate the physicality of the story which would include Parnes' home and community, and the other locations that she describes on her way to Lisbon. In lieu of this research, abstract environmental storytelling--not unlike the vaguely related images, film, and audio recordings used in documentaries and museum exhibits--will help to contextualize the specific artifacts that are digitized and embedded throughout. The gameplay begins once Malvina's family sees the Quanza in the Lisbon harbor.

The physical journey includes:

Lisbon, Portugal

SS Quanza

 Pavimento D

 III Classe Suplementar Alojamentos

 Camarotes de Classe III Alojamentos

 Sala de Jantar de Classe III

 Pavimento C

 Banheiro de Classe III

 Banheiro de Classe II

Banheiro de Classe I
 Camarotes de Classe II Alojamentos
 Camarotes de Classe I Alojamentos
 Imprensa
 Biblioteca

Pavimento B

Sala de Jantar de Classe I
 Sala de Jantar de Classe II
 Padaria

Pavimento A

Camarotes de Luxo de Classe I Alojamentos
 Salao de musica de Classe I
 Enfermeiro
 Consultorio
 Salao de Fumar de Classe I
 Radio Room

Inspired by a Text and Technology class, I thought it would be amazing to incorporate how the passengers were able to send a telegram from the ship to the first lady and what that process looks like technically. I noticed that the heading on the telegram and the quality of it suggest that it was forwarded several times throughout various divisions of the state department and the dates range from the 10th through the 17th. I noticed the sub header which says “2wu ki 30/28 radio rca SS Quanza, N Chatham, September 10, 1940.” “Radio rca” suggests to me that the telegram was sent via radio, so a radiogram or electric telegraph, and there would have been a radio operator and a radiograph onboard. The “N Chatham” connects to N Chatham, MA where the Chatham Marconi Maritime Center is located.

Characters

Main Character: The main character is a historical and a little girl. The player will control the girl as she explores the ship and interacts with other non-playable characters and artifacts. This game starts with a reflection. Malvina thinks back as she tells her story and in doing so takes us to the past. As a young girl around 11 years old, the player goes back in time to explore Malvina's memories.

Non-Playable Characters/Interactives:

Main Character:

Malvina Schamroth

Additional Characters:

Annette Schamroth, Sister

Annette Schamroth, Mother

David Schamroth, Father

The Rand Family

Refugee, jumped overboard in Norfolk

An American Sailor

A Czechoslovakian figure skater

A Parisian Opera singer

A French Movie Star

Jacob Morewitz

Ship Captain

A Port Official

Journalists

NGO Operatives

Government Officials

Guards

Artifacts

The game world is a refugee ship that sails across the Atlantic Ocean. This is a room-by-room exploration game which sways as a ship would—sometimes calm and other times more perilous—at one point even experiencing a storm. Each room will have different furniture and layout with select objects that can be manipulated by the player in their attempt to locate and unlock all of the memories and find all of the artifacts—such as photographs, notes, drawings, newspaper clippings, radio recordings, telegrams, ship manifest, immigration visas, and court records—that help to tell the story. Some rooms will have other characters and artifacts related to their story. The additional characters are opportunities for the player to listen to dialogue that expand not only the experience of other passengers onboard but the main characters as well.

VITA

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Internship Experience:

2016 Costumes/Textiles and Archives, The Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia
2015 Collections and Archives, Virginia Holocaust Museum, Richmond, Virginia

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Contributed genealogical and historical research to the “Over Here, Over There: The Homefront and the A.E.F in France” exhibit at the MacArthur Memorial Museum in Norfolk, Virginia.

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2019 Assistant Curator, Virginia Holocaust Museum, Richmond, Virginia
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