



澳門大學
UNIVERSIDADE DE MACAU
UNIVERSITY OF MACAU

NARRATIVE, GENRE AND IDEOLOGY IN VIDEO GAMES

Bruna Boege Pickler

Supervisor: Tony Schirato

澳門大學
UNIVERSIDADE DE MACAU
UNIVERSITY OF MACAU

An academic thesis in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Communication and New Media at the University of Macau

2018

Narrative, Genre and Ideology in Video Games



Bruna Boege Pickler

SUPERVISOR: Tony Schirato

澳門大學
UNIVERSIDADE DE MACAU
DEPARTMENT: Department of Communication
UNIVERSITY OF MACAU

Master of Arts in Communication and New Media

2018

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Macau

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is original and represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.



澳門大學 Signature: _____
UNIVERSIDADE DE MACAU Date: _____
UNIVERSITY OF MACAU

Abstract

This dissertation aims to produce knowledge regarding the modern video game medium by analyzing the narrative of one such game: Assassin's Creed Revelations, a contemporary example of the cultural form. The dissertation will focus on the narrative structure of the text using the theoretical work of Vladimir Propp and the ideas he develops in *Morphology of Folktale* (1968). We will argue that the morphology identified by Propp as being present in traditional folk narratives can also be found in a contemporary electronic cultural text. We will also identify and discuss issues regarding character development, the relationships between archetypes and categories, the allocation of tasks to the players within the story-as-game, the characteristics of the temporal development of the narrative, the significance and roles of the main characters, and the extent to which gender politics informs the narrative of this contemporary video game.

Keywords: Assassins Creed Revelations, Video Game, Narrative Structure, New Media, Morphology.

UNIVERSIDADE DE MACAU
UNIVERSITY OF MACAU

Index

1. Introduction.....	7
1. 1. Context of the Research	7
1. 2. Key theorists.....	7
1. 3. Gap in the literature and future research	7
2. Justification of the topic.....	9
3. Literature Review.....	10
3. 1. Narratology.....	10
3. 2. Ideology.....	15
3. 3. Genre	16
3. 4. Plot and Visuals.....	16
4. Methodology	19
5. Brief introduction to and account of the game.....	20
6. The game Assassin’s Creed Revelations’s narrative	21
6. 1. Sequence 1 - A Sort of Homecoming.....	21
6. 2. Sequence 2 - The Crossroads of the World.....	21
6. 3. Sequence 3 - Lost and Found	23
6. 4. Sequence 4 - The Uncivil War	26
6. 5. Sequence 5 - Heir to the Empire	28
6. 6. Sequence 6 - Fortune’s disfavor.....	29
6. 7. Sequence 7 - Underworld.....	33
6. 8. Sequence 8 - The End of an Era.....	36
6. 9. Sequence 9 - Revelations	39
7. Analysis (The apple’s tale morphology).....	41
8. Conclusion	49
9. Reference List	50

1. Introduction

This thesis aims to bring knowledge about one specific medium, the video game. Due to the recent technological evolution, this is part of our everyday life, and with the event of globalization it is likely that it will increasingly have a wide cultural impact. This thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of the new and emerging media as a whole, through analyzing the narrative structure of the specific medium of video games: where the narrative is used to engage users, we expect to understand the impacts and how this medium contributes to the broad scenario of new media.

A specific game narrative will be analyzed. We will analyze the narrative of the video game and the ways in which it allows players to take an active role when constructing the narrative, in terms of where the game will lead the character and consequently the outcome of the game.

1. 1. Context of the Research

This thesis will explore narrative theory and how it can contribute to the analysis of video games, specifically throughout the narrative of Assassin's Creed Revelations. We will analyze the narrative structure of this video game.

1. 2. Key theorists

We will refer to the work of Vladimir Propp, specifically Morphology of the Tale (1928), and his approach to the narrative's structure, as well as other relevant theorists.

1. 3. Gap in the literature and future research

The gap in the literature is the under-explored area of the relation between narrative structures and the playing out of video games. Even though the themes of narrative and video

games have been widely studied as separate entities, the relationship between the two has not attracted the same level of academic interest.



澳門大學
UNIVERSIDADE DE MACAU
UNIVERSITY OF MACAU

2. Justification of the topic

The video game, as a popular contemporary cultural form and genre, is one of the cultural sites and set of texts where established and normalized ideas and meanings (about gender, race, ethnicity, age, nationality) taken from various globally-connected social contexts, are represented, reproduced and often take on the form of ideologies. Ideology has been described as "a hidden or disguised reality" (Bouissac, 1998, p.388) which, being repeated on an everyday basis, comes to be accepted as normal, unquestioningly true and a form of common sense. So ideas about the natural superiority of men over women, for instance, can be characterized as a form of masculine ideology that naturalizes the power relations between men and women. These ideologies are played out in various narrative forms, for instance where men are active and women are passive, or where women accept that their socio-cultural status is that of objects of desire for men. This dissertation will look at the ways in which the narrative threads, roles and functions ascribed to characters, and forms of value normalized and taken for granted in the video game being studied, can be seen as being ideologized. The argument, or at least the point of contention, is the extent to which certain types of cultural forms and genres reproduce socio-cultural ideas and values as ideologies, particularly in terms of how they arrange their narratives and, by way of extension, distribute narrative roles, tasks and functions. Propp's work is an important part of this study because it enables us to analyze the action and characters within the video game in terms of specific categories (*hero, helper etc*) that can then be reintegrated into and used in the analysis of the video game as narrative.

3. Literature Review

3. 1. Narratology

A narrative can be found in any piece of cultural work. According to the encyclopedia of semiotics, narrative structures are a sequence of events that follow a temporal and chronological dimension. (Bouissac, 1998, p.437)

Narratology can be defined as "the study of the invariant properties and the underlying compositional principles common to all narratives that characterize the storyness of stories and the narrativity of narratives." (Bouissac, 1998, p.443)

The encyclopedia cites the work of Vladimir Propp in regard to his study, *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968):

"The 'morphology' he constructed for a certain kind of narrative was later called a grammar of the story or plot. ... With ingenious simplicity, he deduced that the actions of the characters, which he called functions, provide stable and constant units and constitute a tale's fundamental structure." (Bouissac, 1998, p.443)

All the narratives that surround us, and in specific for this study, the video game narrative can have their fundamental structure or pieces separated in the smallest units, or functions.

In comparison with other authors, when we take the narrative as its visual dimension only, excluding the grammar as a fundamental structure, it is harder to perceive that the narrative follows a logic, or a sequence. As from citation from authors Schirato and Webb, regarding visual narrative:

"Visual works may not easily tell stories, but they have huge narrative potential and great expressive power: the ability to convey emotions, ideas and attitudes; and to direct readers to particular narratives." (Schirato and Webb, 2004, p.104)

Claude Lévi-Strauss separates narratives in the smallest units. In his structure theory, there are four mythemes for every myth:

"Lévi-Strauss' method is similar to Propp's in its attempt to isolate minimal units, which he calls mythemes, and their laws of combination. But the differences are more salient. Lévi-Strauss for example, focuses on only one myth, the myth of Oedipus. In a two-dimensional notational system that Lévi-Strauss compares to an orchestra score, the syntagmatic sequence of the mythemes is blown up spatially and arranged paradigmatically into four vertical columns to reveal semantic and thematic commonalities among the units of each column. The striking result is a semantic network that interrelates these columns." (Bouissac, 1998, p.444)

In regards to the narratological view, it is a substitute for the semiotics theory, still claiming the realism and relationships between the symbols presented. According to the Encyclopedia of Semiotics:

"The narrative is assumed to have a maximum claim to realism and to emphasize the transparency of its referential function in providing information about that simulated world. From the newer perch, the narratologists assert that real events do not take the form of a readymade 'untold story,' and hence both the narrative world (the story) and the discourse through which that world is presented are constructed or made-up." (Bouissac, 1998, p.444)

It is important to emphasize that there is always the notion of the narrator in these narratives, as well as the discourse, that happens in his social environment. Even in video games, when the player takes the role of the protagonist for a while, it is important to observe that there is always a mediation between the game and the player. According to Bouissac, "fictional or

historical narratives always involve a narrator in the act of mediation, responsible for selecting, organizing, and verbalizing information about events and people." (Bouissac, 1998, p.444)

In the traditional form of story, or narrative, there is always a beginning, a middle and an end, and so it must be true for games, unrestrictive of the platform we play it, and unrestricted of genre, which we will approach later in this study. From the archetypal structure presented by Propp, the "... archetypal folktale begins with a breach of contract and ends with the establishment of a contract in the form of marriage." (Bouissac, 1998, p.438)

This points to us that this structure is circular, where the beginning and the end are similar, either in time and space or in the emotional and social frame.

According to Bouissac with regard to Vladimir Propp's works:

"The unity established through the organization of 'temporal wholes' derives from the organization of successive events in such a way that they form a unified sequence of change in which there is a beginning, middle and end. [...] A composite of these structuralist models yields a five-part sequence that corresponds to the temporal phases of any event, be it an action, a process, a motion, or a communication." (Bouissac, 1998, p.437)

Propp's archetype of folktale begins in disequilibrium. Propp's first seven functions out of thirty-one are the preparatory part of the tale: "A perturbation must be introduced that destroys the equilibrium of the initial situation and initiates action." (Bouissac, 1998, p.437)

In Propp's words, the definitions for each part of the recurrent units in the structure are:

"The paradigmatic analysis and structuration of the Proppian chain of functions brings out the existence of recurrent episodic units that punctuate the dynamics of narrative progress from beginning to end. These intermediate units are the contract and

the test that link together to form a larger test, a recurrent macro sequence in the quantitative organization of plot." (Bouissac, 1998, p.438)

To add movement to the novel sequence, Propp affirms: "Polar changes in the status of the contract, from negative to positive, or the reverse, describe the movement of most stories." (Bouissac, 1998, p.438)

The initial sequence, named "breakup of the order or alienation" (1998) is followed by plot twists, test with the protagonist facing usually an antagonist and ends with a contract, or marriage:

"The archetypal folktale, therefore, manifests five contractual episodes. The macro sequence of the test is a syntagmatic chaining of the contract, the struggle, and the consequence. The discovery of this major recurrent sequence that Propp himself did not recognize is a decisive accomplishment in narratology." (Bouissac, 1998, p.439)

Regarding a minimum narrative, according to Propp, it can be broken down to five stages, with an exploratory thirty-one steps. This five stages can be grouped into three main groups, called contract, struggle and consequence:

"The minimal narrative, can be defined as a syntagmatic sequence made up of the following propositions: Contract (sender, receiver); struggle (helper, opponent); consequence (object, subject)." (Bouissac, 1998, p.439)

According to this sequence, the two first steps are responsible for the protagonist to retain the desired object.

"The test is the irreducible nucleus or kernel that accounts for the definition of the narrative as diachrony. It also operates the transformation of axiological contents that fix the

limits of the 'reversal of the situation' by marking the end of the narrative before and the beginning of the narrative after." (Bouissac, 1998, p.440)

While the contract stage establishes the receiver and the sender of information, the struggle stage sets the motion for the opponent to oppose the helper and the protagonist itself. The consequence is achieved when the subject gains the object of desire.

Taken together this narrative structure theories we can find that there is a lot of fusion between the steps, but they all recognize some kind of chronology, a linear or circular narrative.

Greimas reinterpreted the classical structuration from Propp, where in the place of a final contract, he presupposes a reverse logic:

" 'The Proppian organization,' says Greimas, 'suggests to us the possibility of reading every narrative as a quest for meaning, for the meaning to attribute to human action.' " (1976, p. 10) (Bouissac, 1998, p440) What this means is that meaning is not naturally available or something that is attached to a thing (a man is significant, a woman isn't): rather the narrative is the place where meaning is made, and by extension, normalized and naturalized. This is in keeping with the notion of ideology that we referred to earlier: for Greimas, the narrative of a story 'is the message'.

Furthermore, we can highlight that from his minimum structure, there are two main climaxes:

"One of the most striking differences between these plot models is that, unlike the traditional plot pattern that isolates a single climax or turning point, the narrative schema highlights two peaks in the tale." (Bouissac, 1998, p440-441)

3. 2. Ideology

Ideology functions in a way in which we understand that what is being offered by the media at that given moment is true and will always be. Ideology is what determines what can be thought and what cannot be thought about that particular given form of text, narrative, or discourse. It also "determines what can and what cannot be done." (Schirato and Yell, 2000, p.73)

According to the authors, ideologies:

"try to convince their audiences that certain values, ideas and activities are more or less natural, and ... naturalize meaning." (Schirato and Yell, 2000, p.73)

It is repetition that creates the ideology in a culture. According to Schirato and Yell:

"We made the point that ideologies functioned predominately to naturalise and perpetuate differences within a culture; paradoxically, however, this is usually done through the attempt erasure of differences. Ideologies are often deployed, for instance, to convince other groups that their interests are the same as those of the group producing the ideology." (Schirato and Yell, 2000, p.74)

Regarding genre, according to the authors Schirato and Yell, it is also a consequence of ideology: "Genre 'inhabits texts' ... when meanings are pervasive and accepted unthinkingly as certain or natural, they have been ideologised." (Schirato and Yell, 2000, p.46)

We can observe that one of the functions of ideology is that in a certain environment or within a certain culture, there is harmony and homogeneity. In some forms of culture, we are forced to see some other groups as inhuman and inferior, so that we can differentiate the powerful:

"Ideologies try to convince groups in a culture that the value that is assigned to certain signs or markers of difference (gender, skin colour) is natural." (Schirato and Yell, 2000, p.74)

3. 3. Genre

We are able to identify genres according to their particular features without missing one single beat of the narrative. According to Jacques Derrida: "a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without ... a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text' (Derrida 1981:61) ... their boundaries are pretty permeable too, and ... overlap between genres." (Schirato and Webb, 2004, p.95)

Regarding genre and intertextuality, Barthes writes: "The variation in readings is not, however, anarchic; it depends on the different kinds of knowledge - practical, national, cultural, aesthetic - invested in the image. (Barthes 1997:46)" (Schirato and Webb, 2004, p.90)

3. 4. Plot and Visuals

Some texts can infer meaning without saying what exactly happen. "only some will be genuine narratives - structured to tell in a relatively coherent fashion - while others are texts with narrative potential - being able only to provide springboards for stories that the readers/viewers must produce for themselves." (Schirato and Webb, 2004, p.85)

Even when there is no clear narrative in the established plots, we can take into consideration the icons that appear in the visuals. As by definition of the authors Schirato and Webb: "Narrative can also be implied or identified in a visual text by devices such as the

arrangement of the iconography or the use of perspective to provide a central focus." (Schirato and Webb, 2004, p.87)

From complex plots merging, to a singular line in the narrative we are able to identify genres according to their particular features without missing a beat. According to Schirato and Webb:

"Narrative structures have the status of spatial syntaxes. By means of a whole panoply of codes, ordered ways of proceeding and constraints, they regulate change in space ... made by stories in the form of places put in linear or interlaced series ... every story is a travel story - a spatial practice. (Certeau 1984: 115-16)" (Schirato and Webb, 2004, p.82)

In regard to a visual game-space, we can presume that the player takes part as the narrator of the story, in a similar experience as the one of the writer had when creating the story in the first place. The player when playing the game and taking actions, making decisions gets to decide between different paths, usually leading to a predefined fixed structure of narrative and plots. What this means is that although the video game is already 'put in place' as a (pre-established) narrative (with its own set of ideologies, values and means), within that narrative space players make choices and decisions which, although they do not (and cannot) overturn the 'ideologies' of the game (the *hero* will be a male because the game demands this as a narrative rule), can take the game and its narrative in various directions (at least for part of the time). So we can say that players are, to a certain extent, active within the game, but that the parameters of the game as narrative are to a large extent set or fixed.

Regarding to the basic elements of a visual narrative, according to Schirato and Webb:

"It must have a plot (what happened and why), a narrator (the point of view from which it is told), characters who participate in the story (human or otherwise), events (everything in the

story that happens to or because of the characters), the time and place in which those events take place, and the causal relations which link the events together." (Schirato and Webb, 2004, p.83)

We must also acknowledge that "Time, in short, cannot be 'told' in visual texts or even in narrative pictures." (Schirato and Webb, 2004, p.87) this meaning that what we actually see when actively analyze a visual text is a reproduction of reality, while time itself can be understood only in a verbal narrative. Still according to the authors, "Narrative is a site of interaction (an active verb) rather than a static object (noun), and thus social values will always be inscribed in narratives." (Schirato and Webb, 2004, p.97)



澳門大學
UNIVERSIDADE DE MACAU
UNIVERSITY OF MACAU

4. Methodology

This study will provide a literature of narrative theory, and apply that theory to a particular video game product. This is a contemporary product: Assassin's Creed Revelations. This game belongs in broad to the genre of action-adventure & stealth.

The analyzes of each stage of this game's narrative will be done by collecting material available online with the whole gameplay of the product from beginning to end, through every necessary step. We will collect material from social media, such as Youtube© where we can find the gameplay in an online licensed source with the whole audiovisual content available. This way we are able to analyze each action carefully, throughout each given steps of the narrative and coming up with the steps that are stronger or which ones are non existing accordingly to the archetypes presented in the literature review.

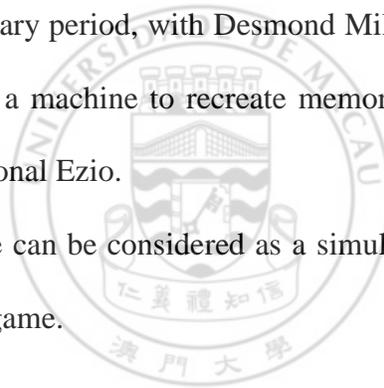
This analysis aims to critically view each point of the narrative and point out the archetypes the narrative contains.



5. Brief introduction to and account of the game

Released in 2011, Assassins Creed Revelations is the third and last game related to the protagonist Ezio Auditore da Firenze. It is a fictional game based on real world events. The main plot is set in the 16th century Constantinople where the protagonist Ezio lives and interacts with assassins of that time and remarkable people in his journey to unlock the secret of Altaïr's vault in Masyaf. Another plot is set in the 12th century with our protagonist Altaïr, with whom we have contact from old memories and flashbacks or at the end of the game when we find his tomb. Another plot is set in contemporary period, with Desmond Miles, who is genetically linked with these ancestors and goes inside a machine to recreate memories, so we are able to go back in time and play the life of the fictional Ezio.

In broad terms this game can be considered as a simulation genre, and in more specific, an action-adventure and stealth game.



澳門大學
UNIVERSIDADE DE MACAU
UNIVERSITY OF MACAU

6. The game Assassin's Creed Revelations narrative

One interesting point in the visual narrative of this game is that, the further you play in the storyline, the older the protagonist gets. So you can perceive the difference in appearance, motion and posture of the character Ezio.

6. 1. Sequence 1 - A Sort of Homecoming

Desmond can't move, because he is trapped on an island. He meets Subject Sixteen. Desmond goes further, passes the threshold and becomes the character Ezio in a different time-space, years behind. This action starts the first mission; it involves pulling ropes to get to the horse carriage, which gets us to a diary that will enable us to open the door of a hidden library. After the first mission, we are back in the skin of Desmond on the remote island. Once again we push the story forward crossing the same gate, leaving the island and becoming Ezio. He now reveals to us that his mission is to protect the hidden secrets of a library called Masyaf. He needs to find 5 keys to open the main door, of which one is being held by the Knights Templars, a medieval society that flourished during the 12th and 13th centuries.

6. 2. Sequence 2 - The Crossroads of the World

Constantinople is where most of the plots take place. Ezio is in a ship talking to a student. The student presumes that Ezio must be Italian, judging by the tone of his accent. We learn here that Ezio comes all the way from Rome to Constantinople in this quest for the keys. In this scene we have the first appearance of a woman. Dressed in a vintage dress, the woman is holding books and a package. Ezio refers to her as an object of desire, when he tells the student that when he was his age, his only interest was in women. When the woman drops the books, the student helps her to pick them up, and Ezio recognizes the boy as a "scholar and a gentleman".

Another man enters the scene, Yusuf de Istanbul, and has trouble identifying Ezio's surname. Ezio then tells him "da Firenze", which is the city he was born at. Yusuf politely calls Ezio "Mentor da Firenze". Yusuf says that everybody in Istanbul is already aware of his presence, since he is known for killing the Borgia family and fighting in the Holy Land against the Templars. While Yusuf updates Ezio about the heirs of the thrones, they are suddenly attacked, and we start a new mission that involves killing Templars.

We enter the head-quarters of the assassins' creed. Ezio meets his disciples. Yusuf gives Ezio money to spend in his armor. We can note here how much detail there is in the visual outfit of the characters. Even the guards have a rich texture to their outfits, and there is much detail in the architecture.

After this action, we are given the hook-blade. Yusuf teaches Ezio how to use the hook-blade. After teaching Ezio, Yusuf leaves the story. We must now reach a hidden assassins place in Galata. We are taken to a strategy mission where we must defend the location that is under attack. Only in this part of the game you gain "morale" points which you can trade for placing other assassins on rooftops or building barricades. You gain morale points with the passage of time by holding your position.

Other assassins tell Ezio where to go. He meets Yusuf again who teaches Ezio how to fight with explosives. We need then to bomb the floor to get attention from the guards. All the guards congregate, leaving free the path we must go through. Ezio then needs to kill the captain of the area and light up a fire sign.

6. 3. Sequence 3 - Lost and Found

We start this sequence back in the island, talking to Subject Sixteen. He starts to talk weirdly and in a mean way. He says he wants to go out of the illusion, but Desmond tells him that this is not possible. Sixteen feels guilty and disappears. A narrator then starts to ask questions about Desmond's relationship with Lucy (a character in a previous game who was killed). When we pass the gate, Ezio's story continues.

Ezio writes another letter to Claudia, his sister, about his quest update. We meet Yusuf again, who says that they lost few friends in the battle. Yusuf asks Ezio to recruit new assassins.

Next mission we need to kill a cowardly captain and light up another fire sign to make the Templars run away from that area. There are many fast-travel points in the map that allow you to relocate to other regions in Constantinople and slowly conquer all the land from the Templars. You can also buy banks as well as renovate them.

We meet a prisoner who was imprisoned for stealing food. Ezio's task is to show compassion and steal the key that releases the man. After the man is released, Ezio invites him to become an assassin and the man accepts the offer.

We enter the apprentice's house. Our mission here is to listen to one apprentice. He says that many apprentice assassins went missing in the city lately. We need to find out more. When we walk in the field where past events happened, like murder, we have a flashback and ghosts appear showing us how events happened. Ezio then starts to teach the apprentice the ways of killing without getting hurt. We can now approach the pigeon house to have access to all records of the current recruited assassins and their current mission, and assign new missions to them.

Before we leave this area, we meet Yusuf and he teaches us how to create bombs. While they talk, Ezio shows Yusuf the diary, which is named “The Secret Crusade”, written by Nicolau Polo. He reveals his plan to find the five keys and tells Yusuf where he plans to start from. Yusuf tells Ezio to talk to Piri Reis at the bazaar to get the correct direction. He meets Piri Reis and asks for directions to Marco Polo’s commercial trade post. He says it is just west of Hagia Sofia.

Ezio reaches the commercial trade post of Polo’s and at this point in the narrative he meets Sofia, the same woman he met in the ship at the very beginning of the story. He needs to search the post to find hints to the location of the keys. He finds a hidden tunnel and when Sofia asks who he really is, Ezio replies again with a sexist attitude, saying that he is the most interesting man she will ever meet in her life.

Ezio explores the hidden chamber. He now needs to find the Templar captain and take the keys from him. Ezio finds many keys and opens many doors until he gets to a hidden door, where when opened, he finds the first key of the library’s door. He returns to Sofia and shows her a map he found. She reads in the corners of the map the names of old books. The books are hidden in the city, and the maps should lead to them. Ezio believes that with the books, he will find clues to the whereabouts of the other keys. Sofia tells him that he is starting to make her interested in him. He says that one key was found by “man who does not read” and that he must find the other 3 remaining keys. He asks her help in deciphering a map.

We go out and meet Yusuf, who tells Ezio to keep the key in the headquarters. Throughout the whole game we have an open world, where we can freely choose side missions, so the narrative flow can take whatever turns we wish. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, we will focus on the main sequences required to complete the game. Also you can climb all the

towers and synchronize the map at the top of some. After you synchronize the map, you can always jump from the high and enter a “leap of faith” where you always land in safety.

Ezio meets a gipsy who tells him she has been 'stolen'. Ezio's mission is to poison everyone who touches a chest. He needs to hire gipsy women to walk with him so he will be invisible to guards. He poisons people who touch the chest, leaving the impression that the chest is cursed. The gipsy woman tells Ezio the story of the word “gipsy” which comes from a misinterpretation from the word “egyptian”, and that her people are not even from Egypt but from Persia. When Ezio takes the chest to return to the woman's headquarter, every guard that sees him runs away, being afraid of the chest. After this favor, the woman says that the gipsy women will always be available to him to return the favor. After this point in the narrative, we are able to hire gipsy women at any point of the city to help Ezio remain hidden.

When we enter the headquarters, Ezio analyzes the key and finds similarities between it and the “Apple of Eden”. They are made with the same material and technology. We are now taken to the year 1189, and we play as the character Altaïr when he was 24 years old, in Masyaf. They are inside the castle, during a war. Altaïr saves a man. A Templar threatens to kill Altaïr's mentor who is held hostage. At this stage the narrative has much more action, and decisions need to be made very fast. Altaïr needs to kill those who are holding his mentor hostage. Altaïr frees his mentor. We understand now that the keys (also called as ancient seals) contain recorded memories.

After this flashback, we continue Ezio's journey in the search of the other keys. Men threaten to kill apprentice assassins. Ezio finds the prisoner and kills those responsible for his captivity.

6. 4. Sequence 4 - The Uncivil War

Ezio tells Yusuf that the Otoman people have the key which they stole from the Topkapi Palace in Byzantium. Ezio needs to knock out nine minstrels. They change roles and Yusuf is now completing the mission for Ezio. While Ezio distracts the people by playing a guitar, Yusuf kills the targets. Ezio discovers that the student he met on the ship is actually a prince. His name is Solomon. We are suddenly drawn into a battle and we need to kill the last Templar in the area before he kills the prince. Ezio saves the prince.

Solomon starts to investigate a threat to his life. A man speaks to Tarik, saying that his incompetence is like treason. The prince Solomon says to the men that he is the one taking the lead on this investigation. Ezio goes to speak to Solomon, and tells him that Tarik failed in securing the palace against the Byzantine invasion. Yusuf tells Ezio to keep an eye on Tarik and the Janissaries.

There is a man in the streets bothering Sofia. Ezio arrives and asks Sofia if the man is disturbing her. The man is scared by seeing Ezio and runs away. She is confused and asks Ezio about the man, and Ezio tells her the man was engaged to his sister many years ago, but betrayed her. Sofia tells Ezio that she is waiting for a parcel to be released from customs. He helps to retrieve the parcel from the ship and gives it to her. She then reads the map and sees lands described by Amerigo Vespucci. They discuss the maps and the new ocean that has been found. Sofia gives Ezio an envelope with the decrypted location of the first book she had promised to him. He goes out and finds the hidden book.

Ezio opens a door and the narrative goes on a while without any dialogue. The next mission needs to be completed in less than six minutes, where the objective is to explore the

underground of the Galata tower. The whole mission has no dialogue and is developed under a dark scenario, and requires climbing over waterfalls. At the very bottom of the waterfall he finds the second of the five keys of Masyaf. He goes back to the head-quarters to deposit the new key securely. We now have another flashback where we see Altaïr killing his mentor (Al Mualim) because the mentor is in possession of the apple of Eden and cannot control it anymore.

We are taken back to the year 1191 when Altaïr is twenty-six years old, in Masyaf. Other people think he is a sorcerer, but Altaïr says that he is a common man controlling illusions. Altaïr carries the body of his mentor and people don't understand Altaïr's judgment and why Al Mualim is dead. Abbas follows Altaïr requesting a better explanation. Altaïr talks about the Templar's apple of Eden, which is able to control illusions. Altaïr says that the apple is hidden in Al Mualim secret study room. Altaïr burns the body of Al Mualim on a pyre. All the assassins are angry, since this is not an accepted ritual of the age. He describes to the people that this could be another illusion. Abbas fights back and says that Al Mualim is bending the rules to suit his own will. We start to fight as Altaïr now and need to disarm our own creed fellows.

Abbas shows up on top of a building holding the apple of Eden, and we can see the magic coming from it, as well as the tone of Abbas, who says that Altaïr is not worthy of owning this artifact. Altaïr says that no man is able to possess this artifact. Abbas starts to go crazy and has illusions, until the power of the apple start to possess him. Altaïr finally gets the apple and asks himself if this artifact will lead all men to ruin.

We are put back in Ezio's skin, where he realizes that Altaïr was the grand master in the order when only twenty-six years old.

6. 5. Sequence 5 - Heir to the Empire

Ezio once more appears, this time writing a letter to his sister. After this, Ezio starts a new mission and goes to talk to a rug seller. He needs to find Tarik and finds out more about his involvement with the Templars. Tarik gets a chest from an old man who says that Tarik can count the money, but the money is still his until he has seen the cargo and analyzed its quality. Tarik confirms the amount, and gives access to the bombs to the old man.

Our next task is to create a riot to distract the guards and gain access. Ezio enters the docks and listens to the men discussing the cargo. He sees that the contents of the chests are guns, and he is spotted by the men. He needs to run away to complete the mission.

He goes to find Sofia again, who tells him about the encryption she had been working on, revealing the location of the other two books. He sees that something is wrong in her shop, and she says that someone broke in and stole a painting of herself. He retrieves it for her and she says it was a gift from her father. She now starts to wonder about Ezio's interest in these books. She says he is not a scholar and asks whether he works for the church. Ezio describes himself as a kind of teacher, but not a church worker, and says he will someday explain it to her in detail.

Our next mission is to find signs of Polo and one of the books. Ezio then finds two books in the city. We enter a hidden chamber. This is an action mission, with very little dialogue. Ezio needs to hurry up to meet his target before he runs away. It is a tricky environment again with running water, a dark scenario and explosions. He jumps inside a small boat and kills a man. After he fights the other men, he needs to find hidden objects in the area. He finds a hidden door, and one more key to the library, the third one of our journey. When we place the key in headquarters, we start a new flashback.

We are taken to the year 1228 in the skin of Altaïr at the age of sixty-three. We are again in Masyaf. He tells a woman called Maria about the losses they have suffered. All their progress has been undone, and he blames it on Abbas, who sent no reinforcements to protect their land. She says Abbas must answer for this, and Altaïr stands up and says that all assassins obey only him. She encourages him to forego his will for revenge. He says that Abbas deserves to die, since he murdered their son. She is kind in her speech to calm him down.

They go and meet Abbas, who claims that the apple has corrupted Altaïr in these thirty years. Abbas sends another man to take the apple. The man reveals to Altaïr that when he murdered Altaïr's son, he had told him that it was Altaïr who had sent him to kill his son, so he died believing his father had betrayed him. Holding the apple, Altaïr cannot control it, and the power flows to kill the man. Maria steps in between them to stop Altaïr and is stabbed in the back. Altaïr kills the man almost at the same time, and falls to the ground with Maria.

Again all the assassins of the order turn against Altaïr thinking that he is possessed. Our only mission is to run away from the area. On his way out, Altaïr meets his son, who was just arriving in the area. He helps him by providing more knives. Both the characters must leave the area together. When they finally reach the main gate, a man tells them that he is going to find the apple and that he will have also Altaïr's head for all the dishonor he has brought to his family. Altaïr and his older son escape on horses.

6. 6. Sequence 6 - Fortune's disfavor

Ezio is writing a letter. He says that Manuel Paleologo is the man controlling the Templars. In this letter he reveals his love for Sofia, mentioning that he is pursuing the last

hidden key and is running out of time. Even though time is short, he likes how the time passes slower when he is with Sofia, and he is able to listen to her voice and admire her joyful face.

We are taken to Solomon playing chess with his uncle. He explains the European variation of the move Rocco. His uncle doesn't think it is fair, since he is playing by different rules. Ezio approaches Solomon when his uncle leaves. He tells Solomon that Tarik has been selling guns to Manuel Paleologo. Solomon is concerned that the conflict might get much worse. Solomon tells Ezio that he must go undercover if he wants to find Tarik and discover the location of a Templar army.

Ezio kills a Templar and wears his clothes and a mask. Since the mask he is wearing is broken, he must be careful not to reveal his own identity. Ezio kills Tarik. On the edge of death, Tarik reveals that he was planning an ambush against the Templars because he discovered a treasonable plot. Ezio asks for a proof of betrayal and Tarik gives him a letter with the Templar's location. Ezio asks for forgiveness and Tarik asks Ezio to protect his homeland. Ezio runs away until he is not recognized anymore.

We are back with Sofia and Ezio. He reads her book about politics. She tells him that she is going to travel 5 days to visit a printing press and asks for his escort. Ezio denies the possibility, since he believes he has only a short time to finish his quest. She says that time runs short for all of them, and says that she needs another day to decipher the location of the other key, because she needs to buy white tulips. Ezio tells her that he will do the job for her, so she has more time to work on the map and the key's locations.

Ezio finds the flower shop and the man says he doesn't have tulips, but he will get some and bring them within one hour. Ezio doesn't have time, so he follows the seller to see where he

gets the tulips from. Ezio finds the place and gets three flowers from a garden. He gets them back to Sofia, who thanks him and also tells him that she has finished deciphering the code.

In our next mission we need to find Solomon. He tells Ezio about Tarik and the Byzantines. Ezio tells him the location of the guns and asks Solomon to take him there. Solomon's uncle tells Solomon about the tragedy of the murder of Tarik. Solomon pretends that he doesn't know, and introduces Ezio with a different name. Solomon tells Ezio to get the ship to the place he wants to go.

The next mission starts when Ezio looks for the missing key in the maiden's tower. He enters it and goes down into a cavern. Again, the scenario is dark and there is a great deal of water around. Ezio needs to decipher many engines inside the cave and how they are intertwined to open a path. There are many chests on the top ceiling, where Ezio also finds the key of Masyaf. He touches the key and realizes this is the fourth of the five keys.

Ezio brings the key to the headquarters. We are taken back to the year 1247 and play the role of Altaïr at eighty-two years of age. He sits together with four people and while the four apprentices are gossiping about Abbas, Altaïr tells them to pity Abbas instead of mock him. That is because Abbas has lived his whole life pursuing power and this means he is weak. One of the four stands up angrily and says that unlike Altaïr, Abbas has never betrayed them. Another man defends Altaïr saying that he was unjustly expelled. Altaïr asks this man if there is any way he can talk to Abbas himself. Our next mission starts here, where we need to unite allies and kill Abbas.

The man says that the guards have brutality as their sole joy and even kill innocent people. Altaïr says that we should spare those who still live by the creed, but kill those who have

compromised the order. Altaïr starts walking and killing silently the captains targeted. His friends serve as his scout since he is very old and has limited movements. Abbas sends men to kill Altaïr.

While Abbas claims to protect Masyaf, Altaïr tells him to lower his guard. Altaïr says that Abbas has corrupted everything they fought for and lost everything they had ever gained. Abbas says that Altaïr sacrificed his own life staring at the apple. Altaïr says he learned many things from the apple, about past and future, death and life. He then kills Abbas with humanity's first ever gun, from a distance. When dying, Abbas says that he can never forgive Altaïr for his lies and for the humiliation he has suffered. Altaïr confesses that Abbas' father never lied, but asked for forgiveness to Altaïr's family before he killed himself. Abbas says that he will find his father in the afterlife and then go back to find Altaïr.

We are back at Ezio's narrative time where he says that Altaïr was stubborn trying to keep unity in the brotherhood, but admires his courage. The assassins were his life from beginning to end.

Solomon asks Ezio if he is leaving. Ezio says he was planning to, but Solomon says the Janassaries have blocked the paths until Ezio is caught. Solomon gives Ezio a bomb five times as powerful as a normal one. Our next mission starts here and we need to find Manuel who has escaped via sea while the Janassaries target Ezio. Before Ezio leaves, he asks Solomon to take care of Sofia for him.

Ezio boards a ship and needs to fire a Greek cannon against the other ships. While all the ships caught fire, Ezio has to get through the fire and reach his own ship.

6. 7. Sequence 7 - Underworld

We hear the Animus voice. Two people chatting, Will and Shaun. Will says that whatever they are going to find now, the Templars cannot have it.

We go back to Desmond. Subject Sixteen asks Desmond if he regrets anything. Desmond says he wishes he was more patient with his parents, and to have listened more. And that maybe things would be different regarding Lucy's death. Subject Sixteen says thank you to Desmond and disappears.

We cross the gates into the simulation area. Ezio is writing a letter with a feather pen. He says he left Constantinople to travel to the interior of Anatolia, to Cappadocia where Manuel is training his soldiers. He says that he will not be alone as Ottomans are ready to attack as well. He will only trust himself and keeps Sofia near his heart. He says he has more affection for Sofia and after Cristina's death this is the first time the capacity for love has returned to him. He fears to drag her into his life and hurt her.

We start this mission searching for the Ottomans and the Templars. Inside the cave, we need to find the path to the top. This is the location where we should find the last key which is with the Templars. Ezio goes to confront a female spy (Dilara). He gets close and she points a knife at him. He says Tarik sent him. He asks where are her men. She says they were captured by Byzantines a week before. She was the only one who escaped. She asks him to come back and find her whenever Ezio gets to know if he is a good fighter or not.

The spy was recognized by the Byzantines and is locked in the chambers. It is Ezio's task to rescue and release her. There is an old man asking some people how long his servants would take to learn to handle fire guns. One of the men replies saying a few weeks. The old man says

that the Janassaries have probably realized that he betrayed them. He asks if they still have resources to fight them. The man/soldier says that the battle between the Sultain and Selim takes most of his time. The old man senses a bad smell. We can see the dead bodies of the prisoners who died of weakness, and the man asks his soldiers to bring the woman from the prison to the chapel. They realize they don't know where the key is kept. Ezio follows them to find the guard who has it. Ezio gets the key and returns to the prison to release Dilara.

She complains that he took too long and that she can smell the dead bodies of the killed Ottoman prisoners. She says Shakulu did this and she is going to kill him.

Ezio finds Dilara again: she says she doesn't want to make friends, but to rescue her men. She shows to Ezio the whereabouts of Shakulu. He says his armor is too thick for bullets, so he must get close to kill him. Ezio's mission is to kill Shahkulu.

When Ezio kills Shakulu, he says that men who kill for fetishistic reasons don't deserve pity. Ezio struggles to kill an enemy for the first time in the game. He doesn't die and fights against him, together with his army. Ezio finally kills them all, and the prisoners are released. Ezio tells Dilara to destroy the rifles. He guides her saying that she must leave at the sound of explosions which Ezio will create. Ezio says he must do it to find Manuel.

We continue the narrative and now the aim is to destroy all the gunpowder that's hidden. Ezio sets fire to the place. Manuel appears shouting, telling people not to panic with the whole cave burning. He sees Ezio and runs away, asking his people to kill him. Ezio now needs to kill him in order to retrieve the last key of Masyaf.

The pursuit starts. When found, Manuel targets Ezio saying that he is the one who is promoting an empty cause. Ezio replies saying that Templars talk about peace but don't give up power. Manuel says that power creates peace, and not the reverse.

Manuel says that he should be the successor of Constantinople. He says that the Ottomans and Byzantines are mere labels, costumes and exteriors, and that the Templars are all part of the same family. Ezio tells him he is there for the Masyaf key. Manuel gives it to Ezio and threatens him: go try to find your fortune, let's see how many steps you can give before one of us finishes you off.

Ahmet appears saying that humanity must walk towards the same goals, and that the Great Temple secrets will give them this and that Altaïr leads would help them to find it. Ezio gets angry saying that Altaïr 's secrets are not for them. Ahmet says that he is there for the Masyaf keys. Ezio pretends he doesn't know the existence of any other key. Ahmet then threatens Ezio and says that maybe Sofia Sartor knows it better. Ezio gets angry and says that she doesn't know anything, and that they should leave her alone.

Now Ezio needs to leave Cappadocia and go to Constantinople because the Templars are being led by Ahmet to kill Sofia if Ezio does not give them the keys.

Ezio starts to get out of the underground world. On the way out, we can see many people coughing because of the smoke from the explosions.

We go back to the year 1257 when Altaïr was ninety-two years old. We see two distinguished icons, Nicolau and Matteo Polo. Altaïr gives Nicolau Polo a codex that promises to answer many questions he is yet to ask. Nicolau says he will go spend some time in Constantinople before returning to Venice. Altaïr says that Marco would appreciate hearing his

father stories. A guard appears and announces that the palace is being invaded. Altaïr tells Nicolau that he will escort him to the village gates and demands that his troops start an attack.

Altaïr walks with Matteo and Nicolau Polo and uses the apple of Eden as his weapon. After they reach a secure point, Altaïr sits and says that he believed in the past that the creed would bring an end to all the conflicts. Altaïr asks Nicolau a last favor, which is to keep the keys with him and protect them and hide them. He tells him they have encrypted messages.

6. 8. Sequence 8 - The End of an Era

Ezio is writing another letter. He asks for Claudia's forgiveness, but much has happened. He confesses that he is going after Ahmet, and that all the keys are in the hands of the assassins now and so there is nothing holding him back. But he is worried about Sofia and he will not let anything happen to her.

Ezio is on a ship and hears people saying that a reward has been put on Ezio's head, and ten thousand acres will be given to any leads on where to find Ezio.

Prince Ahmet threatens to harm Sofia. We must locate her and protect her. Ezio finds Yusuf dead. He calls out all the assassins and demands that they kill Yusuf's murderer. Ezio catches Ahmet and asks him about Sofia's whereabouts. Ahmet says that he is sorry that two men are fighting for the keys of a library. Ahmet says people want truth but when they have it they deny to look at it. Ezio says that liberty is priceless. Ahmet says that he will open the library and with the power hidden there, he will destroy the superstitions that keep mankind apart. He asks Ezio to bring the keys to the Galatian Tower and Sofia's life will be spared. He also says that his brother's army will be there soon and that after that everything will change.

Solomon appears, he says that he heard everything, and that Ahmet is sincere but he is an unjust leader. Ezio says that he fears the disorder that comes from difference. Solomon says that laws are for that, so that it applies to everyone in equal measures. Solomon asks Ezio to spare his uncle if he can.

In this mission we need to get the Masyaf keys and give them to Ahmet to save Sofia. Ezio appears collecting all the keys. He then finds his assassins allies, and tells them they have no time for mourning because of their enemy. He talks to a particular assassin, and says Yusuf had great consideration for him, and Ezio himself has no doubt about this judgment. He asks this assassin to be the leader of the crew. The assassin replies saying it would be an honor. They all go to find Ahmet.

Ezio reaches the place and doesn't see Sofia, only Ahmet and other men. They exchange threats. Ahmet asks for the keys. Ezio asks for the girl. Ahmet points to the top of a higher tower. We can see Sofia held by a man with her head covered. The man is pushing her to the edge. Ahmet asks for the keys again. Ezio gives him a package. Ahmet leaves. Ezio needs to climb the tower to reach Sofia. We have only two minutes to do this. When we reach the top, Ezio takes out the girl's hood and finds out that she is not Sofia. While the woman says thank you, Ezio looks down and sees Sofia being hanged in public, in the same way as his father. He uses a parachute to get down and reaches the tree where Sofia is struggling. He cuts the rope. She says she is not hurt, but confused. He runs with her, they are under attack. They take a carriage.

Ahmet is leaving the city with the five keys. Our mission is to catch him before he runs away. We take on a task which involves damaging other carriages. All the movements are fast and a heroic music plays. This part of the narrative is very tense, Sofia is falling off the carriage,

losing balance. Ezio falls out and opens his parachute. Being dragged by the carriage he needs to save Sofia. She manages to get back inside the carriage and he starts to kill the soldiers on horses while driving the parachute. Ezio releases the rope which was holding him to Sofia's carriage and flies to Ahmet's carriage. Ezio reached the carriage and Ahmet and Ezio start to fall off the cliff while fighting. This part of the game is very tense, because Ezio's life gets almost lost and he still needs to defend and attack at the same time. They hit the floor alive. Ahmet's brother appears and kills Ahmet on his own, implying that their father demanded it. Selim introduces himself to Ezio. He says that he is Solomon's father. Ezio says Solomon has a magnificent mind. Selim says that Solomon told him not to kill Ezio, and that is the only reason he is not doing it and asks Ezio to leave this soil. Ezio is enraged. Sofia stands in between them and Ezio backs off. He says it is not clear where one war ends and another begins.

We are back in the island as Desmond. All the scenarios are fading out in a futuristic way. Subject Sixteen says that this is the end, that everything was scheduled for deletion. Subject Sixteen says: 'What is a man but the sum of his memories? We are the stories we live, and the tales we tell ourselves'.

Desmond is confused. Sixteen says he is saving him.

We are back to Ezio writing a letter to Claudia. He has a light heart and steady hand. He declares he has the five keys and is with Sofia in Acre. Now he has all the time in the world. He says that tomorrow they will leave for Masyaf to open Altaïr's library to fulfill their father's forgotten dream. The next words he will tell Claudia will be delivered in person.

6. 9. Sequence 9 - Revelations

Ezio and Sofia reach Masyaf and walk to open the library. She asks him about the creed. He tells her the motto of the creed which says ‘Nothing is true, everything is permitted’ which he says it is not a doctrine, but an observation of society's fragile foundations, and that we are the architects of our reality and must live with the consequences of our choices.

They reach the door of the library. He uses the keys to complete the constellations drawn on the door. The door opens. He tells her he will get back alive.

Ezio enters. Looks around. He finds no book, and no wisdom, but a dead body of Altaïr who is holding another key. Ezio gets the key.

We are given a last flashback. Altaïr asks his son if he saw his books. The son replies that the books were sent out, but asks why he built the library if he didn't intend to keep the books, and realizes it is a vault. Altaïr tells Darim his son that the secret of the vault should be kept until it passes the secret it contains. Darim does not understand what the secret is. They say goodbye to each other.

Altaïr enters and turns off the torches that light the way. We hear voices from his memories. He telling his wife that he sent the apple to another country. Altaïr locks the door and sits on the chair holding the artifact/key.

We are back in Ezio's time-shift. We walk to the space behind the chair and see another apple inside the wall. Ezio says that he will leave the apple there, because he had seen enough for a lifetime. A light flashes from the apple and Ezio calls Desmond. Desmond hears it. Ezio says that Desmond's name is in the back of his mind like an image of an old dream. Ezio takes out his armor and says that he is only a channel for a message that eludes his comprehension. He asks

himself who is that blessed to be able to speak across centuries and share histories. He asks Desmond to make it worth something in the end.

Ezio wants to talk directly to Desmond, but a bright light appears, and we see a man in futuristic custom and shining lights. His name is never revealed. He asks if they can hear and see him. Desmond appears. It is a strange place of time nexus. The man says he is not used to the calculations, this was Minerva's duty, but sees that humans still have many questions, such as what do the gods want from them. He says he will tell all the answers.

He starts a story, that before and after they sought to save the world. Different vaults had different methods of salvation. He says that it was his, Minerva's and Juno's duty to sort out and test different solutions into their merits. After the first six solutions, the world ended.

The narrative changes into a more visual perspective. A futuristic world experiencing natural disasters. We see the Earth, and a sun explosion. People start running and there is sandstorm, lightning and explosions happening everywhere. People run seeking shelter. A woman tries to protect her baby. There is smoke, and people falling from a cliff into magma, and we hear the baby's cry. The narrator takes up the narrative again and says that after the disaster, only ten thousand people were left. He tells Desmond that he needs to go there where they labored and lost. He says to take his words and pass from the head into the hands, and that is how to open the way.

We are taken to Animus where Desmond is waking up. He tells his friends that he knows what he needs to do. A door is opened and this is how the game ends.

7. Analysis (The apple's tale morphology)

We can identify a minimal structure throughout the narrative of the game as whole, the contract being the first step is illustrated by the steps we take in the island with the character Desmond. The first opponents start to appear as we develop into the character Ezio, right after we pass the main gate in the island. This marks the beginning of the struggle stage of the narrative, and here is where most of the game narrative takes action. The apple is gained and lost a few times during the narrative, and this indicates the second step of the narrative, the struggle. The third and final step can be clearly observed right after Ezio finds the apple behind the chair and the last flash-forward takes place, showing to us many resolutions, this is the consequence step of the whole narrative we developed with the characters we played.

There are a number of questions, issues and points of interest that can be identified in an analysis of the narrative, characterization, relationships, historical background and action in Assassin's Creed Revelations. The first question we can ask is 'What are the rhythms of the narrative'? This involves features such as how action develops, the frequency, extent and timing of discussions between characters, and the deployment of explanations about people, places & events, and how they function as either instigators of, or reflections about action and events. In other words this question concerns both the pace of the story (which will vary depending on whether actions are being depicted or discussions and explanations are being presented), and the interrelationship between these narrative features. This question is tied to the issue of genre: this is a video game, and that means that at times the story and the players will be 'hurried along' (to find the answer to a problem, to retrieve something); however at the same time the genre requires that the audience-as-players need to be 'taken in' and given explanations about contexts, characters, histories, technical points and geography. The first steps in this game and its narrative,

for instance, are very slow: we are trapped on an island, and we are introduced to a great many situations, facts and background details that will enable us to understand where we are, and perhaps more importantly, where we might be going, and why. The story is quickly pushed forward, however, as we cross a portal and move into the story-as-action. This pattern is followed throughout the game: the narrative tends to take on a 'slow/faster/very fast' narrative characteristic. That is to say, it tends to establish the who/what/why and where of a particular situation, which gets the players 'up to speed' and orients them. Then it engages in (often very spirited and dramatic) conversations, discussions and declarations which sets up a move from the 'here and now' to the next stage of action: we are in between the now and the future. Finally the characters (and the players) are thrown forward: the narrative quickly accelerates into a series of (closely related) actions and interactions (exchanges, fights, travels, discoveries). Then the narrative is once again 'slowed down', as this action is 'recapitulated' as knowledge, reflections, and changes to attitudes, ideas and consciousness.

This raises the next issue, which is that of character development. We can consider some of the main characters in this regard, both specifically with regard to Propp's terms, archetypes and categories, and more generally. Desmond Miles's introductory part in this narrative is very slow as he meets Subject Sixteen. Desmond is one of the three *heroes* of this game, and the *hero* archetype takes part in plots in different time-spaces continuums. Desmond can also be considered as an *oracle* as he allows Ezio's whole "simulation" and narrative to take place. Sixteen can be considered a *dispatcher* according to Propp's archetypes, as well as a *donor*, as he reappears many times during the narrative. Yusuf most often functions as a *helper*. He plays as a *hero* in Sequence 4 while Ezio distracts a group of people. Sofia is Ezio's subject of desire, as

well as a *helper*. Solomon plays a supporting role as a student and prince. He can be considered as a *helper* and a *donor*.

Tarik can be considered as an *oracle*, due to his status and actions throughout the game: in his journey he passes information to Ezio so that the *hero* can finish his quest. Dilara is introduced as a thief, but is also brave as she is protecting her own crew. Ezio Auditore da Firenze is the main *hero*, and he develops more throughout the story as a character. The interactions the players have with the other *heroes* are limited. We play as Ezio in the open world, have many decisions to make, and he has contact with almost all the other characters at least once.

Some characters are relatively minor, and do not play a significant role in the action or develop to any great extent: they are mainly *functionaries* or *assistants*. Lucy never appears: she is only in a memory from Desmond's mind. The Man Without Name is a *villain* as he struggles at the end of the narrative with the *hero*, but he is also an *oracle*, providing essential information for further development of the *heroes*. Claudia (Ezio's sister) does not appear in this game. She is the one who Ezio always talks to and probably the only character that could fit a *dispatcher* archetype in full form in this game. The Byzantines mercenaries are *villain* archetypes: they attempt to intercept the *hero*, and he kills them during his journey. Leandros is a Templar and *villain*. He is harsh in his appearances and fights against the *hero* Ezio. Leandros is the one riding the carriage against Ezio at the end of the game. Solomon (whose first appearance is as a student) appears in many scenes with Ezio and is usually providing Ezio with necessary tools. He is a *helper* in this game.

Some characters, although not taking on a dynamic, active or central role or function, are still significant because of what they do to help the *hero*, or because they are important to him in

one form or another. Sofia appears many times in the game's narrative. She is probably the one who holds the most number of different roles at the same time. Yusuf de Istanbul is essentially a *donor*, and appears many times with Ezio. Prisoner and first recruited assassin: this character is an ally and a *helper*. The same role is acquired by many other recruited assassin's throughout the game. They can be called by Ezio at any time for reinforcements in battle. Altaïr is our first *hero* as, chronologically, he is the first and oldest in the Assassin's Order, fighting against Templars. Abbas (1189) is a character who struggles with Altaïr and tries to steal back the apple from the Assassin's. He is a *villain*, but he is significant in terms of the impact he has on the direction of the narrative. Al Mualim (Altaïr's mentor) is even higher in the hierarchical system, as he is the one who is helping our top hierarchical *hero*, Altaïr. He is a *donor*, a *helper* and an *oracle*. Maria from the 13th century time-frame is the wife of Altaïr. Although she is a submissive or passive figure during the game, she has status and historical significance (in other words, she has significance and status that is acquired over and carried across time). Her status, like all the characters in the games, is historical in that this video game is a story that is both set in, and makes considerable use of, history, historical periods, and historical names and categories. Although the game is fictional, it makes reference to and is situated with historical categories and periods (Constantinople and the Byzantines, the Templars, the Assassins). What this means is that history is part of the story, and that to some extent each of the characters has a status derived from history, regardless of whether they actually existed or not.

It is important to look at the relation between the narrative, the characters and the allocation of tasks to the players within the story/game. Specifically it is useful to consider the 'when, why and how' regarding tasks and functions, and how this develops or impacts upon the narrative. The game is played in an "opened world" which means the player has the freedom to

choose from selected mission options displayed throughout the map of Constantinople. At the start of every mission, a menu pops up telling us the objective we must accomplish and we must accept it in order to initiate the mission. After the mission is completed, we usually keep walking from where we are or we are given cinematic flashbacks or flash-forwards to make sense of the narrative as a whole. One way of characterizing this is to say that the players take on a number of roles, functions and tasks, and that this means that they tend to be 'associated with' a variety of Propp's categories during the course of their stay in the game. Generally speaking their roles are both major (as stand in for the *hero*) and facilitatory, in that they help keep the narrative moving forward. When a player takes on an active role into the game's narrative, he is a hero, be it as Desmond, Ezio or Altaïr, in different time-spaces. There is one section of the game, where we can find that Ezio plays as a mentor, since he needs to teach an assassin apprentice the ways of killing without getting hurt. We have many interactions with other roles, throughout the whole narrative.

How can we characterize the relation between the roles and tasks of characters and players, and the narrative as a form of temporal continuum and discontinuum (involving both a progression and a back and forth in history)? We start the game in a frame where time and space are very abstract. It is a futuristic place, yet most of the scenario is intangible. Taking account of the physical presence of the character Desmond, we can understand this time-frame as being the present, maybe happening in the character's own mind. When he steps out of this scenario, by the main portal, he is placed back in time in the body of Ezio. We go back to this island several times during the game, usually when a mission is completed.

As Ezio, we are in Constantinople, a place which we know nowadays as Istanbul. Ezio goes from the docks to the head-quarters, then to Galata. During the whole free walk in the game

you can synchronize viewpoints, that opens up the blueprint of the ground giving you information about hidden locations, treasures and so on. After the first “fire sign” of Ezio, we go to the island as Desmond. This is a very brief part of the game narration and we see Sixteen again and part of his delusion. We step back to Ezio’s temporal frame. As Ezio, we start creating assassin allies. Ezio starts to conquer all the area under the Templar’s control. Most of the narrative takes place in this temporal dimension. After he reaches the first key we are taken back to the year of 1189 where we play as a young Altaïr in the Syrian place called Masyaf. After a few battles, we play as Ezio.

Another major part of the narrative takes place when we reach Galata and find the second key. We are then taken back to the year of 1191 with Altaïr at the age of twenty-six. Altaïr talks about the apple of Eden and its power to control people’s illusions. In this part of the narrative Altaïr’s allies are so angry at him that Altaïr needs to disarm his own friends. Altaïr gets hold of the apple and we are taken to the time-space of Ezio. The narrative develops here: we move between finding book locations, meeting the Polo family and a lot of battles. As we get the third key we are taken back to the year 1228, when Altaïr was 63. In this part of the narrative, there is a moment when Altaïr cannot control the power of the apple and kills Maria by accident. As Altaïr and his son escape on horses, we are taken to Ezio’s time-frame. Ezio meets Solomon and they play chess. He meets Sofia a couple of times and wins some more battles. We take part in many battles as Ezio until we find the fourth key and are taken back to the year 1247 when Altaïr was 82. A slow part of the narrative takes place as the movements of the character Altaïr are limited. This part of the narrative takes place in Masyaf.

We then go back to Ezio, and the next sequence starts with a narrative from Animus, Will and Shaun who are chatting about something that the Templars can’t have. We are taken to the

present, with Desmond. He reveals to Sixteen that he wishes he had been more patient in his life with regard to his parents. We are on the island and Sixteen disappears. We cross the main gate into the simulation of Ezio's life. Ezio pushes the plot forward as he searches for the Ottomans and the Templars. He finds the fifth key. For the first time we struggle to fight an enemy. Ezio goes out of the underground Cappadocia. While the main course of the action happens and Ezio loses the keys saving Sofia, we are in the simulation area in Constantinople. After this climax, we go to Desmond's island. The intangible place starts to fade away, taking us to Acre with Ezio. Ezio and Sofia go to Masyaf. Ezio opens the Masyaf's library door and at this moment the two plots merge, when Ezio finds the dead body of the ancestor Altaïr. In this moment the last flashback happens and we are taken to the time when Altaïr locks himself inside the library. When the flashback stops, we are back in Ezio's body: this is the most complex time-frame of the narrative, as Ezio finds an apple behind Altaïr's chair, and as the apple lights up, Ezio senses Desmond in the future. Desmond hears Ezio's call and both can communicate through time until a bright light that acquires human appearance starts to speak. At this point of the narrative, there is nothing more we can do, and a cinematic short-movie is shown as the closure of the narrative, with futuristic scenarios of the Earth and the Sun's explosions. In the final part we see Desmond in the Animus machine and his colleagues by his side. He wakes up, sees the apple and says he knows what they need to do. The older man opens the truck door. This is the end of the narrative.

It is interesting to consider the relation between the narrative and characterization from the perspective of gender. What, for instance, are the roles and status of the female characters? How can we categorize their roles and functions, both in general terms (active/passive, fighters/love interest) and with regard to Propp's roles and functions?

Dilara is a woman who is a fighter, a leader and protector of her male allies. She is a *hero* archetype. There is a gipsy woman who plays a small role in the game, she has a passive character and can also be considered as a *donor* archetype. Sofia is Ezio's subject of desire, as well as a helper and donor. According to Propp's character archetypes, she is also a princess archetype. Lucy is our "current time" princess archetype whom Desmond fails to save, leading to her death in a previous game. In Assassins Creed Revelations she is remembered once when Desmond crosses the island gate. Claudia (Ezio's sister) is referred to by Ezio several times while writing letters. She can be considered as a *dispatcher*. Maria from the 13th century is the wife of Altaïr. She is a submissive or passive figure in this game. When we consider Altaïr as one of our main *heroes*, she can be considered as an *oracle*, who provides wisdom to Altaïr. The apple is both a love interest and a *villain*. Though not having a human form, the apple of Eden in this game can be considered as a *villain*, because of its manipulative power and struggles against our *hero*. The apple, not having any natural interest in persuading or harming female characters can ideologically be considered as a female figure. At the same time she represents a threat to male figures, and in a sense is an incarnation of the idea of Eve as a temptress who brings about Adam's downfall. Generally speaking women in this game can be divided into three categories: those who threaten men, those who are submissive and are objects of desire for men, and those (in the case of Dilara) women acting like men.

8. Conclusion

From this study we can suggest that the narrative structures and functions identified by Propp are still relevant to the analysis of the video game and its various layers of narrative. Furthermore we can also suggest that the “open world” that the game provides is still derived from and to some extent circumscribed by those original narrative categories and functions, and influence the practices, choices and decisions of the player-as-narrator. The complex structured line of narrative presented in Assassin’s Creed Revelations is still a product of the templates derived from conventional cultural categories (hero/helper) and gender politics (men are active, women passive). What this dissertation has demonstrated, then, is the ideological nature of the video game-as-narrative, to an extent that includes the way that the game uses historical periods, categories, figures and names (Assassins, Templars), and assigns and organizes those features based on ideologized cultural meanings (including, but not confined to, gender).



9. Reference List

Anthropy, A., & Clark, N. (2013). *A game design vocabulary: Exploring the foundational principles behind good game design*. Pearson Education.

Assassin's Creed Revelations - FINAL ÉPICO [Playthrough em PT-BR] (2013, October, 24) [video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87SwWDcVbS4>

Assassin's Creed Revelations - Parte 1: Ezio e a Biblioteca de Altaïr [Playthrough em PT-BR].(2013, September, 16) [video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njjQyU_TTj4

Assassin's Creed Revelations - Parte 2: O Bico da Águia [Playthrough em PT-BR].(2013, September, 20) [video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_NYKgU8q14

Assassin's Creed Revelations - Parte 3: Brincando de Terrorista! [Playthrough em PT-BR].(2013, September, 30) [video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NUkK8BDUE8>

Assassin's Creed Revelations - Parte 4: Revivendo a História de Altaïr! [Playthrough em PT-BR].(2013, October, 4) [video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rF6aSaU4Ao

Assassin's Creed Revelations - Parte 5: Torre de Gálata! [Playthrough em PT-BR].(2013, October, 6) [video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXRICZMHA1E>

Assassin's Creed Revelations - Parte 6: Os Janízaros! [Playthrough em PT-BR]].(2013, October, 11) [video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_u6VSH7hGY

Assassin's Creed Revelations - Parte 7: O Traidor!? [Playthrough em PT-BR].(2013, October,17) [video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Pcbtr8Gy1o>

Assassin's Creed Revelations - Parte 8: A Armadura de Ishak Pasha [Playthrough em PT-BR]. (2013, October, 20) [video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9sv6yy2HHk&t=3548s>

Assassin's Creed Revelations - Parte 9: Capadócia em Chamas! [Playthrough em PT-BR]. (2013, October, 22) [video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmWE0n5-ERo>

Baron, N. S. (1984). Computer mediated communication as a force in language change. *Visible Language*, 18(2), 118-141.

Bousaic, P. (1998) *Encyclopedia of Semiotics*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Danaher, G., Schirato, T., Webb, J. (2001) *Understanding Foucault*. Delhi

Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S., Smith, J. H., & Tosca, S. P. (2015). *Understanding video games: The essential introduction*. Routledge.

Propp, V. I. A., Pírková-Jakobsonová, S., In Wagner, L. A., & Dundes, A. (1968). *Morphology of the folktale*.

Ruggill, J. E., & McAllister, K. S. (2011). *Gaming matters: art, science, magic, and the computer game medium*. University of Alabama Press.

Schirato, T., et al. (2010) *Understanding Media Studies*. Australia: Oxford University Press.

Schirato, T., Webb, J. (2004) *Understanding the Visual*. Australia

Schirato, T., Yell, S. (2000) *Communication and Cultural Literacy*. Australia

Wolf, M. J. (2001). *The medium of the video game*. University of Texas Press.

Wolf, M. J., & Perron, B. (Eds.). (2003). *The video game theory reader*. Psychology Press.