‘Nothing is True’:
The Different Functions of Haytham Kenway in the 
ASSASSIN’S CREED Kenway Saga

Research Master’s Thesis

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Introduction

“They all have to die, don’t they? Even my father.”
“Especially your father. He’s the one holding the whole thing together.”
Connor and Achilles, ASSASSIN’S CREED III

With the start of a new saga in 2012, the popular historical action-adventure series **ASSASSIN’S CREED**\(^1\) (2007-present) presents players with novelties on many different levels, forcing them to actively re-evaluate the convictions and conventions that had hitherto been established in a rather straightforward manner in the series. **ASSASSIN’S CREED III** in particular is a pivotal game in the franchise. The fifth main game in the series, it is the last instalment of the ‘Desmond Saga’ and brings closure to an elaborate narrative that was developed over the course of the first five main games and additional material. At the same time, **ASSASSIN’S CREED III** serves as a transition game heralding in the so-called ‘Kenway Saga,’ which spans the three main games **ASSASSIN’S CREED III, ASSASSIN’S CREED IV: BLACK FLAG** (2013), and **ASSASSIN’S CREED ROGUE** (2014), as well as the two novels Assassin’s Creed Forsaken (2012) and Assassin’s Creed Black Flag (2013).\(^2\) It also spills over into the latest instalments, **ASSASSIN’S CREED UNITY** (2014) and the novel of the same name.

Rather than simply marking the respective ending and beginning of the sagas, **ASSASSIN’S CREED III** also turns around the way the series has so far been presented in two other areas. One crucial difference between the two sagas is the way the Templar-Assassin conflict is presented, the struggle that drives the **ASSASSIN’S CREED** storyworld. Rather than being presented with a singular truth about the conflict, players need to make up their own mind and often realise that matters are not as black and white as they seemed until now. To achieve this, the Kenway Saga abandons the absolute thinking of the Desmond Saga, instead introducing an alternative, relative perspective. Therefore, **ASSASSIN’S CREED III** and the games that follow in its wake require more critical thinking and active interpretation of the narrative on the player’s part.

On a formal level, the Kenway Saga shifts away from a linear presentation of a specific narrative and instead focuses on its worldbuilding capacities. This worldbuilding is part of what today’s entertainment industry has termed ‘transmedia storytelling,’ which embraces the possibility to distribute narratives and (parts of) storyworlds across different media.

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\(^1\) Because this thesis deals with many different media, the following typography will be used to distinguish between the different types: **small italics** will be used for video games and *conventional italics* will be used for books.

\(^2\) Although **ASSASSIN’S CREED III: LIBERATION** (2012) is also considered part of the Kenway Saga, the game is not one of the main games in the series, and neither does Haytham Kenway have an appearance in it. Therefore, the game is omitted from this discussion.
platforms. Such complex narrative structures can offer various viewpoints on one story and require the audience to be increasingly active, motivated and flexible in their media consumption and interpretation. In its purest form, then, transmedia storytelling describes the development of a story or storyworld across different media so that “each medium does what it does best.” The various entry points into such a transmedia story(world) on the one hand ensure a larger consumer base. On the other hand it becomes more challenging, albeit certainly rewarding, for the consumer to experience the story in full, while at the same time the need for ‘more content’ is met.

As this thesis will show, the Kenway Saga tentatively starts to embrace the possibilities of transmedia storytelling, which strongly influences how the overall series can be developed and interpreted. On closer study, one character in particular stands out in shaping the saga in this regard: Haytham Kenway, who, although not one of the main protagonists, appears in all media texts of the saga directly or indirectly. Rather than analysing how or if the Kenway Saga is part of transmedia storytelling, this thesis will focus on unravelling the complex relationships between the different media texts by focusing on Haytham Kenway as the central character who ties the narratives together. This approach will give important insights into the affordances of transmedia storytelling in an actual, successful game series that is being developed on a large scale, as well as the possible advantages and disadvantages that the size and success of the series might bring with it in the context of transmedia storytelling. This will bring us one step closer to understanding the complexities of the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling and the media landscape that not only starts to embrace it, but also, more importantly, seems to expect it.

As explained above, the Kenway Saga raises various questions both in terms of its content as well as its formal composition. For this thesis they have been reformulated to the following sub-questions: a) how does Haytham Kenway’s presentation in the pivotal game ASSASSIN’S CREED III work towards the above mentioned transitions in the saga? b) how does the portrayal of the Templar-Assassin conflict change in the Kenway Saga, looking specifically at Haytham’s role in these changes? And c) how do transmedia storytelling techniques impact the experience and interpretation of the saga? These sub-questions work towards answering the main question of this thesis: How does Haytham Kenway function as the pivotal character in the ASSASSIN’S CREED Kenway Saga?

Because video games are the main medium in the ASSASSIN’S CREED series, Chapter 1 will first establish a theoretical framework of video game narrative. Next, the concept of

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3 This paragraph merely serves as a minor introduction to the concept of transmedia storytelling. The subjects introduced here will be addressed more thoroughly in Chapter 1.3.

4 See Jenkins 2011, §16.

5 Jenkins 2008, p. 98.
character both generally in narratology and specifically in video games will be discussed, followed by a closer look at transmedia storytelling. Chapter 1 ends with a short introduction to the ASSASSIN’S CREED series and the Kenway Saga in particular. In Chapter 2, I will analyse the internal portrayal of Haytham Kenway by a close reading of key parts of the transition game ASSASSIN’S CREED III, arguing how Haytham’s diverse gameplay and narrative roles are crucial for introducing the changing complexity of the saga. Chapter 3 focuses on the internal storyworld of ASSASSIN’S CREED and shows how Haytham is used to portray the Templar-Assassin conflict in a fundamentally different way. The media texts that will be examined to argue this are the games ASSASSIN’S CREED III and ASSASSIN’S CREED ROGUE, and the novels Forsaken and Unity. Chapter 4 approaches Haytham in relation to transmedia storytelling, focusing on the specifics of how he catalyses the different media texts and what this means for the consumer’s interpretation and agency. Here, quantitative and qualitative analyses of audience responses in the framework of an online survey conducted for this study will be used to demonstrate the role of transmedia storytelling in the Kenway Saga. Finally, the Conclusion will bring together the different findings to argue how Haytham functions as a pivotal character who catalyses the different media texts and brings about the transitions previously mentioned.

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6 As will become clear in the thesis, Haytham’s role in the novel Unity, while technically not part of the Kenway Saga anymore, is crucial both in the shift of the presentation of Templar-Assassin struggle as well as the transmedia storytelling aspect of the series.
Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

Today’s entertainment industry increasingly requires us to situate a media text within its often confusing relations to other media texts. In the context of transmedia storytelling, my analysis establishes certain relationships not only between media texts themselves, but also between text and consumer on the basis of an online survey. Since the primary media in the ASSASSIN’S CREED series are video games, this chapter first gives a historical and general overview of video games and their narrative capacities, before proceeding to the concept of character in narratology and in video games. Further, a more in-depth account of transmedia storytelling is given, focusing especially on its encyclopaedic world-building strategy. Finally, the ASSASSIN’S CREED series and the Kenway Saga in particular are introduced to provide the necessary framework to understand the analyses and findings of the next chapters.

1.1 Shoot, Die, Repeat: The Narrative Capacities of Video Games

1.1.1 Historical and Generic Framework

Hardly any medium has seen the kind of rapid development that the video game has seen in the few short decades since its conception. With the computer and its numerous possibilities at its base, the medium has the possibility to become incredibly diverse. While displaying narrative and technical similarities to film, video games add new medium-specific components like "interactivity, collaboration and competition between players, and labyrinthine narrative structures, as well as new ways of structuring space, time and narrative."\(^7\) Video games therefore provide a unique way of engaging the player, whether with a narrative, its rules, or both, leading to an immersive, powerful and very immediate experience. While there is some debate over the exact birth date of the video game, it is often understood to have started with Russel et al.’s SPACEWAR! (1962), which was later adapted by Bushnell as COMPUTER SPACE (1972) and paved the way for the foundation of the gaming company Atari and their first successful arcade video game PONG (1972). At the same time, Baer invented the first video game console, the Odyssey, which brought video games into private households as well.\(^8\)

These developments soon gave rise to a variety of genres, each using different techniques and requiring different skills from the player. Particularly relevant for this thesis is the development of the adventure game genre, a genre heavily influenced by pen-and-paper and tabletop role-playing games such as Dungeons & Dragons. In those, players

\(^7\) Wolf 2002, p. 32.
\(^8\) Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. 2008, pp. 50-53.
take on the role of a certain character with certain defined characteristics and react to the environment and plot described by a ‘dungeon master.’ With the adventure genre, designers were able to properly explore the narrative capacities of the medium both in text and graphical form. As Connie Veugen shows, adventure games draw on the player’s explorative impulse by providing a partly unknown world that has to be discovered. She considers the central aspects of a successful adventure game to be

a gripping non-linear story, which makes it hard to turn away from the computer, because you want to know what happens next; a diegetic world that compels the gamer to explore it in search of anything that can help to eventually gain closure; and the gamer must get the feeling that it is her own actions and choices that got her there, which gives her a sense of achievement.

Adventure games therefore have very strong narrative aspects, i.e. in order to progress the narrative and finish the game, the player has to follow certain pre-designed steps.

Video games have come a long way since their conception. The variety of gaming platforms to choose from easily accommodates different player’s needs. With the sheer amount of video games produced, generic classification becomes more and more difficult, and so far no proper agreement has been reached to bring structure into the terminological chaos. Wolf for instance provides a long list of genres using aspects like interactivity, controls and objectives. However, as Veugen points out, Wolf’s system is not workable because it is too detailed and unnecessarily separates related categories. Egenfeldt-Nielsen et. al.’s categorisation of the four genres action, adventure, strategy, and process-oriented games, while more workable than Wolf’s categories, is problematic when discussing video games that fall into more than one category. Finally, the industry’s classifications differ from academic classifications, and even there different institutions recognise different genres. Such problems partly stem from the fact that the medium is in constant development: new emerging forms and skill sets require different types of classification.

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9 Ibid., pp. 46-47.
10 Veugen 2011, p. 81.
11 Ibid., pp. 83-84.
13 Veugen 2011, p. 43.
14 Ibid., p. 45.
1.1.2 Video Games as Interactive Narratives

In terms of what video games actually are, Jesper Juul distinguishes between two main types of games: games of emergence and games of progression. Games of emergence are based on rules defining various outcomes and providing a framework which the player has to strategically appropriate. Juul considers this the 'primordial game structure.' Games of progression require the player to follow a specific order of actions and events, which is the case for instance in adventure games.¹⁵ This opposition between rules and narrative is also a reflection on the two camps that have long divided game studies, with ludologists focusing on video games as rule-based structures and narratologists investigating their narrative capacity. While seen as irreconcilable positions then, the two camps have nowadays moved towards one another, and the main issue seems to have been one of terminological confusion.¹⁶ This struggle demonstrates that in the end, video games cannot only be one or the other:

> Whatever else may set narratives apart from games, it is not the absence or presence of action- or event-generating systems like rules or algorithms, because games are not necessarily always rule-based, and because actions- and events-generating engines exist in stories as well where they go by names like duty, desire, beliefs, intentions and other intentional states that motivate or govern the behaviour of characters.¹⁷

Both types of games have extremes among their ranks, and while some video games, such as TETRIS (1984), are more rule-based and do not seem to have any narrative function, others and especially contemporary ones rely heavily on storytelling. Furthermore, even non-narrative games can be assigned dramatic meaning by players.¹⁸ Essentially, then, “[a] basic narrative is nothing but the representation of a rule-based process.”¹⁹ Especially in the case of graphically challenged older games, the narrative framework was provided by paratexts, such as packaging, rather than in-game. Nowadays, the discourse surrounding the release of a game (or any other media product) has a strong influence on the way it is received and can establish a narrative framework outside the game, although more often than not this is provided in-game as well.²⁰ Like all media, video games also rely on the player’s ‘(literary) repertoire,’ which influences both content and form of the game. If a player does not have the necessary repertoire to begin.

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¹⁵ Juul 2005, p. 5.
¹⁷ Simons 2007, §36.
¹⁹ Compagno 2015, p. 1004. Original emphasis.
²⁰ Paratexts are secondary “texts that prepare us for other texts,” occupying an interstice between diegesis and extra-diegesis, a “threshold’ between the inside and the outside of the text” (Gray 2010, p. 25). They can either serve as an entry point into a text (entryway paratexts) or impact interpretation during or after the consumption of the text (in medias res paratexts, p. 23).
with, many aspects of the game can go missing. The gameplay repertoire first has to be built up through repeated playing of similar games.\(^{21}\)

As already mentioned, narrative is a particularly important part of the adventure game genre and typically occurs in games of progression. The main issue in seeing video games as a potential narrative medium is their inherent quality of interactivity, which seemingly impacts the narrative capacities of a game as such. Giving a certain amount of agency to the player limits the designers’ possibility to present a pre-defined narrative. Wolf claims that one solution to the clash between interactivity and narrative would be to limit the narrative itself. Instead he proposes to focus on ‘footnoting,’ i.e. providing background information through non-playable characters, which maintains the storyworld without assigning actual narrative control to the players.\(^{22}\) Narrative and rules do not always have to clash with each other however. Rather than limiting game design, narrative can also be an aid to help players understand a game’s rules and its interface more naturally.\(^{23}\)

Another highly debated issue in narrative video games is cut-scenes. Those are cinematic sequences that interrupt gameplay to relay information to the player. They can introduce narrative tension, direct the narrative in a certain way, provide information or compensate for missing in-game narrative.\(^{24}\) When used well, cut-scenes can be an efficient narrative tool without necessarily giving the player an impression of impotence. They are especially popular in opening and closing sequences, “ensuring that the player’s first experience of the game is a visually appealing one and laying out the central concept of the action.”\(^{25}\) There is however a chance of damaging immersion by breaking the game’s flow and presenting a different visual quality in playing and viewing\(^{26}\) (see fig. 1a-b). Cut-scenes can be useful to show events that are necessary for the narrative, but undesirable from a player’s standpoint. Richard Dansky explains that “[o]ften, a cut scene is the best place to kill off a supporting or allied character to the protagonist. It gives the players time to react and prevents them from becoming frustrated attempting to circumvent the inevitable in a gameplay context.”\(^{27}\) Some narrative needs can also be fulfilled by scripted events rather than cut-scenes. Here, the camera focuses on the depiction of in-game events and directs the player’s attention to them without interrupting

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\(^{21}\) The literary repertoire also extends to other types of media, and generally “include[s] anything that the reader might already know – references to earlier works, social norms, historic events” (Egenfeldt-Nielsen et. al. 2008, p. 184).

\(^{22}\) Wolf 2002, p. 108.


\(^{24}\) Ibid., p. 176.

\(^{25}\) Dansky 2007, p. 127.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 128.

\(^{27}\) Ibid.
the flow of the game. Thus scripted events enable the designers to take control of the action without taking away all of the player’s control, as cut-scenes do.

![Fig. 1a Capture WORLD OF WARCRAFT (Blizzard Entertainment). Gameplay of MISTS OF PANDARIA.](image1)

![Fig. 1b Capture WORLD OF WARCRAFT (Blizzard Entertainment). Cutscene at the end of MISTS OF PANDARIA.](image2)

Narrative agency, i.e. the ability to directly influence the course of a story, gives players certain authorship over the narrative and presents game designers with the problem of maintaining control. However, it would appear that in some cases, players do not even need to have real narrative agency, but merely the illusion thereof. Veugen points out that “[g]amers want to have the idea that their actions are meaningful and influence what happens next, even though the overall outcome of the game stays the same.”

Agency, narrative or otherwise, plays an especially big role in open-world action adventure games, where players have more power over their actions and the order in which they experience the story. Although the main storyline is linear, the player can choose when to follow it and when to explore the gameworld and its numerous side quests. Here, Jon Samsel and Darryl Wimberley distinguish between designing a critical objective, which is a main goal the player has to work towards without being given specific instructions as to how to achieve this, and a critical path providing the player with a specific procedure that must be followed exactly to succeed.

No matter which technique is chosen, by design the player is unable to do anything that has not been programmed. This is why the fictional world of video games, according to Egenfeldt-Nielsen et. al., can be compared with a theatrical stage: most of the time, objects are there for ambience only and are not to be interacted with. Only objects somewhat related to gameplay will actually be interactive, although players’ expectations as to what they can and cannot interact with have drastically changed over the past years. Interactive objects can also be used to increase the player’s immersion in the gameworld and to develop the narrative more subtly. An example of this kind of storytelling based on

28 Ibid.
29 Veugen 2011, p. 219.
30 Ibid., p. 224.
32 Ibid., p. 23.
33 Egenfeldt-Nielsen et. al. 2008, p. 175.
environments and surroundings rather than, for instance, character interaction is *Gone Home* (2013), in which the narrative is developed primarily through the environment. Here, the player can interact with and inspect more closely a wide range of objects that subtly tell a family’s background story. This example of interactivity demonstrates a different kind of player agency: rather than having a direct impact on the *outcome* of a narrative, the player has some control over the interpretive process as such. In games like *Gone Home*, whose gameplay relies solely on exploration, it is entirely up to the player, her skills and her motivation which parts of the narrative and the gameworld she is exposed to. Therefore, interactivity leads to a unique reception of the story: even if the overall narrative remains the same, no two players will have the exact same experience and process despite having the same liberties and restrictions imposed upon them by the designers. While *Gone Home* is admittedly an extreme case, I would argue that this type of agency influences interpretation in many other games and series as well, and as I will demonstrate in Chapter 4, the same type of agency can be found in transmedia storytelling projects.

1.2 Character

1.2.1 Character in Narratology

Generally speaking, characters are the actors in a narrative. While there are several different conceptions of character, the two most important ones in the context of this thesis are psychological and narrative. In the first instance, which understands character as a person or individual, analysis is concerned with a character’s mental states and processes leading to a sort of psychological profile.\(^{34}\) In the second instance, character is considered within the hierarchy of a certain text, which eventually formulates “point of view, voice, focalization, narrator, and character as speaker.”\(^{35}\) In analytical terms, the narrative approach gives insight into how character is conveyed, and what this in turn means for the interpretation of said character. If a specific character’s perspective is constantly assumed within a narrative, readers will get a rather biased view of a situation, whereas an omniscient narrator might give more insights into more different characters and aspects of the narrative, but without necessarily assuming a highly subjective perspective of the character. These categories, then, are means of conveying the character as a person or individual. In order for this to work, Uri Margolin explains that the two distinct but interrelated processes of characterisation and character-building are necessary. Character-building can be seen as an extension of the first, “consist[ing] of

\(^{34}\) Margolin 1983, p. 2.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.
individual acts of characterization [...] until a coherent constellation of mental attributes has been arrived at."36

One conventional approach to characterisation is Forster’s distinction between flat and round characters: characters without any development, being “constructed round a single idea or quality,”37 and inherently complex characters with clear development in the narrative. This however is a rather inflexible approach. Mieke Bal claims that this model of literary criticism is mainly focused on psychological concepts, i.e. a complex, changing character versus stable stereotypes, and is therefore not applicable for all types of narratives.38 Bal also points out that the extratextual situation of the reader often influences character interpretation, such as contextual data or a reader’s ideologies.39

Generally, Bal describes the four principles of repetition, accumulation, relations with characters and character changes which, when combined, help the reader in the character-building process. Repetition and accumulation of characteristics for instance flesh out a character and draw attention to specific character traits. Relations with other characters and the changes a character undergoes throughout a narrative describe the character more diegetically.40

Events are another way of indirect characterisation. Here, Lothe distinguishes between “two types of events: kernel, which has a cardinal function and promotes action by giving the characters certain choices, and catalyst, an event that accompanies the kernel, but does not signify an alternative choice.”41 The way characters handle certain decisions and events in the narrative reveals a lot about their personality without explicitly spelling out character traits. Ultimately, though, the interpretation and judgement of the character depends on the reader’s deciphering of clues.

Bertetti proposes to view (transmedial) character not merely in relation to an individual text, but instead as “cultural and social constructs, although they are manifested by a text and they are the result of textual procedures,”42 where characters that are established in several texts are defined by the whole range of texts. This idea would be related to what Margolin describes as a mega character, “a generalized literary figure [...] which both synthesizes and transcends any individual figure of this name. Such stereotypes are based on the existence of a set of core properties ascribed to the figure in all of the works in which it occurs and considered essential to it.”43 Bertetti shows that even though there

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36 Ibid. 4.
37 Forster 1927, p. 93.
38 Bal 2009, p. 115.
39 Ibid., p. 119.
40 Ibid., pp. 126-127.
41 Schäfer 2011, p. 10.
42 Bertetti 2014, p. 2344-2345.
43 Margolin 2007, p. 70.
may be variations on different levels in the way a character is implemented in and across different texts, the characters are overall recognised and accepted as the same character by the audience unless the changes made to the character are too strong.

### 1.2.2 Character in Video Games

Apart from core properties in the narratological sense, medium-specificity also plays a role in a character’s presentation and reception. As will be shown, this is especially the case in video games as they add the previously discussed component of interactivity and narrative agency to the mix. Despite this, the analysis of game characters in their personality and narrative functions does not appear to be fundamentally different from analysing characters in other media. This is partly because narratives are often developed in cut-scenes, which employ conventional cinematic ways of depicting a character.

Game characters themselves are primarily characterised through action, conveying character, and through (believable) dialogue, conveying personality.\(^4\) When considering the interaction between narrative and gameplay, however, Andrew Walsh points out that a game character needs to have both purpose (gameplay- or narrative-related) and personality.\(^5\) Fundamentally, he distinguishes between three main character types: protagonists (or player-characters), non-player characters (NPCs), and antagonists.\(^6\)

**Player-Character**

The player-controlled character is the protagonists of a game narrative, in a gameplay sense represented by the avatar. This is “the gamer’s representation on screen, i.e. the token that moves through the gameworld.”\(^7\) A character’s gameplay function (the avatar) is distinct from its narrative function (the protagonist).\(^8\) This is generally accepted as such by players, as according to Egenfeldt-Nielsen et. al. a player’s mind operates on a story and an action level. On the former, the player makes sense of the story, including characters’ motivations and feelings, and is concerned with filling in the gaps of the storyworld. The action level however is not concerned with the story at all. It is used to solve action problems and therefore relates mostly to gameplay.\(^9\) This ensures that there is not necessarily a break in the game’s coherence that might result from the player’s own skills. For instance in the case of the *ASSASSIN’S CREED* series, a player might have trouble climbing buildings seamlessly, therefore falling down frequently. The player is unlikely to

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\(^4\) Walsh 2007, p. 124.  
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 104.  
\(^6\) Ibid., pp. 110-116.  
\(^7\) Veugen 2011, p. 229.  
\(^8\) Ibid.  
relate this perceived clumsiness to the protagonist within the narrative, who is highly skilled. Within the narrative, the protagonist can be a traditional or reluctant hero, an anti-hero, or even consist of a duo or group of protagonists.

Simons emphasises that “characters are vehicles onto which [players] project their own goals, skills, experiences and understanding of the game. Characters in games [...] are functional and not emotionally and psychologically characterized entities as their counterparts in narratives.” Simons seems to talk here about the avatar specifically. Rune Klevjer investigates this relationship between avatar and player in avatar-based single-player video games. While he does recognise the importance of fiction in character-building through establishing a kind of identification with the character, he sees a kind of prosthetic embodiment, not fiction, at the core of avatar-player relationships. The identification is also dependent on the way avatars are presented as actual characters. A subjective, first-person avatar is not shown except for instance the hands as the character’s perspective is assumed explicitly, and may therefore feel more direct to the player. Extended or third-person avatars can be shown more directly, and therefore the character as a personality and the story itself become more important. As far as identification goes, both Points of Perception have their own advantages and disadvantages, but third-person avatars seem to be particularly suitable for establishing a narrative.

One crucial issue in which game characters differ from characters in other media is the possibility of the player-character’s death. This is a primary game mechanic in many shooter and squad-based games [...]. There are two major reasons often cited for this: a) It provides a penalty when the player fails; b) as in other media it hopefully raises the stakes. [...] In other non-series media, there is a third important reason: the protagonist, the character we’ve invested the most empathy in can really die.

Because video games demand the development of cognitive and gameplay skills, much trial-and-error is involved throughout the course of a playthrough. The frustration of replaying large parts of the game has been partly abolished by the possibility to save the

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50 An anti-hero is a protagonist characterised by flaws and weaknesses, who “who draws us into sympathy despite doing things that should appal us” (Mullan 2006, pp. 90-91).
54 Ibid., p. 156. It has to be remarked that even if a video game employs a first-person perspective, attention can still be drawn to the character’s appearance via for instance reflections in mirrors, as well as cut-scenes.
55 Stockburger, after Järvinen, points out that the conventional notion of ‘point of view’ is misleading because of the supposed focus on visual information. Instead, he proposes to consider Järvinen’s ‘Point of Perception’ (PoP) to combine visual and aural spatial perception (Stockburger 2006, p. 145).
56 Sheldon 2003, pp. 71-72.
game status, which was lacking in certain early games. Still, it can take numerous attempts until a player has defeated a certain foe or solved a certain puzzle. For Juul, this is an inherent contradiction between game rules and narrative, as the possibility to restart a sequence or having more than one life is not explained within the fictional world. However, it does not necessarily have to be a contradiction. If a player’s mind works on the two levels of story and action, the aspects that concern gameplay do not need to be integrated into the story level and are separated cognitively. Players generally accept this as a conventional game mechanic, so it is not likely to threaten the feeling of immersion into the fictional world.

Non-Player Characters (NPCs)
According to Egenfeldt-Nielsen et. al.’s character distinction based on interactivity, non-player characters can be stage characters, functional characters, or cast characters. Stage characters strictly belong to the surroundings and the atmosphere, and therefore they cannot be interacted with. Functional characters can be interacted with, but only in a general sense, for instance by talking to merchants to buy or sell items. Cast characters, finally, have specific narrative function and have the most developed personalities.

Sheldon distinguishes between different relevant NPC types, namely mentors, servants and pets, merchants, trainers, and quest givers. While different types of NPCs have different purposes, they generally “mediate between the game appearance and mechanics. [...] The rules of the game manifest themselves in the professions of the people. And their presence builds up some operable boundaries.” Non-player characters therefore have a variety of functions, only one of which is to help the player-character, as is the case for instance for allied NPCs. Apart from the various in-game functions, they also populate the gameworld and create a more lively atmosphere.

Antagonist
Walsh identifies several different types of antagonists. The ones most encountered are group antagonists, who present a collective enemy in high numbers without the need for

57 Juul 2005, p. 123.  
58 Non-experienced players may have more issues with the concept of the player-character’s death simply because they are not familiar enough with such conventions. When teaching a friend how to play video games, I often came across her panicking because of the impending or actual death of the player-character, exclaiming, “But what happens now that I am dead?”  
60 Sheldon 2003, pp. 78-85.  
61 Compagno 2015, p. 1010. Original emphasis. Compagno discusses how in ASSASSIN’S CREED II, NPCs exert some kind of social control, leading to the construction of “two very different spaces: the first horizontal space, at the ground level, and the second vertical space, on the roofs and ledges” (ibid.), with horizontal space being much more constricted than vertical space.
individuality, and bosses, who “provide the possibility to add more personality to a group protagonist by singling out an individual to be confronted as an effective ‘Champion’ of the opposing forces.”  

Although some kind of motivation needs to be present to defeat the group antagonists or the bosses whose motivations can be transferred to the whole group, they are not the villain driving the narrative. The main villain is the ‘nemesis.’ He or she has a clear relationship with the protagonist and works against him or her throughout the game, most often resulting in a climactic stand-off between the two at the end of the game.

To establish the relationship necessary for strong emotional involvement, the player needs to see and feel constant reminders of the nemesis’s actions throughout the game, for instance via the above mentioned group antagonists or bosses. Even though the nemesis is a central character, his or her physical presence might not be encountered all too often in the game. To leave a strong enough impression, then, the purpose and personality of nemesis characters need a set of characteristics that makes them worthy opponents. Sometimes this can mean mirroring the protagonist [...]. On other occasions, an antagonist can be given a skill that differs from that of the protagonist, but which enables the antagonist to rival the protagonist’s powers.

An effective villain gives the player and player-character a clear motivation to proceed in the narrative. From a narrative point of view, villains should just be villains, but in games they need to evoke strong emotional responses to be successful. The player’s frustration towards the villain is built up through the constant vexing of the player-character’s attempts to stop him or her.

Because games depend so much on agency, they need to present a clear motivation for player-character and player. If the narrative or the goal is not captivating and interesting enough to pursue, a player will likely not bother with it. This is why Sheldon points to the importance of the pivotal character, who is the character who sets the story in motion. [...] The protagonist can be the pivotal character. [...] In many games, the pivotal character is the antagonist [my emphasis], who, with Pinky and the Brain determination, is bent on world domination in one form or another. [...] The player-character reacts to the resulting crisis. [...] It creates the initial crisis that drives the action. And it’s a good reason why at least one of our characters is in the game to begin with beyond a simple gameplay function.

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63 Ibid., pp. 114-115.
64 Ibid., p. 115.
Sheldon sees anti-heroes and villains as particularly suitable for this function. In video games much more so than in other narrative media, a villain ideally has to appeal to the players’ emotions so that they “want to stop the antagonist as a character, not just as a gameplay challenge.”66 Players tend to identify with the player-character’s position and therefore have to actively work against the antagonists. This creates the dynamic that drives the gameplay forward.

1.3 Transmedia Storytelling: There Can Not Be Only One

1.3.1 Transmediality and Transmedia Storytelling

In basic terms, ‘transmedia’ simply means that something happens ‘across media.’ When we talk of something being done transmedially, it corresponds to what used to be called cross-media, which nowadays mostly refers to the same or similar content being released on different platforms.67 Although sometimes used interchangeably, transmediality is not the same as transmedia storytelling. According to Ryan and Thon, transmediality takes a step back from the medium-specificity that is at the core of transmedia storytelling, instead denoting concepts or strategies that can be used similarly in multiple media. They see narrative and character as two such overarching concepts and further give more specific examples of the different degrees of transmediality and its relationship to medium-free and medium-specific concepts:

Solid candidates for the medium-free pole are the defining components of narrativity: character, events, setting, time, space, and causality. A good example of a transmedially valid yet not medium-free concept is interactivity. It is applicable to video games, improvisational theater, hypertext fiction, tabletop role-playing games, and even oral storytelling, if one considers the impact of the audience on the narrative performance, but not to literary narrative, print-based comics, and film. Medium-specific concepts, finally, are explicitly developed for a certain medium, but they can occasionally be extended to other media through a metaphoric transfer. [...] But since narratologists hardly ever agree on the definition of any term, the borders between the three types of concepts [medium-free, medium-specific, and transmedially valid but not medium-free] are relatively fuzzy.68

However, considering that every medium has distinct means of expression, transmedially applicable (‘medium-free’) narratological concepts are not employed in the same manner, and therefore medium-specificity plays an important role in how the concepts are used, once it is established that they are used. Veugen for instance shows that using similar concepts in different media can be problematic if medium-specific differences are not considered, as their conventional usages in one medium can

67 Veugen n.d., p. 16, endnote x.
68 Ryan and Thon 2014, p. 4. Original emphasis.
negatively impact the interpretation of its usage in another medium. Therefore, “[b]eing alert to these differences is especially important in trans- and cross-media analysis. […] When applied to different media, the same term may mean different things and thus lead to problems of interpretation.” Such distinctions are particularly important for this thesis considering that the analysis of a transmedial concept, i.e. character, is researched in different media types. Video games are the main media in the ASSASSIN’S CREED series, with other media texts functioning as supplements to establish the storyworld further. The previous section established different approaches to character, one narratological (transmedial, if you will), the other focused on interactive gameplay aspects (medium-specific). To be able to properly relate the different media texts with one another, we first need to establish what transmedia storytelling actually is.

Transmedia storytelling is a narrative strategy coined by media scholar Henry Jenkins. It denotes the distribution of a narrative across different media (texts), “with each text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best […] Any given product is a point of entry into the franchise as a whole.” Most of the time, transmedia storytelling necessitates collaborative authorship to cover the different skills needed to produce texts in each medium. However, the term transmedia storytelling becomes difficult at times because it seems to refer to a single, coherent narrative. This is merely misleading terminology though, as Jenkins points out that transmedia storytelling is more related to world building. This, again, is dependent on what the different types of media can add to the experience. The focus here is on the expansion of a narrative or storyworld, and therefore it is important to put to rest another popular misconception, namely that transmedia storytelling is similar to adaptation. Adaptation is the re-interpretation and re-creation of a specific source text and has three main features:

- An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works
- A creative and interpretative act of appropriation/salvaging
- An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work

The main difference between adaptation and transmedia storytelling is that although it can add different perspectives and additional information to an already established narrative, adaptation is always interpreted within the framework of the source text and does not by definition expand the universe. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, all texts should be equal, whereas adaptation is often understood as secondary. Here, too, one must not

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69 Veugen 2011, pp. 143-144.
70 Jenkins 2008, pp. 97-98.
71 Jenkins 2007, §3.
judge too quickly, as adaptations can easily be seen as texts in their own right and sometimes even overpower the source text's authority, as is the case for instance in *The Lord of the Rings* and the film adaptations by Peter Jackson.\(^{73}\) This shows the power that adaptations can have despite supposedly being secondary subordinated works, reinforcing Linda Hutcheon's exclamation that "an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing."\(^{74}\)

In real transmedia storytelling projects, this struggle for dominance should not be present. Approaching transmedia storytelling within the framework of seriality, Jenkins corrects his early insistence of nonlinearity, where he assumed that the order in which transmedia texts are consumed does not matter. Instead, "we are seeing companies deploy very different content and strategies in the build up to the launch of the 'mother ship' of the franchise than while the series is on the air or after the main text has completed its cycle."\(^{75}\) The media literacy of most contemporary audiences extends to a variety of media and media platforms. With the consumer gaining more and more power over what content is consumed when and how, maybe producers are even inevitably forced to increase their standards, too. This is not only an aesthetic phenomenon, but depends on economic considerations as well, as different points of entry into a franchise expand the potential market.\(^{76}\) The emergence of convergence culture, and with it transmedia storytelling, results in fundamental shifts in the creative industries.\(^{77}\) Jenkins points out that, for instance, licensing arrangements are bound to change in this new environment towards co-creation, where "companies collaborate from the beginning to create content they know plays well in each of their sectors, allowing each medium to generate new experiences for the consumer and expand points of entry into the franchise."\(^{78}\) Here, it is also important to note that transmedia storytelling and franchising, while similar in the use of different media for narrative purposes, are mostly not the same. Franchises invoke "corporate leveraging of intellectual property across a number of different media platforms for financial gain,"\(^{79}\) whereas transmedia storytelling has a stronger creative focus that deals with the expansion of a storyworld.\(^{80}\) This means that

\(^{73}\) Veugen 2011, pp. 216-217.
\(^{74}\) Hutcheon 2006, p. 9.
\(^{75}\) Jenkins 2009b, §15.
\(^{76}\) Jenkins 2007, §5.
\(^{77}\) Jenkins defines convergence culture as “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want” (Jenkins 2008, p. 2).
\(^{80}\) Veugen n.d., p. 3.
because franchises operate with a more direct financial logic in mind, the different products are not necessary for narrative development or world-building. Instead, the franchise focuses on one specific text or product, and all other products can be considered secondary and in the main product’s service.\(^{81}\)

Due to its flexible consumption, transmedia storytelling depends on the audience’s motivation to get involved in the complexities of storytelling. Here, it is useful to think of the involved media texts as ‘spreadable’ and ‘drillable,’ or in terms of horizontal and vertical consumption and distribution. Essentially, spreadable media focus on the circulation of the audience through for instance social networks,\(^{82}\) and drillable media, according to Mittell, “encourage a mode of forensic fandom that encourages viewers to dig deeper, probing beneath the surface to understand the complexity of a story and its telling.”\(^{83}\) The concept of drillability seems to assign a certain agency and responsibility to the consumer. Rather than having all the necessary elements of a narrative or a storyworld served to them on a silver platter, audiences are required to actively invest into a franchise in order to fully grasp its complexities. Jenkins points out that spreadability and drillability are not mutually exclusive and can therefore co-exist in the same franchise.\(^{84}\)

How a franchise is approached and in how much depth, then, depends on the consumers themselves. This would also mean that producers are responsible for providing a clear incentive for the consumer to seek out other related media products apart from what may be deemed to be the ‘mother ship.’ Perhaps this is one of the main challenges of transmedia storytelling: how to reconcile both the consumer’s constant desire for more (diverse) content with a coherent incentive to seek out said products, while at the same time keeping the overall and individual narratives contained enough to be managed by fans.

1.3.2 Transmedia Worldbuilding

As suggested above, transmedia storytelling places a higher demand on consumers than mono-medial projects do, in turn increasing the pressure on the producers as well. In order to fully understand the narrative or grasp the extent of a storyworld, media products need to present their drillability and provide an incentive for the consumer to seek out other products. As Jenkins rightly points out, a single text belonging to an overarching narrative needs to be coherent enough to become a satisfying experience in its own right for those who do not wish to seek out all the other texts as well. At the same time, the individual texts do not have to be completely self-sufficient as they fit into a larger

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\(^{82}\) Jenkins 2009a, §14.

\(^{83}\) Mittell 2009, §5.

\(^{84}\) Jenkins 2009a, §17.
Transmedia projects are especially able to encourage the exploration of “complex fictional worlds which can sustain multiple interrelated characters and their stories. This process of world-building encourages an encyclopedic impulse in both readers and writers.” In this context, it is useful to keep in mind what Mark J. P. Wolf, after Tolkien, calls the Primary and Secondary World, the world that we inhabit and know versus a fictional world that has no direct relationship with the primary world. He points out that the allure of complex fictional worlds is the completeness that it seems to have, therefore feeling like a more or less real place that can be visited and explored. Because reading and understanding worlds is partly based on filling in gaps, the audience’s specific context influences the experience of the world and its interpretation as well. Generally, extrapolation, or the closing of the gaps, takes form in the techniques of “the completion of narrative gestalts, gap-filling using Primary World defaults, and gap-filling using secondary world defaults,” for the latter of which the reader needs to have specifically learned the defaults from the media text. This makes the process more dynamic and encourages re-reading. Certain details are necessary to be communicated explicitly in order for the audience to accept the fictional world as a complete and convincing Secondary World. Generally, though, world-building relies strongly on the intentional leaving-blank of gaps to engage the audience, “and details not necessary to a narrative can reward the observant spectator with additional world data.” The illusion of completeness is what makes fictional worlds intriguing enough for the audience to want to invest more time into exploring it better. According to Wolf,

The rise of world-centered franchises (as opposed to character-centered ones) is also a result of the focus on worlds and the broader possibilities they present for growth. The interactive nature of extrapolation, especially as a conscious activity that requires knowledge of the world, fuels the speculations of fan communities, encouraging creative thinking and greater participation, which keeps a franchise alive and profitable. […] The presence of effective world gestalten […] becomes arguably as important as narrative in the overall success of the franchise, and is something that works interactively in a transnarrative, transmedial, and transauthorial manner.

Presenting additional material allows the consumer to spend more time ‘in’ that world. Jenkins also shows, however, that too much information can alienate fans if the additions do not meet the fan’s expectations, taking away their freedom to speculate. The

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86 Jenkins 2007, §3.
87 Wolf 2012, p. 124.
88 Ibid., p. 131.
89 Ibid., p. 136.
90 Ibid., p. 137.
91 Ibid., pp. 137-138.
92 Jenkins 2008, p. 117.
aesthetics of transmedia storytelling also call for the formation of collective intelligence acting on the encyclopaedic impulse of transmedia stories or worlds. Collective intelligence refers to virtual communities in which each individual is an important part of knowledge production by contributing his or her specific expertise and skills. This means that there is no longer one ‘expert’ who knows and understands everything about a subject. This can be seen in projects like Wikipedia, which are made up of all kinds of people contributing content, and the fact that most franchises and series have their own Wikis. Wikis also enable people to gain knowledge that they are unable to acquire themselves, for instance because they have not consumed all media texts. Especially in extensive storyworlds, collective intelligence is crucial to help consumers keep track of story and character developments.

A final point has to be made about the issue of character in transmedia storytelling projects, and how the nature of transmedia storytelling might enhance the presentation of character. Christy Dena claims that the best and most coherent transmedia projects are conceived of as such from the very beginning, although they can also emerge as an extension of an already existing product for further entertainment or narrative purposes, such as providing details about the characters even when the main storyline is finished. The extensions can also interfere with the experience of the main product at the same time, such as sending text messages to the viewer to offer more insight into the characters’ lives. This is appropriate to the multitasking multimedial society that we live in nowadays.

Jenkins challenges this idea of a systematic distribution and unified experience in transmedia storytelling. He argues that while maintaining continuity is important for many transmedia franchises and consumers, another dynamic at work is multiplicity, which gives the fans the opportunity to approach the events or characters from an alternative perspective than the one provided by the original text, sometimes with large differences that the fans have to reconsolidate with the main text themselves. The logic of multiplicity also makes it easier to conceive of fan-produced texts as being a part of the transmedia storytelling experience since it explains potential discrepancies with officially sanctioned texts. This would mean that even if there is some incoherence regarding the depiction of characters, consumers will likely be able to incorporate this into the overall interpretation of the character. Further, as Jenkins points out in his early thoughts on transmedia storytelling, different media are suited to introduce different concepts of the story and the story world. For instance, “a story might be introduced in a film, expanded

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93 Ibid., p. 27.
94 Dena 2009, p. 4.
95 Jenkins 2009a, §20.
96 Ibid., §22.
through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play.\footnote{Jenkins 2003, §10.} This seems to suggest that video games are not as well suited for storytelling as other media are, as they are supposed to be mainly explorative. However, video games might even have a crucial function for transmedia storytelling products precisely because of their unique interplay between interactivity and narrative.

So far, the theoretical framework has introduced concepts related to video game narratives, character both in the general narratological sense as well as specifically in video games, and transmedia storytelling. Before launching into an analysis of the Kenway Saga in terms of \textit{ASSASSIN’S CREED III}, the transmedia storyworld as such, and the transmedia storytelling capacities in general, I will give a short introduction to the \textit{ASSASSIN’S CREED} series to contextualise the analyses in the rest of the thesis.

1.4 \textbf{ASSASSIN’S CREED}

1.4.1 \textit{Introducing ASSASSIN’S CREED}\footnote{This paragraph only serves as a short introduction to the series. For a more in-depth account of the lore in \textit{ASSASSIN’S CREED}, see Chapter 3.1.}

With the release of \textit{ASSASSIN’S CREED} in 2007, Ubisoft started what would become a massive transmedial franchise offering complex storylines and relationships between media. Working with significant historical time periods, they introduced the lore of two opposing orders, Assassins and Templars, and their ancient feud to influence the course of mankind. For this purpose, both factions are in constant search of powerful artefacts from an ancient and much more advanced civilisation known as ‘Those Who Came Before,’ also referred to as the ‘First Civilisation.’ The historical settings are directly embedded within a contemporary framework, where the company Abstergo Industries, the modern-day front for the Templar Order, has developed the Animus, a machine enabling test subjects to access and relive the memories of their ancestors. The technology is used by the Assassins as well. This is reflected by the games’ interface, which simulates the Animus interface itself and divides the games into memory sequences, again split up into individual memories to access and replay.\footnote{For a list of sequences and memories in the games discussed in this thesis, see Appendix B}

At the time of writing, two completed sagas can be distinguished within the series: the Desmond Saga (2007-2012) and the Kenway Saga (2012-2014). The Desmond Saga comprises the first five games and revolves around the Assassin Desmond Miles and his ancestors Altair Ibn La’Ahad during the Third Crusade (\textit{ASSASSIN’S CREED}), Ezio Auditore da Firenze in Renaissance Italy and Constantinople (\textit{ASSASSIN’S CREED II, ASSASSIN’S CREED: BROTHERHOOD}, and \textit{ASSASSIN’S CREED: REVELATIONS}), and the Native American Assassin Ratonnhakéton, better known as Connor, during the American Revolution.
In this saga, Desmond makes contact with First Civilisation members and eventually sacrifices himself using their technology to save humanity from destruction. The Kenway Saga starts with *ASSASSIN’S CREED III*. After Desmond’s sacrifice, the following *ASSASSIN’S CREED* games take a contemporary framework where an unnamed Abstergo Entertainment research analyst accesses the memories of Edward Kenway, a pirate-turned-Assassin during the Golden Age of Piracy (*ASSASSIN’S CREED IV: BLACK FLAG*), the Assassin-turned-Templar Shay Patrick Cormac during the Seven Years’ War between Great Britain and France (*ASSASSIN’S CREED: ROGUE*), and the Assassin Arno Dorian during the French Revolution (*ASSASSIN’S CREED: UNITY*). *UNITY* is not strictly part of the Kenway Saga anymore, although there are some overlaps as will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Apart from the main games, the series is further enriched by handheld games, books, graphic novels, comics and short (animated) films, with a feature-length film planned for December 2016. As Veugen shows,

*ASSASSIN’S CREED* did not start as transmedia storytelling, but as a franchise that soon exhibited all the traits of convergence culture. With the growing success of the franchise, Ubisoft on the one hand released more and more media and paratexts that required active participation by the fans of the franchise; on the other hand they also made a conscious effort to open the *ASSASSIN’S CREED* storyworld to non-gamers. Veugen argues that the Desmond Saga only started to intentionally become transmedia storytelling at a later stage in the development, but was not initially conceived of as such.

1.4.2 Introducing the Kenway Saga

As stated above, the Kenway Saga starts with the same game that concludes the Desmond Saga: *AC3*. Considering how radically narrative strategies changed with this video game, with additional media consciously expanding the narrative and offering not only more information, but different perspectives on the same events, it would appear that Ubisoft intended this saga to be a ‘fresh start’ with innovative changes taking place on several levels. *AC3* is the first game that starts to criticise the black-and-white view of the

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100 For a full list of all the *ASSASSIN’S CREED* media, see Appendix A.
101 To simplify terminology, the following abbreviations and typographies will be used for the media texts discussed in this thesis: *AC2* for *ASSASSIN’S CREED II*, *BROTHERHOOD* for *ASSASSIN’S CREED: BROTHERHOOD*, *REVELATIONS* for *ASSASSIN’S CREED: REVELATIONS*, *AC3* for *ASSASSIN’S CREED III*, *AC4* for *ASSASSIN’S CREED IV: BLACK FLAG*, *ROGUE* for *ASSASSIN’S CREED ROGUE*, *UNITY* for *ASSASSIN’S CREED UNITY*, and *Forsaken* and *Unity* for the respective novels.
102 See Makuch 2015.
103 Veugen n.d., p. 12.
104 Veugen cites the release of the novel *Assassin’s Creed: The Secret Crusade* (2011) as a turning point, which “told the story of Altaïr, but not just the one from the first game. It told his whole life story, part of which would also be shown to Ezio in *REVELATIONS*” (Veugen n.d., p. 8).
struggle between the Templars and the Assassins, albeit rather tentatively (see Chapter 3). The novel Forsaken (2012) was released roughly a month after AC3 and consists of excerpts from Haytham Kenway’s diary. The next game AC4 and the corresponding novel detail the life of Haytham’s father, the pirate-turned-Assassin Edward Kenway, offering a more openly sceptical view on the nobility of the Assassin cause due to Edward’s initially rather opportunistic motives. The whole narrative becomes much more confusing when two main games were released at the same time in 2014: ROGUE and UNITY. Only the latter has an accompanying novel, written from the perspective of the Templar Élise de la Serre, who is the love interest of UNITY’s protagonist, the Assassin Arno Dorian. ROGUE is set in between AC4 and AC3,105 and is innovative in the sense that the protagonist Shay Patrick Cormac starts out as an Assassin, but forsakes his Brotherhood and joins the Templars.106 Especially in ROGUE, the judgement of Templars and Assassins is not cut anymore, and the conflict is presented from an alternative perspective.

Especially keeping in mind the incoherent chronology of the released media texts, it may seem difficult to gauge how the variety of media texts is connected with each other. As I will show in this thesis, Haytham Kenway can be seen as a focal character in merging all media texts of the Kenway Saga, and bringing about significant changes in narrative techniques and the portrayal of the storyworld as such. To demonstrate this on a micro-level, the next chapter will first analyse Haytham’s character functions in the transition game AC3 before discussing the bigger picture of the saga in the remaining chapters.

105 AC4 takes place from 1715 to 1722, ROGUE from 1752 to 1760 with a few memories from 1776, and AC3 spans the time from 1754 to 1783. UNITY picks up where ROGUE left off in 1776.

106 This is innovative for the main games at least. The graphic novels are more ambiguous in their depiction of the struggle, focusing for instance on Daniel Cross, a modern-day Assassin-turned-Templar. Daniel Cross also appears as a character in AC3, where he attempts to kill Desmond but fails because of psychological side-effects from prolonged exposure to the Animus. Recognising this moment of weakness, Desmond kills him.
Chapter 2: Haytham Kenway in *ASSASSIN’S CREED III*

As stated before, *ASSASSIN’S CREED III*, and in particular Haytham Kenway’s role in it, can be seen as a crucial turning point in the series. It forms the transition between the two sagas (Desmond and Kenway) and it refines the storyworld in general. As the game that first introduces Haytham, *AC3* forms the main image of Haytham that players associate with him, but, as will be shown in later chapters, a variety of other media texts continues to form a more complex image of the character. In this chapter, I provide an analysis of Haytham’s character in *AC3* focusing especially on the different roles the character embodies both in the gameplay and in the narrative, thus showing that the various roles and their interactions are important, not only to understand the multi-layered character of Haytham Kenway, but also to expose them as they are significant for the upcoming changes that set the Kenway saga apart.\(^\text{107}\)

2.1 Haytham’s Gameplay Functions

2.1.1 Player-Character

Unusual for the series, Haytham Kenway occupies three different gameplay levels in *AC3*. He is first introduced as a player-character in Sequence 1, remaining so in Sequences 2 and 3.\(^\text{108}\) The game starts with an assassination at an opera house in S1#2. Here, the player (as Haytham) has to demonstrate her gameplay agility by sneaking around and climbing balconies to reach a target, in order to retrieve a First Civilisation Amulet. This gameplay sequence helps to create the illusion for the player that she is in fact an Assassin protagonist. In the narrative, this false impression is reinforced by the fact that Haytham kills his victim with a hidden blade (the iconic weapon of the Assassins) and the fact that he spares an innocent, a small boy who witnessed the assassination. As one of the rules explicitly stated in the Creed of the Assassins is not to harm innocents, Haytham appears to be one of them.

After this memory, Haytham travels to America to locate a storehouse that is supposed to contain more powerful First Civilisation artefacts. To achieve this, the player has to free a number of Native American slaves held at Southgate Fort.\(^\text{109}\) One of them is Ziio, who

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\(^{107}\) For a list of all relevant characters discussed in the analyses, see Appendix B5. For a synopsis of *AC3*, see Appendix B1.

\(^{108}\) To simplify the terminology, the memories will henceforth be referred to by the abbreviations S (sequence) and # (memory). Therefore, Sequence 1, Memory 2 is abbreviated as S1#2, etc.

\(^{109}\) Again, this is a deed that conforms with the familiar player’s expectations towards an Assassin player-character, as Assassins are generally seen to fight for freedom and against any form of oppression, in particular from Templars.
knows the location of the storehouse.\textsuperscript{110} When Haytham and Ziio arrive at the location, the Amulet does not work. The next cut-scene ends Haytham’s role as player-character, as his Templar allegiance is revealed when he initiates his second-in-command, Charles Lee, into the Order, finishing with “You are a Templar. May the Father of Understanding guide us.”\textsuperscript{111} In the contemporary storyline, Desmond voices a surprised “Wait, what?” in reaction to this, mimicking the probable player reaction. Haytham’s status as player-character and presentation as Assassin in these first three sequences, in all probability, has led to an initial positive identification with the character. Presenting Haytham as an Assassin player-character can be seen as Ubisoft’s first step to relativise the Templar portrayal in the series.

2.1.2 Allied Non-Player Character

After Charles Lee’s initiation, Haytham is rarely seen in-game at first. The Assassin protagonist, Haytham’s illegitimate son Connor, focuses his attention on the other Templars first, in particular Lee. The player is however constantly reminded of Haytham leading the Templar operations. Connor does not meet Haytham face-to-face until 1777, at which point he has already spent eight years actively going after Haytham’s faction. Their paths cross here because of their mutual interest in finding Benjamin Church, a rogue Templar agent recruited by Haytham in Sequence 2, who has stolen supplies from the Patriots that Connor seeks to recover.\textsuperscript{112} Haytham in turn wants to punish Church for betraying the Templar Order. Pointing out that in the matter of Church at least, their “interests are aligned,”\textsuperscript{113} Haytham decides that they should work together. He therefore becomes an allied non-player character for Sequences 9 and 10. In those sequences, he assists Connor in combat, although his general function appears to be that of a guide. Most of the time, the player (as Connor) has to follow Haytham, which is consistent with Haytham’s authoritative personality. While generally, it would appear that Connor depends on Haytham for guidance, it is possible for Haytham to be killed during some of the fights. Therefore, the player has to protect him as well, which is consistent with similar missions in the other \textit{ASSASSIN’S CREED} games.

The way that Haytham is presented as an allied NPC reinforces his superior attitude and training. The ‘real’ opposition between Connor as a positive Assassin and Haytham

\textsuperscript{110} Ziio’s real name is Kaniehtí:io and she is a member of the Kanien’kehá:ka tribe. Because Haytham is unable to pronounce her name, they agree on Ziio to facilitate conversation.

\textsuperscript{111} S3#3, cut-scene.

\textsuperscript{112} The Patriots are a faction of colonists revolting against the British control of the colonies, resulting in the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Connor supports the Patriots, in particular George Washington, throughout the game because their aims seem to coincide with his goal to save his tribe.

\textsuperscript{113} S9#2, cut-scene.
as an antagonistic Templar is shown in their ideological discussions, although, as will be addressed in particular in Chapter 3, this opposition is not as strong as it normally is in the Desmond Saga. Their opposing characters are also shown in the way they handle certain situations. Connor, for instance, repeatedly voices opposition to Haytham’s cruel, inconsiderate techniques, always killing interrogation subjects after learning the necessary information. Yet, Haytham merely calls Connor’s complaints “pointless banter.”

Neither does Haytham show much concern for Connor’s life. In a scene where Connor tries to save Haytham from being killed, Haytham leaves mid-fight, telling an outraged Connor to meet him in New York afterwards: “If you can’t handle a couple of mercenaries, then we’ve really no business working together.” Interestingly, even though Haytham is an NPC in these sequences he more or less dictates Connor’s, i.e. the player’s, actions. Thus, a somewhat personal and favourable connection is formed between player and NPC, and player-character and NPC.

2.1.3 Antagonist

After the completion of the first three sequences, Haytham becomes the main antagonist in the narrative next to Charles Lee. Due to Connor’s conviction that Lee was behind the attack on his village in his childhood, Connor is more obsessed with finding and killing Lee than Haytham, presenting the former as a classical nemesis as previously described by Walsh. However, there are reminders throughout the game that Haytham is the mastermind behind the Templar operations, which makes him another nemesis who needs to be defeated.

Both nemeses are important for the development of the story and are therefore cast characters according to Egenfeldt-Nielsen et. al., but they are quite different in the ways they are presented. Not only does Haytham have a blood relation with Connor, he also becomes his ally for a short period of time. Haytham only becomes an antagonistic NPC in their final confrontation, in which Connor kills Haytham. However, Connor was not planning on killing Haytham, as the purpose of Connor’s (the player’s) mission is finding and killing Charles Lee. Haytham thwarts Connor’s plans, forcing him into combat during which both of them are severely injured. Here, Haytham is presented as a relentless antagonist, taking away the ambiguity that has been assigned to him in his previous roles as player-character and allied NPC. Generally, Haytham’s character functions change from identifiable and positive player-character to a more ambiguous allied NPC, only to finally achieve his full potential as antagonistic NPC. As Charles Lee is assassinated after Haytham, this, in terms of game conventions, reinforces

\(^{114}\) S9#2, cut-scene.  
\(^{115}\) Ibid., scripted event.
once again that he can be seen as the main nemesis in this game, as they are always the last and most difficult gameplay challenge at the end of the game.

2.2 The Fourth Haytham: Haytham’s Narrative Functions

2.2.1 Haytham as Father or Lover

Haytham’s character as a personality is mainly developed in cut-scenes and scripted events. This presents a fourth version of Haytham. Here, he is primarily characterised through his roles as lover and father on the one hand and as Templar Grand Master on the other hand. As I will argue, Haytham’s narrative roles are directly related to the gameplay functions, creating a certain ambiguity and complexity.

Of the two, his role as lover and father in particular characterise Haytham. As was already explained, Haytham first meets Ziio when he frees her and the members of her tribe. Their first proper encounter demonstrates his imperialistic, prejudiced manner of thinking when he assumes that Ziio does not speak sufficient English, a mistake that she quickly corrects. His desperate attempts to gain her trust are reinforced by his mission’s urgency, but in time he develops a personal interest in her. When Haytham has finally gained her trust, Ziio is the one to initiate their relationship, walking around and gently touching him. Although Haytham takes her hand, he first conducts himself like a proper gentleman: “You have shown me great kindness, Ziio. Thank you. I… I should go.” He sounds uncertain however, as if silently asking her to stop him from leaving, which she does by initiating their first kiss (fig. 2).

![Fig. 2 Capture ASSASSIN’S CREED III (Ubisoft). S3#3. Ziio and Haytham kiss for the first time.](image)

Although the initiation of Lee into the Templar Order ends the memories that have Haytham as player-character, Haytham’s and Ziio’s relationship is addressed two more
times in the game. The next sequence starts with Ziio’s voiceover in her native language – translated in the subtitles – in which she tells of Connor’s birth and claims,

I miss Haytham sometimes. He may have even loved me, in his own way. But his eyes… His eyes were ever fixed on the future – one in which he and his Templar brethren controlled all. My greatest fear is that one day I shall look into the face of my son and see the same dark hunger there.116

This does not explain why their relationship ended, but mentioning his Templar identity suggests that it may have been due to ideological differences. The passage is likely taken from her diary, as the next scene shows young Connor reading a journal and dropping it under the table when Ziio enters the room. In that case, such reflections must have been among the first impressions Connor got of his father. The second time their relationship is mentioned is during Connor’s and Haytham’s cooperation. Haytham asks about Ziio’s wellbeing and seems shocked at the news of her untimely death. Apart from it being the first indication that the Templars may not have been responsible for the village’s destruction, the conversation reveals Haytham’s sentimental side as well: “I always wondered what life might have been like had she and I stayed together.”117 His feelings appear genuine, but Connor does not care for his words: “It is done and I am all out of forgiveness.”118

This scene already demonstrates Haytham’s difficult relationship with Connor. While Haytham’s dry wit and sarcasm add a humorous and human dimension to the now overall inaccessible and untouchable character, they also demonstrate his feeling of superiority and lack of respect for other characters. He expresses those particularly often towards his son. During their missions together, Haytham’s behaviour is generally sarcastic and arrogant, and he even makes fun of Connor’s sometimes crude methods. His restrained and sophisticated attitude points to his years of experience as opposed to Connor’s. As already mentioned, Connor is repeatedly shocked about Haytham’s ruthless methods. This includes leaving Connor to fend off a group of mercenaries on his own. When they meet again in New York after this incident, Connor is still angry with his father for leaving him behind.

Haytham’s insistence on being the figure of authority clashes with Connor’s inherent unwillingness to follow orders, especially from Haytham. The relationship between father and son is a complicated one, as Connor has been groomed to think of the Templars, and in particular Haytham, as his enemies. His view of Haytham might already have been formed by his mother’s diary entries. Still, especially the influence of Connor’s mentor

116 S4#1, voice-over.
117 S9#4, cut-scene.
118 Ibid.
Achilles plays a large part in vilifying Haytham as he repeatedly points that Haytham needs to die, for “he is the one holding the whole thing [the Templars] together.” Paired with the traumatic event of witnessing his mother’s death at an early age, Connor develops a kind of hatred towards Haytham that is difficult to overcome. When they first meet face-to-face, Haytham ambushes Connor and could easily have killed him, but stays his hand. Their relationship remains business-like, but it is clear that they know about each other, and not amicably. Faced with Connor’s accusations of working for the British, Haytham replies, “I expected naiveté. But this… The Templars do not fight for the crown. We seek the same as you, boy! Freedom. Justice. Independence.” He barely allows Connor to get a word in as he goes on to justify the Templars’ actions, as well as pointing out why Connor should not have assassinated Haytham’s men, and decides that they should work together. The decision appears purely professional and not motivated by personal feelings at all. Haytham’s view on the Templar-Assassin struggle as he presents it here suggests for the first time that the organisations might not be as different as previously assumed, but Connor is unwilling to listen.

Haytham and Connor have severe difficulties forming a proper father-son relationship, and it is unclear whether they desire one at all. Since their cooperation is based on aligned professional interests rather than on mutual trust, their conversations rarely revolve around personal matters. When they do, they soon turn back to their major point of friction, their fundamentally opposing ideologies. Furthermore, Haytham continually treats Connor as inferior, and the young Assassin’s tendency to repeatedly express dissatisfaction with his situation almost invites snide remarks. When they reach Church’s supposed hiding place, Connor needs to steal a guard’s uniform. Here, it becomes apparent that Haytham refuses to mother Connor:

Haytham, sitting down: “Very well. I will wait here then.”
Connor: “Of course you will.”
Haytham, sarcastically: “Oh, I’m sorry. Would you like me to come along and hold your hand, perhaps? Provide kind words of encouragement?”
Connor storms off without replying.

There are, however, a few moments during which Haytham attempts to establish a personal connection with Connor. When entering Church’s hide-out, Haytham introduces Connor as his son, causing the latter to shoot him a curious look (fig. 3). It is during this mission that Haytham asks about Ziio and desperately tries to convince Connor that he was not responsible for her death, but Connor is the one to initiate the conversation, possibly as a reaction to Haytham’s open admittance of their kinship. Haytham even

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119 S5#1, cut-scene.
120 S9#2, cut-scene.
121 S9#3, cut-scene.
compliments Connor after Church's assassination, patting him on the back saying “You did well.”

As a consequence of their cooperation, Connor starts to doubt the whole situation and what he has worked for so far. His voiceover at the beginning of S10#1 shows that his father’s words have had some effect on him. After apologising to Achilles for his behaviour, he goes to New York to seek out Haytham, as Connor considers it beneficial for Assassins and Templars to unite their efforts. However, Connor makes clear that his feelings towards Haytham are not at all positive: “I do not claim to trust the man – or even like him. But I would be remiss to ignore this opportunity.” Any attempts to gain mutual trust become hopeless when Haytham exposes George Washington’s involvement in the attack on Connor’s village. Connor is outraged and, disillusioned, breaks with both men. The voiceover starting S11#2 shows that Connor has not completely given up on Haytham however: “Of my father, there is no trace. And I am glad of it. If I can be rid of Lee, there may still be a chance for reconciliation – and through it, peace.” Connor soon realises that this is a futile attempt however, as Haytham has helped Lee escape. This leads to the final confrontation between father and son. All progress that has been made between the two seems gone. Haytham is openly antagonistic and condescending towards his son, clearly not seeing him as a potential ally anymore. His change in attitude is not explained in-game. When both are wounded, Connor makes a last attempt at saving his father’s life by offering him redemption or mercy, but is forced to kill Haytham in self-defence, who shows no true regrets:

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122 S9#5, cut-scene.
123 S10#1, cut-scene.
124 S11#2, voice-over.
Haytham: “Don’t think I have any intention of caressing your cheek and saying I was wrong. I will not weep and wonder what might have been. I’m sure you understand. Still, I’m proud of you in a way. You have shown great conviction. Strength. Courage. All noble qualities. I should have killed you long ago.”
Connor, in his native language: “Goodbye, father.”

Haytham’s dying words demonstrate the difficulties they face in being caught on two opposing sides in a struggle that transcends personal feelings. The transition from a potentially positive or neutral character to a negative, antagonistic character is present in both of the relationships that identify him. Such a portrayal of Haytham is in line with his gameplay function as well. When he is the player-character and his relationship with Ziio is still being established, he is depicted as emotional but reserved, and overall their relationship starts on a positive note. As soon as his Templar identity is revealed and he is no longer playable, his portrayal becomes more negative and solely focused on his ideology. This becomes more complicated in his relationship with Connor, as he is now openly a Templar. Emotions and ideologies are inseparable in their case, and the status of their relationship depends on which side comes out on top. In the end, despite the glimpses of a possible relationship with his son, Haytham’s Templar identity trumps all other concerns.

2.2.2 Haytham as Templar Grand Master of the Colonial Rite

As mentioned above, Haytham and Connor barely have any personal conversations at all. Much more than through his role as lover or father, Haytham is characterised through his position as Templar Grand Master both in authority and ideology. Once Connor is introduced as player-character, Haytham’s first in-game appearance positions him as the head of the Colonial Templars when Achilles shows Connor a diagram with Haytham on top as Grand Master (fig. 4).  

125 For an in-depth discussion about the presentation of the Templar-Assassin struggle in the Kenway Saga, see Chapter 3.3.  
126 It is not Haytham who is Connor’s main focus when he first sees the diagram, though, but Charles Lee, emphasised by the camera zooming in on his portrait with a voiceover of what Lee had told Connor before his village was attacked.
This is the first time that the Templar ideology is explained from the perspective of the Assassins, which states that the Templars' goal is to control humanity. Haytham and his Templar brethren however claim overall good intentions in their approaches. This demonstrates the suspicion and hostility the two organisations hold towards each other. The presumed down-to-earth Templar attitude, as opposed to the idealistic attitude of the Assassins, is reflected by other Templar agents as well, for instance by Pitcairn, who points out: “And we should live forever on castles in the sky. You [Connor] wield your blade like a man, but your mouth like a child. And more will die now because of that...”

Overall, the Templars are much more organised than the Assassins. This is particularly demonstrated by the official Templar initiation ceremony compared to Achilles simply giving Connor his robes, saying, “Once upon a time we had ceremonies on such occasions. But I don’t think either of us are really the type for that.” Connor even accuses Achilles of letting the Brotherhood become weak and giving the Templars the opportunity to become as powerful as they are now, but the specifics of the Assassins’ situation and Achilles’s disillusionment are not explained until ROGUE. Haytham’s priorities – potentially establishing a relationship with Connor and furthering the Templar cause – are combined in his attempts to make Connor see what he considers the truth. In defence of the Templars, he points out, his speech increasingly passionate and angry: “The only

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127 Strictly speaking, Achilles is a former Assassin. He is increasingly disillusioned and unmotivated about their cause, and generally does not take part in the missions himself.  
128 The only two targets not claiming good intentions are Thomas Hickey, whose reason for cooperating with the Templars is profit (S8#3), and Benjamin Church, who has already betrayed the Templars at this point (S9#5).  
129 S7#4, cut-scene.  
130 S5#5, cut-scene.  
131 S9#2, cut-scene.
difference, Connor — the only difference between myself and those you aid — is that I do not feign affection.\textsuperscript{132}

Despite their mutual efforts to convert the other to their respective world view, father and son are unable to find common ground. Haytham dies a Templar, and in his eulogy, Charles Lee remembers him as “a man of peerless vision, who sought to change the world,”\textsuperscript{133} a man, in other words, who furthered the Templar cause immensely. This is how Haytham is characterised officially as well. The game gives access to the Animus Database, a database compiled by the contemporary Assassin Shaun Hastings to give Desmond, and by extension the player, an overview of important characters, events and locations. Here it is important to emphasise that Shaun is \textit{not} an objective character. In-game, he is presented as very sarcastic, which occasionally reflects in the entries as well. While the entries are normally quite extensive, Haytham’s database entry does not reveal much about him, only focusing on his role within the Templar Order:

\begin{quote}
B. 1725.
Haytham Kenway is a Templar who came to the American colonies in 1754. From what we’ve learned, Kenway was sent here by Grand Master Reginald Birch, with a dual mission: to establish his own Templar group to rival the colonial Assassins — and searching for clues about artifacts related to the First Civilization. And when a Grand Master tells you to do something, you do it. Even if it’s just a Chess Grand Master. Kenway didn’t find the artifacts he was looking for. He did, however, recruit a small, dedicated band of Templars. He also attempted to forge a relationship with the Kanien’kehá:ka in the frontier, and one woman in particular, Kaniehtí:io. The two were briefly lovers — and however brief it was, it was enough, because Kaniehtí:io, unbeknownst to Haytham, ended up raising their son, Connor. I’m guessing it was Kenway who became Grand Master in the colonies, and therefore the man responsible for the 1763 attack on the Colonial Assassins. That attack wiped out most of the membership and almost all of our records from that era. It’s never been clear exactly what happened in that attack, or how Kenway managed to make it such a complete surprise. In any case, I don’t like this guy. Sorry to use such strong words.\textsuperscript{134}
\end{quote}

The database entry becomes available in S5#2, when Connor first sees Haytham in person. Therefore, it does not spoil the player’s surprise of Haytham’s allegiance. Since the database is compiled by the Assassins whose resources are limited, not much is revealed about his private life, in particular the time before he joined the Order. Considering that it later turns out that he is the son of the Assassin Edward Kenway, it is surprising that not even this kind of information is made available. An explanation for this seeming omission is given in the entry which refers to lost records.\textsuperscript{135} By presenting

\begin{footnotes}
\item[132] S9#3, cut-scene.
\item[133] S12#1, scripted event.
\item[134] In-game database \textit{AC3}. Also see Appendix C for this and other transcripts of relevant documents in the games.
\item[135] From a production standpoint, it makes sense to omit such information in order not to spoil the upcoming games. Considering the great focus on Edward Kenway as Connor’s grandfather, rather
\end{footnotes}
Haytham in such a manner, the character is kept mysterious and his personal motives remain inaccessible. Shaun’s remark at the end of the entry frames him as a villain, but considering Shaun’s sarcastic and cynical attitude, it also makes the entry less reliable.

2.3 Conclusion

Haytham occupies a variety of functions within the game in terms of both gameplay and narrative. His personality is mainly developed in cut-scenes and scripted events, and reiterated by his different gameplay functions of player-character, allied non-player character, and antagonistic non-player character/nemesis. This development is unusual because the player necessarily identifies with Haytham to some extent, at least in the first three sequences. This is partly because he is the player-character in those sequences, which means that his avatar serves as an extension of the player and establishes a more direct relationship with him or her, but also because the player is fooled into seeing him as an Assassin. The plot-twist suggests that there is more to Haytham and possibly the Templars in general than meets the eye, but Haytham is still portrayed more negatively as a person the more the game focuses on his Templar identity.

Haytham’s variety of functions presents him as a conflicted and conflicting character. Apart from the explicit information given, Haytham denies deeper insights into his character and his background. For that reason, he is first and foremost a Templar villain, albeit one with the potential to question the Templar-Assassin struggle as a whole. The changing gameplay functions in particular serve to establish a more direct and conflicting relationship not only between Connor and Haytham, but also between Haytham and the player, an ambiguity that paves the way for the various transitions in the Kenway Saga, as will become clear in the following chapters.

than pointing to his being Haytham’s father, it is easy for players to forget that they are related until he appears as a child at the end of *AC4*. Even then, the link can only be made by players who have played *AC3* before *AC4*. 

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Chapter 3: The Transmedia Storyworld of ASSASSIN’S CREED

The previous chapter focused on Haytham’s portrayal in the transitional video game ASSASSIN’S CREED III, in which his various gameplay and narrative functions serve to underline the ambiguity of the character. This chapter takes a step back from the individual texts, focusing instead on the bigger picture that Haytham influences, namely one’s understanding of the storyworld as such. For this purpose, I will briefly discuss the lore of the ASSASSIN’S CREED series in general and the way the storyworld is depicted in the Desmond Saga, before proceeding to investigate more in-depth the storyworld as presented in the Kenway Saga. Here, I will demonstrate especially Haytham’s importance for the drastic changes in the portrayal.\(^{136}\)

3.1 The Lore of ASSASSIN’S CREED

3.1.1 Those Who Came Before

The world of the ASSASSIN’S CREED series centres on the ancient feud between the two organisations, Assassins and Templars, and the way this conflict influences past and present. Apart from ideological differences detailed below, the struggle is driven by the lore of the First Civilisation, also known as Those Who Came Before. This is an ancient, highly advanced race with generally similar anatomy to humans, with one strong difference being “six senses instead of just five, allowing for a more sophisticated perception of time and space.”\(^{137}\)

Many aspects about Those Who Came Before remain unknown in the lore of ASSASSIN’S CREED. Apart from their predictions of a global catastrophe that ends the Desmond Saga, there are constant reminders of the First Civilisation throughout the games, the most obvious being the so-called Pieces of Eden. Those are ancient artefacts created by this Civilisation. Both Assassins and Templars are constantly competing in their search for the artefacts to further their own goals. The series uses the power that the artefacts give to their wielders to explain a variety of historical events.\(^{138}\) Generally, “the Templars have been consistently successful in collecting them, and many remain in their possession.”\(^{139}\) This gives the Templar Order a clear advantage over the Assassins, who constantly seem to suffer from limited resources.

\(^{136}\) Parts of this chapter are under consideration for publication with Online – Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet.

\(^{137}\) Assassin’s Creed Encyclopedia 3.0, p. 52.

\(^{138}\) Ibid., p. 54.

\(^{139}\) Ibid.
3.1.2 The Assassin Brotherhood

Assassins and Templars appear in strong opposition in *ASSASSIN’S CREED*, although “[a]ccording to some, Assassins and Templars once shared the same ideals, the same hopes for humanity.” The struggle is described in rather binary terms: the Assassins are “founded in the belief that only free will can ensure the betterment of the individual,” and the Templars are seen as their “powerful mirror organization which believes that the best way for humanity to survive is to save it from itself through the sublimation of free will.” The Assassins’ Creed ultimately maintains that “nothing is true; everything is permitted,” but the Brotherhood still operates on the basis of three main tenets:

I. STAY YOUR BLADE FROM THE FLESH OF THE INNOCENT.
II. HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT.
III. NEVER COMPROMISE THE BROTHERHOOD.

These three rules provide the protocol that the Assassins live by, demanding that they limit unnecessary deaths and keep a low profile to protect themselves and the Brotherhood. For Assassins, “[d]evotion to the Brotherhood comes before personal loyalties.”

Apart from this ideological foundation, some core properties of the Assassin Brotherhood mark them as different from the Templars, such as their trademark weapon, the hidden blade, and the use of various other technical innovations detailed in Altaïr’s codex. An ambiguous aspect that might point to an inherent genetic difference between Templars and Assassins is the so-called Eagle Vision, which in the games is a mode of vision that can be activated to view hidden objects or locations, as well as identify certain types of NPCs, such as enemies or targets. It is diegetically explained as “an extrasensory ability, which seems to be inherent in particular bloodlines. […] Although any of us has the potential to unlock Eagle Vision, it would seem that humans with strong connections to the members of the First Civilization have greater chances of acquiring it.” This simultaneously suggests that Eagle Vision is dependent on bloodlines as well as being a dormant human trait. While all Assassin protagonists in the series possess the ability, it appears to not be inherent to all Assassins. Yet, so far only Assassins have shown this ability. The only Templars in the games to possess Eagle Vision (Haytham Kenway and

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140 Ibid., p. 31.
142 Ibid.
143 Ibid., p. 23.
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid., p. 25. The codex consists of the journal of Altaïr Ibn-La’Ahad, the protagonist of the first game, and is an important book for the Assassins because of its philosophical and practical implications.
146 Ibid., p. 24.
Shay Patrick Cormac) were also Assassins at some point or at least stemmed from an Assassin bloodline.

3.1.3 The Templar Order

As mentioned above, the Templar Order is considered the exact opposite of the Assassin Brotherhood, with “the Templars [...] convinced that it is through calculated manipulation of the masses that humanity will ultimately reach its full potential.” This however is not their only ideology, as they also strongly believe in “the betterment of humanity through technical and scientific advancement.” Just as much as the Assassins’ codex deals with technical innovations, so did the Templar Order have many scientists and visionaries amongst its ranks, ultimately forming an alliance with the Church. Within the historical framework provided by the ASSASSIN’S CREED lore, it is important to recognise that the Order’s proclaimed intentions were initially honourable, and that in particular its European division underwent a crucial change in the Renaissance:

Operating on the fringe of society, the Order’s leaders – eventually led by Rodrigo Borgia – forgot their true purpose, blinded by greed and personal ambition. Templars refer to this period as the Dark Age of the Order. [...] In spite of the mistakes of the European Renaissance, the Templars’ search for understanding continued. Hidden behind society’s political, religious, cultural and scientific leaders, many Templars strove to become pioneers of scientific research.

In fundamental terms, Assassins and Templars both have the betterment of humanity in mind, but they have inherently different notions of how to achieve this initially noble goal. This is primarily manifested in their attitude to free will. The Assassins consider free will necessary to give humanity the opportunity to improve itself, whereas the Templar Order sees it as an obstacle to betterment, and therefore humanity has to be guided to achieve perfection. It has to be remarked that Assassins are also critical of their own methods and question their ideology to the extent that they are aware of the potential negative consequences of bringing free will to everyone.

In the end, despite their similarities, the organisations embody opposite extremes. In an ideal Templar world, free will would be abandoned for the masses, while in an ideal Assassin world, everyone would have a freedom of choice, which in turn would lead to creativity and innovation.

147 Ibid., p. 31.
148 Ibid., p. 33.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
3.2 The Desmond Saga

From the beginning of the Desmond Saga, Assassins and Templars are established as complete opposites in the contemporary and historical storylines. In both timelines, the Templars are presented as cruel, immoral and disrespectful of other people’s lives. Here, the Templars and Assassins can be seen as a clear dichotomy. Firstly, the Templars are generally portrayed as corrupt and hypocritical, as men not driven by a certain ideology, but by a hunger for power and control. They stand in direct opposition to the Assassins, who are characterised by wanting to liberate mankind. Secondly, the Templars are shown to be deeply flawed, as shown in their overall cruelty and emphasised by BROTHERHOOD’s antagonist Cesare’s violent tendencies and his incestuous and unfaithful relationship with his sister.\(^{151}\) The organisations are binary opposites, with the morally bankrupt Templars opposing the sometimes rash, but overall virtuous Assassins. The last two games of the saga, REVELATIONS and AC3, also situate the Templar-Assassin struggle in political and ideological terms. Here, the Templars typically instigate precarious political situations.

Since AC3 is the game that serves as a finale to the Desmond Saga as well as a transition to the Kenway Saga, the depiction of the Templar-Assassin struggle does change here with Haytham’s character, but not as strongly as it does in the later games. The primary view of the Templar-Assassin struggle in the Desmond Saga still coincides with the one mainly presented in Ezio’s storyline, asserting the Assassins as positive force whose methods may be excused because of their honourable aim, whereas the Templars are violent and ruthless, concerned only with their greed for power and control. The highly negative impression of the Templars might go back to their contextualisation within what is recognised as the Dark Age of the Templar Order, but the contemporary Templars are not presented favourably either.

3.3 The Kenway Saga

As stated before, the start of the Kenway Saga marks several changes in the way the ASSASSIN’S CREED series is portrayed. On the one hand it introduces a more ambiguous concept of morality and the Templar-Assassin struggle than the one overall presented in the Desmond Saga. On the other hand it shifts from a linear story organisation to a non-linear narrative that is less internally coherent and instead more focused on the depiction of the storyworld as such. The transmedia side of the production plays a significant part in this as well, now taking fuller advantage of the possibilities of transmedia storytelling (see Chapter 4). The comic books and graphic novels of the Desmond Saga had already

\(^{151}\) Indeed, family bonds are not sacred to Templars at all here, as Cesare’s father Rodrigo, Pope and antagonist of AC2, disagrees with Cesare’s methods and tries to poison him, only to be killed instead.
depicted Templar characters as protagonists before. With the start of *AC3* some novels are used to explore an alternative viewpoint, specifically using Templar protagonists to present the in-game events in a different light and to give more information on the characters as such, as is the case with *Forsaken* and *Unity*. This technique enables greater identification with central Templar characters, in turn casting doubts on the Desmond Saga’s conventional portrayal of the Templar-Assassin struggle. This is not only explored in the novels however, as all video games in the Kenway Saga portray the struggle in a more ambiguous way with less noble and more opportunistic characters. Edward Kenway in *AC4*, for instance, starts out as a pirate and impersonates an Assassin thinking that it will bring him profit. It is only much later that he truly joins the Brotherhood after having undone the damage he did by selling their secrets in the first place. The following discusses Haytham’s role in particular in changing the portrayal of the Templar-Assassin storyworld, further demonstrating the current state of the struggle on the basis of *ROGUE*.

### 3.3.1 Haytham Kenway

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Haytham is introduced not as a Templar, but as a potential Assassin. It is only after playing him for three sequences in *AC3* that the player is made aware of his allegiance. At this point he becomes unplayable and develops first to allied NPC, then to his final function as nemesis. In the three playable sequences, he is presented as an overall noble character, or at least not any less noble than other (Assassin) protagonists. His interest in personal relationships becomes apparent in his relationship with Ziio, which slowly develops over the course of the sequences. When Connor becomes the player-character and joins the Assassin Brotherhood under the tutelage of Achilles, Haytham, as Templar Grand Master of the Colonial Rite, becomes one of Connor’s nemeses, with his importance being reiterated time and again by Achilles. Haytham is also characterised as being emotionally cold, which is especially demonstrated on the basis of Connor’s attempted execution.\(^{152}\)

As shown in Chapter 2.1.2, when Haytham and Connor actually meet face-to-face in S9#2, their cooperation, on Haytham’s prompting, is based on their having a common target, the Templar traitor Benjamin Church whom Haytham has recruited in Sequence 2. This is where Haytham’s character becomes the most ambiguous, for instance in the struggle between his usual inaccessible and superior demeanour and his few fruitless attempts to establish a more meaningful relationship with his son. The ambiguity is also

\(^{152}\) To prevent Connor from crossing the Templars’ plan of assassinating George Washington, Haytham approves of Connor’s public execution without a trial. He is rescued by the Assassins. See Chapters 4.1.1 and 4.2.2 for further information about the execution and the way it is dealt with in different media.
extended to general Templar characteristics. While Achilles disdainfully teaches Connor what he believes to be the Templars’ goal, to establish “[a] people in service to the principles of order and structure,” Haytham’s explanation when confronted by Connor is decidedly more positive. He clearly considers the Templar ideology as more down-to-earth and reasonable than that of the Assassins:

Haytham: “Order. Purpose. Direction. No more than that. It’s your lot that means to confound with this nonsense talk of freedom. Time was, the Assassins professed a far more sensible goal, that of peace.”
Connor: “Freedom is peace.”
Haytham: “Oh, no. It’s an invitation to chaos.”

Convinced of this ideology, Haytham attempts to make Connor see what he considers the ultimate truth. He introduces his own binary view of looking at the conflict, clearly considering the Assassins to be wrong and the Templars to be right. This is especially shown in the final confrontation between Haytham and Connor. Haytham is unrelenting in his attitude here and accuses Connor of being blind to the truth:

You act as though you have some right to judge. To declare me and mine wrong for the world. And yet everything I’ve shown you – all I’ve said and done – should clearly demonstrate otherwise. […] Even when your kind appears to triumph... Still we rise again. And do you know why? It is because the Order is born of a realization. We require no creed. No indoctrination by desperate old men. All we need is that the world be as it is.

In AC3, Benjamin Church is the only character who views the whole conflict in a truly relative manner, pointing out while dying that “[i]t’s all a matter of perspective. There is no single path through life that’s right and fair and does no harm. […] You should know better than this, dedicated as you are to fighting Templars – who themselves see their work as just.” Haytham’s character emphasises this point. Rather than being presented solely as an evil Templar, he is first introduced as a potential Assassin, and later as a potential ally. Apart from establishing a point of identification for the player, this shows how similar Templars and Assassins truly are, as there are little to no indications that he is not an Assassin in the first three sequences. The game ends by portraying him as the antagonist however, disillusioned and unwilling to compromise his ideology for the sake of

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153 AC3, S5#1, cut-scene.
154 S9#3, cut-scene.
155 S11#3, scripted event and cut-scene.
156 S9#5, cut-scene.
157 Haytham does not hide his dual heritage, as his clothes sport an Assassin insignia as well as an Eagle, which is an important symbol for the Assassin Brotherhood. To the keen eye, this might be another reason to believe that he is in fact an Assassin.
his son. This sheds a negative light on him, especially because his sudden change in attitude and behaviour is not explained in-game.

This is where the novel *Forsaken* comes in.\(^{158}\) At the beginning of the novel, Haytham’s father Edward is killed and his half-sister Jenny is kidnapped during an attack on the Kenway household. Consequently, Templar Grand Master Reginald Birch becomes his guardian and initiates him into the Templar Order. Unaware that his own father was an Assassin, Haytham lets himself be indoctrinated by Birch’s perspective, who describes the Templars as “help[ing] to maintain peace and order in our time. […] It requires structure and discipline, and structure and discipline require an example to follow. The Knights Templar are that example.”\(^{159}\) Haytham grows up with this conviction and rises in the Templar ranks. Often characterised as a killer, his methods become unnecessarily ruthless for a while. He has no scruples to take someone else’s life, even to the point where Birch criticises him for his non-adherence to the code of honour that he has taught him.\(^{160}\) While continuing the investigation to find his father’s killer and rescue Jenny, Haytham starts to suspect Birch’s involvement in the attack, especially once he finds out about his father’s Assassin identity. In the end, Birch’s consistently untruthful behaviour towards Haytham is a breaking point between the two, and Haytham observes: “The warmth between us […] is gone. In me, he sees insubordination. In him, I see lies.”\(^{161}\)

Novel and game start to overlap at the Royal Opera House, where Haytham has to recover the First Civilisation amulet from Miko, an Assassin Haytham was familiar with from a previous mission in the novel. This is the mission that starts AC3. Miko’s death makes Haytham question the binary view of the Templar-Assassin struggle and inspires him to develop an alternative ideology: “Miko had died wanting to find another way. What had he meant? An accord of Assassin and Templar? My thoughts went to my father.”\(^{162}\)

Haytham is well aware of the opposing ideologies and points out that they mainly differ in the way the organisations view the world: the Assassins in more relative, the Templars in more absolute terms.\(^{163}\) He sees his dual heritage as an advantage, demonstrating that the two viewpoints can be reconciled:

I had begun to think of myself not so much as a Templar but a man with Assassin roots and Templar beliefs, whose heart had briefly been lost to a Mohawk woman. A man with a unique perspective, in other words.

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\(^{158}\) For a more in-depth analysis of *Forsaken*, see Chapter 4.1.1. For a synopsis of *Forsaken*, see Appendix B2.

\(^{159}\) Bowden 2012, p. 67. Original emphasis.

\(^{160}\) Ibid., pp. 127-128. Interestingly, this code of honour sounds similar to the Creed of the Assassins.

\(^{161}\) Ibid., p. 205.

\(^{162}\) Ibid., p. 208.

\(^{163}\) Ibid., pp. 85-86.
Accordingly, I had been less preoccupied with finding the temple and using its contents to establish Templar supremacy, and more with bringing together the two disciplines, Assassin and Templar. I’d reflected on how my father’s teachings had often dovetailed with those of Reginald, and I’d begun seeing the similarities between the two factions, rather than the differences. Such ideological reflections show that there is more to the ancient conflict than meets the eye. This is true for the character of Haytham as well. The novel portrays him as sensitive and analytical, and the way he behaves does not always conform to the way he feels. His character takes a turn for the worse after Birch’s death and the suicide of his best friend Holden. Where before, he was idealistic and hopeful about reconciling the two ideologies, he becomes more and more disillusioned with his cause as the years progress. He simply becomes indifferent. Although Connor gives him some hope again, Haytham eventually sacrifices himself for the sake of Charles Lee, to finally behave as a Templar Grand Master should. He ends his life considering the two philosophies to be incompatible, having now lost all his former convictions about reconciling them:

Once upon a time, many years ago, I’d dreamed of one day uniting Assassin and Templar, but I was a younger and more idealistic man then. The world had yet to show me its true face. And its true face was unforgiving, cruel and pitiless, barbaric and brutal. There was no place in it for dreams.

**Forsaken**, much more than *AC3*, shows that an alliance between Templars and Assassins is possible in theory. Haytham’s personal ideology plays an important part in this, and it even extends beyond the Kenway Saga as such. In the novel *Unity*, the protagonist is the French Templar Élise de la Serre. Several different ideologies are presented throughout the novel, although mainly focused on the internal politics within the Templar Order. Élise’s mother in particular adopts a rather moderate stance. Until she dies from an illness, she is the main influence on Élise’s ideology. On a mission in London while helping out a befriended Templar family, the Carrols, Élise infiltrates Jennifer Scott’s, Haytham’s sister’s, household to steal the letters that Haytham had written to her in the years prior to his death. Those letters, and by extension Haytham, become an important guideline for Élise, although the exact details of his contemplations are never given.

Élise is willing to implement Haytham’s ideals of a Templar-Assassin cooperation, to the point where her father, the current Grand Master of the Parisian Rite, arranges a meeting with the Assassin Mentor Mirabeau. Before this comes to pass, Élise’s father is assassinated by other radical Templars. The betrayal minimises her resources and

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166 For a synopsis of *Unity*, see Appendix B4.
prevents her from assuming her intended position as Grand Master. She dies in the process of avenging her father. Before this, she does however cooperate with her Assassin lover Arno, who used to be her father’s ward and who was initiated into the Brotherhood by the Assassin Bellec. Arno is also the player-character of the corresponding game, \textit{UNITY}. Arno’s and Élise’s cooperation demonstrates that an alliance between Templars and Assassins is indeed possible, although here it is a result of their romantic feelings for each other rather than possibly reconciled ideologies. It becomes clear that on both Templar and Assassin sides, there are individuals who are strongly opposed to any kind of cooperation between the organisations, in particular the Carrol family and Bellec, both of whom are continually attempting to have Élise killed. \textit{Unity}, then, frames the Templar-Assassin struggle differently, now focusing not only on the general differences between the organisations, but also portraying internal discordances. With \textit{Unity}, Assassins and Templars are no longer just good or bad anymore: ‘good’ Templars, like Élise’s mother, exist just as much as ‘bad’ Assassins, like Bellec, do.

3.3.2 Shay Patrick Cormac$^{167}$

Another character interconnected with Haytham and crucial in the changing portrayal of the storyworld is Shay Patrick Cormac, the Assassin-turned-Templar who is the player-character of \textit{ROGUE}. The beginning of the game, as well as the surrounding paratexts, leave no doubt that Shay will become a Templar over the course of the game. His initial voiceover frames the player’s expectations of the events to come by pointing out that he \textit{used} to be an Assassin, but no longer belongs to the Brotherhood.$^{168}$ \textit{ROGUE}, then, is the first game in the series with a Templar as main player-character, although Shay is also an Assassin for the first two sequences. The main difference between playing Haytham in \textit{AC3} and Shay in \textit{ROGUE} is that the player is now aware of the character’s allegiance, which likely raises a wide range of ideological and emotional issues for the players familiar with the series, which I will come back to in Chapter 4.1.2.

At the beginning of the game, Shay and his best friend Liam are tasked with the retrieval of two artefacts from the Templars. During these missions, Shay is shown to be critical of the Assassin cause and refers to a certain double standard. The Assassins’ struggle, according to Liam, is “beyond political borders,”$^{169}$ while Shay thinks it should

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$^{167}$ For a more in-depth analysis of \textit{ROGUE}, see Chapter 4.1.2. For a synopsis of \textit{ROGUE}, see Appendix B3.

$^{168}$ Most of the other games start with voiceovers to provide an interpretive framework and a recap of the previous storylines. The difference between \textit{ROGUE} and the other games is that the voiceover is provided by the historical protagonist, whereas previously it was provided by the contemporary Assassins, mostly Desmond. In \textit{AC3} Desmond’s father recounts the story and introduces the Templars as the enemy. \textit{AC4} does not start with a voiceover.

$^{169}$ \textit{ROGUE}, S1#3, scripted event.
recognise them. Early on, Shay acknowledges that Assassins and Templars might not be so different in their methods, giving neither group the moral superiority that both factions think they possess:

Shay: “Seems to me we should just talk to them like men instead of skulking around.”

[...]

Liam: “They’re murdering bastards who want to control the world and everyone in it. Never forget.”

Shay: “And we have nothing in common with that, of course.”

Throughout the missions, Shay consistently questions the morality of his assassinations, as they do not seem honourable to him. Nevertheless, Shay remains loyal to the Brotherhood until accidentally causing an earthquake in Lisbon trying to retrieve a First Civilisation artefact. After this, he confronts the Assassins, furious about their negligence and distressed because of the many innocent deaths he caused. He especially blames Achilles for insisting on the mission, thinking that he knew about the risk and claiming that their “mad grab for power” has to end. It is not clear whether or not Achilles knew about the possible consequences, but considering that he agrees with Shay at the end of the game, it is unlikely. The heated confrontation does not allow for explanations; at least none of the Assassins put any forward. This reaction, wherein Shay may easily interpret ignorance as indifference, is the key to Shay’s transformation into a Templar. Although at first unaware of this, he becomes associated with Templars in New York City and is eventually initiated into the Order, where he also becomes acquainted with Haytham. Agreeing that the Assassins need to be stopped from disrupting the First Civilisation sites, they start to take out the Colonial Assassins one by one.

The moral relativism of the Templar-Assassin feud is addressed at several points in the game. Although Shay is aware that his decision to join the Templars was a logical one, he is not free of guilt. During his assassination, for instance, the Assassin Adéwalé, who has served with Haytham’s father Edward in AC4, claims that Shay has “become a monster,” to which Shay replies, “Perhaps I have.” While reiterating that the Assassins consider Templars enemies and highly immoral, Shay’s reaction shows doubts as well. However, when Shay voices regrets about having to kill Adéwalé, his first mate Gist points out that the Templars Shay assassinated at the beginning of the game had been good men too, and he further points out, “Who knows, had you not [joined the Templars], you might have found yourself at the end of Master Kenway’s blade.” This demonstrates how fickle the

170 Ibid., scripted event.
171 S2#5, cut-scene.
172 S5#2, cut-scene.
173 Ibid., scripted event.
174 S6#3, scripted event.
relationships in the game are, and how closely tied to allegiances instead of personal matters.

Apart from the characters’ considerations, the gameplay reflects this relativism as well, although possibly not as convincingly as it could have. The game needs to provide a strong incentive in order for the players to want to kill Assassins, a group that players have identified with for several games already. The shock of the earthquake serves that purpose, but throughout the game the Assassins are also shown to employ questionable and cruel methods. At one point, for instance, Shay needs to free hostages taken by the Assassins. Taking hostages is not a technique consistent with what has previously been known about the Brotherhood. To familiar players, such behaviour might appear non-canonical. Shay’s storyline ends with a voiceover in which he clearly and consciously identifies with the Templar cause.

3.4 Conclusion

Compared to the Desmond Saga, the Kenway Saga takes more liberties in regards to story composition and the presentation and evaluation of the storyworld, which is developed mainly in the games and further explored through techniques of transmedia storytelling. Haytham Kenway is not only the character who marks the transition from one saga to the next, but also from the conventional depiction of the Templar-Assassin conflict to a more relativistic point of view. This is picked up in ROGUE as well; although Shay’s decision to leave the Assassins is his own, it is Haytham who eventually initiates him into the Order and leaves a lasting influence on Shay and his ideology. ROGUE and Forsaken in particular are designed to question the hitherto black-and-white portrayal of the feud, reinforcing a grey area instead. This likely only achieves its full effect in relation to the other media texts. The basis for the changing portrayal eventually lies in Haytham’s character to a large extent. According to Ubisoft’s historical researcher Maxime Durand,

specifically starting with ASSASSIN’S CREED III, we came up with characters that actually had doubts, even for villains. […] Even for Haytham, he’s not a villain. He’s not actually a bad guy, he’s trying to come up with a new way to show the world […] I think that’s why ROGUE was so interesting to show that, to explain furthermore how Assassins and Templars are actually just two freaks. […] Well, they’re just two terrorist groups. […] and it’s not black and white […] For a long time we’ve been wanting the series to show that it’s more grey than that. So I think it’s a matter of realisation now. We can come up with something that’s more mature.175

Both Templars and Assassins are equally convinced of their moral superiority and the righteousness of their respective causes, making ROGUE’s portrayal still rather binary but

175 Durand, Maxime. Personal interview, 24 March 2015. For a transcript of the interview, see Appendix E.
presented from a different viewpoint. The real ambiguity focusing on the similarities between the organisations that Haytham discusses in *Forsaken*, and that is picked up in *Unity* especially in presenting the internal struggles of the organisations, is not as clear in *ROGUE*. At the end of the game, and consequently the Kenway Saga as such, the modern-day Templars ask the protagonist, here an unnamed research analyst at Abstergo Entertainment, to make an informed choice and join them. At the same time it is not an actual choice: it is clear that a refusal to join the Order will result in death. The first-person PoP extends the question to the players, requiring them to actively reflect on the struggle themselves.
Chapter 4: Haytham Kenway and Transmedia Storytelling

The previous chapter outlined Haytham’s role in changing the portrayal and understanding of the storyworld as such. This ambiguity, and indeed the maturity that Durand mentions above, can be related to the whole of the Kenway Saga and is formally expressed and reiterated via the affordances of transmedia storytelling. As mentioned before, Ubisoft did not systematically make use of transmedia storytelling until 2011. In terms of storytelling, the Kenway Saga moves away from a coherent, linear narrative. Instead, it presents a more storyworld-based approach with a non-linear but internally connected narrative. This chapter focuses on the way Haytham connects these media texts with one another and gives insights into his formal importance regarding the transmedia nature of the series, emphasising the focus on world-building rather than developing a linear narrative throughout the saga. First, I will focus in more detail than previously on Haytham’s role in Forsaken and ROGUE, as those are core texts dealing with Haytham extensively. As AC3 has already been discussed at length in Chapter 2 and his appearance in AC4 is minimal, these two texts will only be incorporated in the discussion of the texts’ interconnectivity. Here, I analyse the Kenway Saga in terms of media chronology and media interaction. Although not strictly speaking part of the saga anymore, the video game UNITY and the corresponding novel will be addressed as well because of Haytham’s continuing influence on them. Although technically part of the Kenway Saga, the novel Assassin’s Creed: Black Flag (2013) is omitted from the discussion because of this study’s focus on Haytham, who is not present in this media text as it focuses on parts of Edward Kenway’s story before Haytham’s time.

4.1 Media Texts in the Kenway Saga

4.1.1 Assassin’s Creed: Forsaken

The epistolary novel Forsaken, released on 4 December 2012 shortly after the release of ASSASSIN’S CREED III, is written as a first-person narrative constructed from Haytham’s fictional diary entries from the age of ten years onwards. It is framed by Connor’s entries. Particularly the prologue heavily influences the interpretation of what is to come, as Connor points out, in line with the implied reader’s experience who has likely played AC3 before reading the novel: “I never knew him. Not really. I thought I had, but it wasn’t until I read his journal that I realized I hadn’t really known him at all. And it’s too late now. Too

176 For a full synopsis of the novel, see Appendix B2.
late to tell him I misjudged him. Too late to tell him I'm sorry." This suggests that Haytham has more depth than previously assumed in AC3. Young Haytham reflects on his life, particularly referring to the attack on the Kenway household, during which his father Edward is killed and his half-sister Jenny is kidnapped. The attack is a traumatic event for Haytham and is the driving force behind his character for most of his life. From this day onwards, Haytham is intent on finding Edward's killers and rescuing Jenny.

Haytham further explains that he does not know why his family appears to be stigmatised, and he is therefore unaware of the Templar-Assassin struggle when his guardian Reginald Birch reveals his Templar allegiance to him and takes Haytham to Europe to find Edward's killer and rescue Jenny. In the twelve-year gap between his entry announcing their departure for Europe and his next entry, Haytham has become a full-fledged Templar. Their investigations have not been fruitful and are of lower priority now, but they are still his underlying motivation:

> the fire of vengeance in my gut burns less fiercely these days, perhaps simply because I've grown; perhaps because of what Reginald has taught me about control of oneself, mastery of one's own emotions. Even so, dim it may be, but it continues to burn within me.178

Throughout the novel, Haytham is characterised as a killer, both by himself and other characters, although he becomes less ruthless for a while after serving in the army. He is highly detached from the act of killing itself: “I take no pleasure in my skill at death. Simply, I am good at it.”179 This is picked up at several points in the novel, for instance when, Jenny, finally rescued from slavery, says: “you were born to kill, and kill is what you have done, and I was born to serve men, and serve men is what I have done. My days of serving men are over, though. What about you?”180 This comment can also be interpreted differently, namely that Haytham was born to be an Assassin. In time, Haytham starts to accept his Assassin heritage and actively combines it with his Templar ideology.

After the events detailed in the first three sequences of AC3, Haytham's search for Jenny leads him and his closest friend Holden to Damascus, where she is kept as a slave. When Jenny confirms that Birch had been behind the attack to steal Edward's journal, they travel to France to confront him. The years of uncertainty, suspicion and lies finally coming to a climax, they kill Birch and a number of other Templar agents. After Birch's death and Holden's suicide, Haytham becomes disillusioned and resigned with everything. After a sixteen-year gap in the novel, Haytham eventually confesses to take care of

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177 Bowden 2012, Prologue. The issue of the implied reader's experience will be addressed more thoroughly in the presentation of the online survey.

178 Ibid., p. 88.

179 Ibid., p. 84.

180 Ibid., pp. 348-49.
Templar affairs “with the same amount of enthusiasm as I tended my crops, or wrote to Jenny, or climbed out of bed each morning – in other words, very little.”\textsuperscript{181} His respect for other people’s lives is diminished again as well, and he is aware of these developments, too: “Many years ago, my father had taught me about mercy, about clemency. Now I slaughtered prisoners like livestock. This was how corrupt I had become.”\textsuperscript{182} This changes when Connor enters into his life. After approving of Connor’s execution, for instance, he reflects that “[w]hatever inside me that might once have been capable of nurturing my child had long since been corrupted or burned away. Years of betrayal and slaughter have seen to that.”\textsuperscript{183} He starts to feel guilty however, and he anonymously rescues Connor from the gallows. Although he does not show it, he holds his son in high regard, considering him

a younger version of myself, as an Assassin, the path I should have taken, the path I was being groomed to take, and would have done, had it not been for the treachery of Reginald Birch. Watching him […] what I felt was a fierce mixture of emotions; among them regret, bitterness, even envy.\textsuperscript{184}

Connor therefore serves as a dramatic foil for Haytham and makes him question his divided loyalties and his path in life.\textsuperscript{185} In the end, however, he forsakes the possibility of a meaningful relationship with Connor. Fuelled by Lee’s harsh criticism, he makes a final stand for the Templar cause and sacrifices himself for his second-in-command. Connor’s epilogue details their final confrontation and Haytham’s insistence that they could never be anything but enemies. Connor also describes how he hides the amulet.\textsuperscript{186} In the end, Connor returns to the Assassins, still hopeful that his work so far has not been futile.\textsuperscript{187}

In the context of transmedia storytelling, \textit{Forsaken} focuses primarily on Haytham’s personal background and situates the character within the ancient Templar-Assassin struggle. It presents Haytham as a deep, tragic character, explaining the type of character he becomes at the end of \textit{AC3}. Furthermore, it gives more in-depth insights into the events of \textit{AC3} itself or events that have only been alluded to in the game, presenting them from a different perspective. This makes the character and his behaviour more believable.

\textsuperscript{181} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 382. It may be somewhat ironic to see the importance that these unenthusiastic letters later take up in \textit{Unity}.
\textsuperscript{182} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 444.
\textsuperscript{183} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 399.
\textsuperscript{184} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 412.
\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 400.
\textsuperscript{186} This is the First Civilisation Amulet that Haytham stole from his assassination target Miko.
\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 479.
4.1.2 ASSASSIN'S CREED ROGUE

ROGUE was released as the last game in the Kenway Saga in November 2014, simultaneous with the release of UNITY. Consisting of a total of six sequences, it is much shorter than the other main games of the saga. In the first two sequences, Shay is still an Assassin under the tutelage of Achilles Davenport, but he breaks with the Assassins after inadvertently causing the earthquake in Lisbon.

Haytham first appears physically in the game after the Templar Monro, who works with Shay and introduces him to the Templar ideals, dies. He does so in his function as Grand Master initiating Shay into the Templar Order. The Initiation Ritual is kept solemn and mysterious with overall low-key lighting. Haytham is kept in the shadows for most of the cut-scene, merely allowing his outlines to be seen (fig. 5a). He only steps into the light once Shay has said his vows. The camera focuses on him as he officially makes him a Templar: “Then we welcome you into our fold, brother. You are now a Templar, harbinger of a New World. May the Father of Understanding guide us” (fig. 5b-c). The way he is introduced here can be understood to explicitly point to the connection with the other games and the Kenway Saga overall. Players familiar with the saga will likely recognise the character even before he is shown explicitly. Regardless of whether or not it is a familiar player playing the game or someone not familiar with the saga, the scene builds Haytham’s reputation by adding an aura of importance and mystery to him. This emphasises the important role that he plays both within the storylines and within the context of transmedia storytelling as such.

Fig. 5a Capture ASSASSIN’S CREED: ROGUE (Ubisoft). S4#3. Haytham is only a silhouette for most of the Initiation Ritual.

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188 For a full synopsis of the video game, see Appendix B3.
189 When ignoring additional downloadable content, AC3, AC4 and UNITY consist of twelve sequences each.
190 S4#3, cut-scene.
Haytham steps into the light once Shay has said his vows.

The camera focuses on Haytham when he welcomes Shay into the order.

After this, Haytham continues to appear throughout the game to stop the Assassins together with Shay. However, he mostly stays aboard Shay's ship during the actual missions. Haytham becomes an allied NPC in S6#2 and S6#5. In S6#2, Haytham takes charge, with Shay having to follow him. The dynamics seem more equal in S6#5: sometimes Shay has to follow Haytham, at other times Haytham will wait for Shay to proceed. Haytham cannot be killed in either of the missions. In S5#2, Haytham provides a distraction to enable Shay to assassinate Adéwalé. Here, their conversation mentions Edward explicitly:

Adéwalé: “I served with your father, Haytham. He would be ashamed to see what you have become.”
Haytham: “Really? I wasn’t aware my father had a sense of shame.”
Adéwalé: “Do not speak ill of your father, boy! If you become half the man he was, it will be a blessing.”
Haytham: “Blessing or curse, [spoken aggressively] I am my own man. Have you had enough, old man?”
Adéwalé: “This old man will put you in an early grave, Haytham!”
Haytham: “Younger men have tried and failed.”

Haytham actively helps discover the next target’s location, Hope, one of Shay’s former mentors. Here, Shay witnesses one of Haytham’s typical interrogation scenes that familiar players already know from AC3, impassively killing the informant with his hidden blade and spattering Shay with blood. Unlike Connor in AC3, Shay does not seem particularly disturbed by this. He is merely curious about the origin of the hidden blade, as it is not normal Templar equipment. Haytham claims that it was “donated by the Brotherhood,” but does not explain further. The whole conflict comes to a climax when Haytham and Shay follow Achilles and Liam to the Precursor site, again with Haytham as an allied NPC who leads the way at first, firm and encouraging. Achilles finally agrees with Shay’s concern about the First Civilisation sites. He prevents Liam from shooting Shay, which sets another earthquake in motion. Shay confronts and assassinates Liam, who accuses him of betraying the Assassins and killing their friends, in particular Hope. This upsets Shay, indicating that it is not easy for him to go after the Assassins, especially his former trainers and mentors. After Liam’s death, Shay barely manages to prevent Haytham from killing Achilles, pointing out that “Achilles is harmless now! A Mentor with no followers. What kind of world are we making if we cannot show him mercy? Besides, he understands what these Precursor sites are now. Without him, the Assassins may continue their search.” Haytham agrees, but shoots Achilles in the leg anyway, telling him to “[n]ever forget what has happened here.” After this, Haytham orders Shay to continue searching for one of the artefacts, a Precursor box with the potential to uncover more First Civilisation sites. Shay’s storyline ends with a memory from 1776, in which Shay kills the Assassin Charles Dorian in Versailles.

Throughout the game, modern-day sequences provide additional interpretive frameworks, especially about the Templar-Assassin conflict. In those sequences, the player is able to explore the building of Abstergo Entertainment with the objective to restore the servers and the option to hack into other employees’ computers, as well as finding tablet documents. Particularly noteworthy in this context are the video files called “Berg’s Inspiration.” In those, Master Templar Otso Berg, who alongside his fellow Templar Violet da Costa supervises the exploration of Shay’s memories, reflects upon the

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191 S5#2, scripted event. Surprisingly, his reaction to Edward is disrespectful, suggesting quite a different relationship than Forsaken does.
192 S6#2, scripted event.
193 The Precursor or First Civilisation sites are temples that hold powerful artefacts or information about them. Both Assassins and Templars are trying to uncover them throughout the series.
194 S6#5, cut-scene.
Templar-Assassin struggle by referring to several characters that are significant for the history of the Templar Order: Al Mualim, Baptiste, Duncan Walpole, Haytham Kenway, and Daniel Cross. Berg’s reflections on Haytham Kenway are particularly interesting for the transmedial characterisation process. He talks about Haytham’s background, describing him as “cunning and ruthless, but he had a streak of emotional weakness that ultimately triggered his downfall.” Berg refers to the killing of Birch as his doom because “Templars kill for efficiency, not petty emotions.”

This reflection on Haytham however is not a requirement for in-game progression, so not every player will come across it. The same goes for the Animus database entry that is unlocked after Shay’s initiation into the Order in S4#3. It is more extensive than the one in AC3, which diegetically makes sense considering that this information is from Abstergo’s own database rather than being researched by Assassins with limited resources. Not only does this entry point to Haytham’s upbringing, focusing on his search for Jenny as well, but it also reveals that Birch was behind the attack on the Kenways:

In 1755, Haytham got word from his European contacts that Jenny was found in the Ottoman Empire. He left the colonies to rescue her, and was shocked when she revealed that Birch and the Templars were behind the attack on his home. Their father was an Assassin, and Birch had him killed for his secrets. Together, they traveled to Troyes and killed Birch. Haytham returned to the colonies in 1758.

This entry covers Haytham’s life up to and including ROGUE, but it does not reveal more information about Haytham’s life after ROGUE. Neither the Animus database entry nor Berg’s Inspiration are necessary to uncover. It is therefore questionable whether or not they become part of the character interpretation.

Generally speaking, ROGUE covers the sixteen years that are left out in Forsaken, thereby adding information to fill the unexplained gap. This information cannot be found in any other text. Haytham is not presented as an antagonist here, and by taking his side, the player experiences Haytham before he became one of the main nemeses in the series.

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195 These are all characters that appeared in previous games (main and secondary) and other media.
196 In-game video file ROGUE, also see Appendix C6.
197 Ibid.
198 In-game database ROGUE, also see Appendix C2.
4.2 Transmedia Storytelling

4.2.1 Media Chronology

The Kenway Saga employs a technique of nonlinear storytelling, departing from the linearity and narrative coherence of the Desmond Saga. In the Desmond Saga, the contemporary and historical storylines are causally connected, both with one another and internally. Desmond and his fellow Assassins ultimately work towards preventing the global catastrophe predicted for 21 December 2012 and thwart the Templars’ attempts of retrieving and using the Pieces of Eden. Although they are the main focus of the video games, the historical storylines are in service of this contemporary narrative. If considered by themselves, they are linear as well as they rely on a very specific progression. Throughout AC2, BROTHERHOOD and REVELATIONS, the Assassin player-character Ezio is depicted at different stages of his life: a young man slowly learning about and joining the Assassin cause; a mature Assassin taking on much responsibility in rebuilding the Brotherhood and becoming its Mentor; and an older Assassin following in the footsteps of Altaïr Ibn-La’Ahad, bringing the saga full circle by formally finishing the storyline of its first player-character. To fully understand the events in the games and Ezio’s character development, it is necessary to have played the games in chronological order, which is also the release order.

With the end of Desmond’s storyline in AC3, the series turns away from this insistence on linearity and adopts a nonlinear style instead. The release order of the media texts in the Kenway Saga is AC3 and the corresponding novel Forsaken (2012), AC4 and the corresponding novel of the same name (2013), and simultaneously UNITY, the Unity novel and ROGUE (2014). The internal chronology of the media texts, however, is more complicated (fig. 6). Considered chronologically, AC4 and its novel would be the first texts in the saga, followed by Forsaken, ROGUE, and AC3 and UNITY simultaneously. Forsaken encompasses almost the entire timeline of the saga, disregarding AC4 because Haytham had not yet been born there. The release order however begins with the chronological end of the saga, AC3, and establishes a certain status regarding the Templar-Assassin situation, in which the force of the Colonial Assassins is largely diminished. From there, the saga works back and forth to retrospectively explain this status and to give better insights into other aspects of the organisation.\(^{199}\)

Such nonlinear narrative techniques within the overall chronology are likely to complicate reception and interpretation of the different stories and characters. It is challenging to sufficiently interpret and understand a story of which the ending is presented, but not the beginning, with other texts constantly filling in more gaps and

\(^{199}\) For a timeline of the most important events and their distribution across the different texts, please refer to Appendix B7.
simultaneously introducing more ambiguity, as *Forsaken* does. Especially the temporal relationships between *Forsaken* and *ROGUE* are complicated. According to *Forsaken*, Haytham rescues Jenny and takes revenge on Birch in 1757. This event and Holden’s death drastically change his character. The exact date of Shay’s initiation in *ROGUE* is not given, but Colonel Monro dies in 1757, and the next memory after his initiation is in 1758. The Animus database entry in *ROGUE* claims that Haytham returns to America in 1758. Therefore, Shay meets Haytham at the beginning of his disillusioned, ruthless period, and together they cause the downfall of the Colonial Assassins in 1760. The novel does not mention this at all, despite it being a crucial event that Haytham takes part in. While *Forsaken* does not refer to *ROGUE* at all, *ROGUE* specifically refers to Haytham’s diary in the database entry, thereby explicitly connecting the two texts in a way that none of the other texts do.

![Chronology of the Kenway Saga](image)

**Fig. 6 Chronology of the Kenway Saga (including *UNITY*)**

The temporal relationships of the saga generally place a higher demand on the consumer to independently connect the different media texts. While some parts of the narratives overlap in the different media texts, the overall narrative is distributed systematically across the texts. It is up to the consumer to recognise these different connections in order to form a coherent linear story, however, this is only possible in retrospect because of the saga’s narrative nonlinearity.
4.2.2 Media Interaction

As shown above, the different media texts in the Kenway Saga are connected logically, but in a nonlinear manner, which complicates a coherent reception of the narrative. This strengthens the argument that the Kenway Saga is primarily about presenting the storyworld, and only secondarily about establishing the narrative of the Kenway family. When analysing how exactly the different texts relate to one another diegetically, and what they add to one another, one can determine that the media chronology in the Kenway Saga does not rely on linearity and causality, but on themes and characters connecting the different texts, in particular Haytham’s constant direct or indirect presence in all of the media texts. This section will discuss this aspect, which is at the core of the saga’s transmedia storytelling.

As explained before, AC3 establishes Haytham’s character ambiguously: first as a potential Assassin, then as a potential ally, and lastly as a Templar nemesis who needs to be defeated in order to gain closure. Especially because the previous games have all been presented from Assassin perspectives, the player has no initial reason to question the portrayal of Haytham and the overall events of AC3. It is Forsaken which sheds the most light on the character’s background, motivations and the specific events of AC3. Crucial differences here are the execution scene and the final confrontation between Connor and Haytham. In AC3, the player is led to believe that Haytham is behind the execution, and that he therefore is fully aware of condemning his own son to death. Indeed, Forsaken confirms that Haytham, apathetic as he is at that point, approves of the execution on Charles Lee’s prompting. What AC3 does not show are Haytham’s doubts and feelings of guilt on the day of the execution. The novel describes how he attends the execution in disguise. Connor is initially saved by the Assassins, as is the case in the game as well, but their attempts are not completely successful. Ultimately, it is Haytham who anonymously saves Connor. At this point in the novel, he already starts to redeem himself, but the game pushes the character interpretation in the opposite direction. The player is left with the impression that if it had been up to Haytham, Connor would have died, and likely thinks in line of Haytham’s own musings: “With one word, I would ratify the execution of my own child. What manner of monster could do such a thing?”

Apart from showing Haytham’s doubts about the Templar-Assassin struggle that he consistently voices throughout his life, the novel also explains the crucial character change that Haytham undergoes shortly before his final confrontation with Connor. In the game, Haytham suddenly transforms from a more or less resistant ally to an antagonist, displaying a strong personal hostility towards Connor. This unexplained character change

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200 Bowden 2012, p. 399.
complicates the relationship between the characters as well as between the player and the characters. Haytham’s attitude towards Connor is decidedly more positive in the novel as opposed to the one he chooses to present in the game. His last diary entry describes his final conversation with Charles Lee, in which he openly admits that Connor is his son before sacrificing himself for Lee. His final words in his diary address Connor directly, offering him the truth so that he might “understand me, maybe even forgive me. My own path was paved with lies, my mistrust forged from treachery. But my own father never lied to me and, with this journal, I preserve that custom.”\textsuperscript{201} The epilogue by Connor brings the two texts full circle again. These last diary entries can be seen as a dialogue not only between the two characters, but also between the two media texts, each relaying something different and providing additional perspectives to paint a more complete picture of the events and relationships.

The next game in the saga, \textit{AC4}, seemingly goes into a completely different direction as it details the events surrounding the pirate Edward Kenway, who at the beginning of the game impersonates an Assassin traitor in order to collect a reward from the Templars. In this game, the Templars’ main objective is finding the so-called Observatory, a First Civilisation artefact with which the Templars intend to monitor and blackmail people of interest. For this purpose, they need to find a Sage, a person with a high concentration of First Civilisation DNA, in this case Bartholomew Roberts. Edward’s carelessness endangers the Assassin Brotherhood, with which he now starts to work together. He intends to find the Observatory before the Templars do, but is eventually betrayed by Roberts and joins the Brotherhood. This is rather late in the storyline compared to the other games in the series. After sealing away the Observatory to prevent it from being abused in the future, Edward receives word about his wife’s death shortly before the arrival of his daughter Jennifer, of whom he was unaware before. Together they return to London.

It is only at the end of the game that the implications for the Kenway Saga become clear. Although it is possible to deduct that Edward is Haytham’s father because they share the same family name, the game never focuses on this fact and makes it easy to forget. A cut-scene during the credits opens onto the same opera house in which the first mission of \textit{AC3} takes place. A suitor inadvertently insults Jenny by calling her by the Kenway surname, which Edward swiftly corrects, pointing out that she prefers to be called by her late mother’s surname. Instead, he introduces the ‘real’ Kenway child: Haytham (fig. 7). This is a scene referred to by Haytham at the beginning at \textit{AC3}, where he explains to Birch that his father had once brought him to this opera, but that he now remembers

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., p. 461.}
little of it. It is also the only time that young Haytham appears in the games. The scene serves to tie the game into the rest of the saga and to remind the player of the connections between the characters. For those players who read *Forsaken* before playing *AC4*, the relationships between the characters are clear already. As *Forsaken* begins with Edward’s death, the chronology is reversed here as well, likely creating an interesting gaming situation because the players familiar with the novel are already aware of how Edward dies and what the future holds for Haytham. Players who have only played *AC3*, but not read *Forsaken* would still be aware of Haytham’s future, but are unlikely to grasp the gravity of the situation, unaware of Haytham’s exact background.

*ROGUE* is the next and last game released in the saga. It portrays Haytham as a more cold-blooded, ruthless character, even more prominently so than in *AC3* because it lacks the personal aspects of Connor’s and Haytham’s relationship. Chronologically, this game connects *AC4* and *AC3*, as well as filling in the gap in *Forsaken*. In terms of transmedia storytelling, *ROGUE* is particularly important because it provides Haytham’s tragic background story in Berg’s Inspiration. Until then, this is exclusively dealt with in *Forsaken*. It explains how Haytham became the character that he is now, but most importantly also evaluates him and his significance for the Templar-Assassin conflict. The entry in the Animus database gives more detailed information on his background, although only up until 1758, shortly after killing Birch. Therefore it gives the player only the background information necessary to understand the character currently. From a
production standpoint, it makes sense to omit information about AC3 for those who have not played it yet.

ROGUE also specifically refers to Forsaken in Haytham’s Animus database entry. The modern-day Templar Violet de Costa even comments on the fact that Shay has never been mentioned in the journal: “Fun fact: Haytham kept a diary! I wonder why he never mentioned Shay in it.”\(^{202}\) This is possibly done to invite the players to consume other products and to show that there could have been a reason for the sixteen-year gap in Forsaken, which makes no reference to the events from ROGUE despite their significance to the Colonial Templars. However, as pointed out before, reading the entry is a voluntary act on part of the player. As the last instalment in the Kenway Saga, ROGUE wraps up several loose ends of the saga and explains certain ambiguities. It explains, for instance, what happened to the Colonial Assassins to reduce the Brotherhood to the bare minimum that is represented by Achilles in AC3. The fact that Haytham plays an important role in the fall of the Colonial Assassins furthermore emphasises his importance throughout the different storylines.

The chart below (fig. 8) visualises the most important relationships between Haytham and other important characters across the saga’s media texts, as well as the relationships between those characters. As the diagram shows, Haytham can be considered the centre of the Kenway Saga, influencing directly or indirectly many storylines and characters. AC4 is an exception here because he only appears in it once, as a child, but the relationship between Edward and Haytham strongly impacts the saga as a whole. Especially noteworthy is Shay’s role in the diagram. As an ally to Haytham, he has a great impact on AC3 retrospectively and UNITY contemporaneously. If Haytham and Shay had not brought about the downfall of the Colonial Assassins in ROGUE, neither Connor nor Achilles would have had as strong a reason for going after the Templars as aggressively as they did in AC3. The ancient feud would have still existed, however, and likely impacted the events in other ways. Especially Haytham’s treatment of Achilles at the end of ROGUE has an influence here. It adds a personal dimension to Achilles’s mentoring of Connor. Although it is never stated explicitly, Achilles may not have insisted as strongly on Haytham’s death as he did now that he has been crippled by him. Therefore, Shay’s and Haytham’s actions influence Connor’s training and ideology as well.

The connection between ROGUE and UNITY is noteworthy for several reasons. Firstly, the simultaneous release requires the consumer to make a conscious decision which game to play first, which likely influences the interpretation of the respective events as well. Secondly, ROGUE provides a direct causal link to UNITY. This marks a particularly

\(^{202}\) In-game database ROGUE, also see Appendix C2.
interesting dynamic between the texts. *ROGUE* provides a few incomplete memories, which are flash-forwards to the year 1776. Here, Shay is on a mission to assassinate Charles Dorian, Arno Dorian’s father. The name of the assassination target is not revealed until the final incomplete memory, S6#6. At this point the player likely recognises the implications even without having played *UNITY*, as Arno is probably well-known because of the paratexts surrounding the release of the game. *ROGUE*’s final incomplete memory of the assassination is the first memory of *UNITY*, but shown from a different perspective. While Shay encounters Arno and Élise in *ROGUE*, *UNITY* never makes clear that Shay is the killer of Arno’s father. It seems likely that the order in which the two games are played highly influences the perception of the character and the story; the connection the player has formed with one character might strongly impact the ability to connect with the other.

Consistently developing a character as pivotal as Haytham across different media and media texts is difficult. Producers have no way of ensuring that a consumer will consult all necessary media texts, and therefore the reliance on different media texts to distribute information about a character complicates an official interpretation. At the same time it also emphasises the complex interplay between interpretation and presentation in transmedia storytelling. Durand explains:
Every medium has to bring something that’s unique. Obviously our main focus here is to make video games. I think we want to reward people that go read transmedia products […] For instance I have a lot of friends that are girls, that don’t play the games, they watch their boyfriends play the game. So they have an idea, they like the cinematics in the game, so they prefer to read the book […] I think then it’s interesting for both of them with two different products. Some people both play and read, I think we don’t want to forsake people who don’t play the game, we do our best to bring to every product our touch, the touch of our creativity.\textsuperscript{203}

This suggests that \textit{ASSASSIN’S CREED} is not a full-fledged transmedia storytelling project yet. Although displaying many elements of transmedia storytelling, the video games are still considered the main products, with the other media texts, although complementing the main texts, considered secondary. The above quote demonstrates the difficulty in consolidating different media texts and preventing frustration on the consumer’s part. Perhaps this also shows that transmedia storytelling projects in which all texts are completely equal are more difficult to maintain commercially and in larger franchises than in smaller, contained projects. For the reader or player, participating in the transmedia storytelling side of \textit{ASSASSIN’S CREED} is rewarded by gaining additional insights into the storyworld, information that can then enhance the gaming experience as well. For instance in the case of Daniel Cross,

for people who have not read [the comic books] it wasn’t compulsory to see him in the game, he was just a […] cool character – but for people who did read these books, […] it was really interesting because you could actually and finally see him in the game. So […] for us, […] it’s not only [that] the games are brought to the books, but the books also bring elements to the game.\textsuperscript{204}

It has been pointed out before that in 2011, \textit{ASSASSIN’S CREED} transformed more consciously into a transmedia storytelling project. In fact, as Veugen points out, Ubisoft “did not see this as a form of transmedia storytelling, but as their own take on co-creation and convergence culture, which they termed confluence.”\textsuperscript{205} This results in a large corpus of texts of varying status and importance, where essentially “everything is linked within the universe of […] \textit{ASSASSIN’S CREED}.”\textsuperscript{206} This is exemplified especially well in the Kenway Saga. Even within the context of transmedia storytelling or confluence, having one character catalyse several texts and storylines is innovative and challenging for both producer and consumer.

\textsuperscript{203} Durand 2015.
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{205} Veugen n.d., p. 11. Confluence is described as follows: “our strategy is to put in place bridges between the creative talents building those [fully interconnected] worlds to enrich each other’s experience” (Guillemot, qtd. in Veugen n.d., p. 1).
\textsuperscript{206} Durand 2015.
4.3 Audience Responses

4.3.1 Aims and Methods of the Survey

No media text can exist in a vacuum. Complex textual relationships like intertextuality and paratextuality create expectations and influence reactions not only in combination with other related media texts, but also through additional material outside the text itself and a specific repertoire that a consumer brings to a product. In complicated media interactions such as those of transmedia storytelling, the interpretive process is likely even more complex and diverse than in mono-medial consumption. To investigate the dynamics of transmedia storytelling in the case of Haytham Kenway, the online survey created for this study was intended as a way to measure actual consumer responses to the series and its characters, especially taking into account how consumption behaviour might have influenced character interpretation.

To ensure representative responses, a filter question was built in after a few general demographic questions, asking whether or not the respondent had consumed any of the main media texts after and/or including AC3. Only respondents confirming this question were able to continue with the survey. Available in English, German and Dutch, the survey was conducted from March to April 2015. Out of 550 completed responses, 489 respondents qualified to take the full survey. Of those, 91% were below the age of 31. The majority of respondents was male (74%), 23% were female, six respondents identified as non-binary/other, and six preferred not to answer the gender question.

The main part of the survey was divided into two blocks: consumption behaviour and character reception. Due to the limitations of this thesis, only the latter will be dealt with in more detail here, with the overall survey generating interesting data to be implemented in future research. The main purpose of the survey for this particular study was qualitative, testing the hypothesis that consumption behaviour in transmedia storytelling projects has an influence on the reception and interpretation of story and character. For the sake of a feasible analysis, not all media texts of the Kenway Saga are specifically dealt with here. The main focus of the selection is on Forsaken and AC3, considering that those are the main texts through which Haytham is characterised and the most influential in forming a strong opinion about him, as well as ROGUE because its changing portrayal of the Templar-Assassin struggle is likely to have had an influence as well.

To test the hypothesis indicated above in line with the elaborations of the transmedia storytelling techniques as detailed in this chapter, two different response sets were created, the first one dealing with the chronology of the media texts and the second one focusing on the general media interaction. The analysis here is two-fold, focusing on

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207 For the full list of questions, please see Appendix D1.
Question 22 quantitatively and Question 26 qualitatively. Q22 is a multiple-choice question listing five positive emotions (caring, pride, respect, like, loyalty), four negative emotions (jealousy, disappointment, annoyance, dislike), and one emotion that can be considered both (pity). It also provides an option to indicate a different emotional response. Respondents were asked to indicate which of these emotions they associate with Haytham Kenway. Q26 is an essay question asking the respondents to summarise the character of Haytham. Here, the qualitative data analysis program ATLAS.TI was used to create codes and manually tag the responses, thus indicating what kinds of qualities are used to describe Haytham. Most important here is the distribution of the code families. An important distinction must be made between the codes referring to positive or negative characteristics and the ones referring to a good or bad character/game. The former are used to describe characteristics specific to the character (such as loyalty, pride, or ruthlessness), whereas the latter only refer to the quality of the character or game. The response sets exclude inconsistent answers, such as those indicating that they had played ROGUE, but failing to mention it when describing the order in which they had played the series, or those that obviously mistook Haytham for Edward.

4.3.2 Influence of Media Chronology on Character Interpretation
This response set consists of two main groups and several sub-groups. Group A (86 respondents) had played AC3 and read Forsaken, and Group B (63 respondents) had played AC3 and ROGUE. For the purpose of this group, it was not deemed necessary to specifically exclude the other media text (ROGUE or Forsaken respectively), as this analysis is concerned mainly with the overall chronology rather than the specific media texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Group quality</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Respondents read Forsaken before or at the same time as playing AC3.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Respondents read Forsaken after playing AC3.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Respondents played the two games in release order, i.e. AC3 before ROGUE.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Respondents played the two games in chronological order, i.e. ROGUE before AC3.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 9 Overview of groups in Media Chronology

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208 For a full list of codes and code families, see Appendix D2.
209 This is exemplified by one response describing Haytham as an “[u]ninteresting and unfulfilling antagonist. I’m more disappointed with the execution than with the character, really.” (Media Interaction, Group D; Media Chronology, Groups A2/B1). This was tagged as ‘bad character/game’ because the negative evaluation does not refer to the character’s personality or actions, but to the design of the character or game(s).
Group A was divided into two sub-groups: those who had read *Forsaken* before or at the same time as playing *AC3* (A1, 15 respondents) and those who had read *Forsaken* after playing *AC3* (A2, 71 respondents). As the chart below shows (fig. 10), the emotional responses for Haytham differ somewhat between the groups. Generally, negative emotional responses are low for all groups, with annoyance being the highest negative emotion in Group A1 (33%) and dislike being the strongest one in Group A2 (23%). Except for disappointment and annoyance, those respondents who had read *Forsaken* after playing *AC3* experience all emotions more strongly. The strongest differences between the groups are in the positive emotions of respect and like. The emotion that is experienced more or less equally across the groups is pride (67% in A1 and 65% in A2). All in all, these are surprising results. Despite knowing more about Haytham’s tragic background when playing the game, those respondents who had read *Forsaken* before or at the same time as *AC3* still receive the character more negatively than those who were first introduced to him as a villainous character. This however might not be due to the information state while consuming the respective media texts, but the order of the media texts in general. If *Forsaken* was read last, the respondents’ last experience of Haytham was positive, whereas *AC3* likely leaves a more negative experience. It also has to be remarked that Group A2 has considerably more respondents than Group A1, making the latter less statistically representative.

As not all respondents filled in the qualitative responses, the groups are smaller in the evaluation of Q26 (14 in A1 and 62 in A2). As the diagrams below show (fig. 11a-b), both groups make equal reference to Haytham’s positive characteristics and his complexity as well as describe him in equally neutral terms, with only insignificant differences between the groups. In line with the findings from Q22, Group A1 describes him in more negative terms, with 30% mentions of negative characteristics as opposed to 20% in Group A2. Those who had read *Forsaken* only after playing *AC3* refer to his ideology more though (14% compared to 9% in Group A1). Those who had read the novel before or at the same time as playing the game also point out more frequently that he is a good character by design (13% as opposed to 7% in Group A2). Interestingly, Group A1 makes no reference at all to his potential as an Assassin or his personal background.
Group B was divided into those respondents who had played the two games in release order (\textit{AC3} before \textit{ROGUE}, 54 respondents) and those who had played them in chronological order (\textit{ROGUE} before \textit{AC3}, 9 respondents). As the chart below shows (fig. 12), negative emotional responses are rather low again: the highest negative emotional responses are annoyance in Group B1 (17%) and disappointment, annoyance and dislike in Group B2 (22%). Negative emotions are generally experienced more strongly amongst those who had played the games in chronological order. The strongest difference is in the emotion of caring (22% in Group B1 and 44% in Group B2). Respect is experienced more or less equally. Again, the results are surprising. Considering that \textit{ROGUE} portrays the Templars in a much better light, playing it before \textit{AC3} would suggest an increase in positive responses towards Haytham in \textit{AC3} as well. However, Group B2 again only
consists of 9 respondents, which might explain the unexpected differences between the groups.

In the qualitative analysis, Group B1 consists of 89 respondents and Group B2 of 7 respondents. The diagrams below (fig. 13a-b) indicate that generally, respondents describe Haytham in equal terms, with only insignificant differences between the groups. The strongest differences can be found in how frequently reference is made to Haytham’s perceived complexity (15% in B1 and 5% in B2), as well as his positive characteristics, which are mentioned more frequently in Group B2, with 30% as opposed to 23% in Group B1. Both groups refer to Haytham’s background. Group B2 makes no reference whatsoever to his potential as an Assassin, and none of the groups define him in relation to other characters.

In terms of media chronology, one response in particular stands out in Group A2/B1. The respondent indicated that the games were indeed played in release order (although the overall series was played in a mixed order, starting with **AC3**), but that (s)he was interested in the influence that a different order would have: “By this time [by playing **UNITY**] I had my sister play the games in chronological order to see the difference. I think that 4 and **ROGUE** should have been published before 3.” This respondent had a very informed opinion about Haytham, explaining:

> I believe that Haytham was manipulated and emotionally tortured as a child, which sent him on a path that he made the best out of, the path of a Templar with Assassin roots. He is a very loyal, tough loving, charismatic badass who seeks purpose, order, and justice in the world by process of tyranny, which unfortunately gets in the way of he and his son making peace, although I think that if things did not speed up the way they did in **AC3** Haytham might have made a truce with Connor and unite the orders.\(^{210}\)

The same respondent also filled in an elaborate qualitative part, explaining that Haytham “was the first Templar that I felt bad for killing on a personal level.” This respondent shows a clear awareness of the interaction of media texts and demonstrates that players can have multiple experiences, for instance by having someone else play the games in a different order for comparison.

\(^{210}\) This description was put under ‘Other’ in Q22 and was therefore not part of the qualitative analysis.
4.3.3 Influence of Media Interaction on Character Interpretation

This response set is used to analyse the influence of the overall media interaction on interpretation and was divided into four groups. Group A had only played AC3, but not ROGUE, nor read Forsaken (186 respondents), Group B had played AC3 and read Forsaken (22 respondents), Group C had played both AC3 and ROGUE, but not read Forsaken (146 respondents), and Group D had consumed all three media texts (64 respondents).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Group quality</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Respondents played AC3 without ROGUE or Forsaken.</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Respondents played AC3 and read Forsaken.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Respondents played AC3 and ROGUE without Forsaken.</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Respondents consumed AC3, ROGUE and Forsaken.</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 12 Emotions associated with Haytham Kenway (percentages)

Fig. 13a-b. Distribution of code families in Groups B1 and B2.

Fig. 14 Overview of groups in Media Interaction
The graph below (fig. 15) shows that again, positive emotions are experienced more frequently than negative ones, with the negative ones never reaching above 28% (dislike and disappointment in Group A). It is noticeable that in most cases the emotional responses do not differ much between Group B and Group D. This is also the case for the negative emotions between Group A and Group C. They do however differ in their experience of positive emotions, which Group C generally experiences more strongly than Group A. Group B scores higher than all other groups in the experience of caring, pride, and pity, whereas those respondents who had consumed all the texts experience respect, like and loyalty more strongly than the other groups. Group A experiences dislike more strongly.

In the qualitative analysis, Group A consists of 188 respondents, Group B of 32 respondents, Group C of 229 respondents, and Group D of 154 respondents. The diagrams below (fig. 16a-d) show that A and B refer to Haytham’s negative qualities more frequently than C and D (33% and 31% in Groups A and B as opposed to 26% and 20% in Groups C and D), whereas his positive qualities are referred to more equally across all groups. Interestingly, those respondents who had only played AC3 indicated stronger negative responses, noticeable in the amount of expletives used to describe the character. In Group A, 15 expletives are used to describe Haytham, whereas the other groups only have two instances per group. Groups A and C perceive the character as slightly less complex than Groups B and D (7% and 10% as opposed to 16%). While all groups make more or less equal reference to Haytham in ideological terms, it is important to note that only Group B and C refer to the new ideology he introduces (two instances per group). The rest of the ideological responses focus solely on his position as Templar Grand Master.
An in-depth analysis of all interesting qualitative responses is not possible here, but a few particularly stand out in the context of this thesis. One respondent for instance recognises canonical discrepancies between the character’s presentation in AC3 and Forsaken:

He is incredibly dedicated to his cause. He has absolutely no question that the lifestyle he has chosen is right and what the world needs. His devotion affects even his perception of family and blood ties, though his apparent wavering in that stance and knowledge/lack of knowledge of Ziio's death are two of the numerous canonical discrepancies between the game and the books. For the sake of my gaming experience, I have disregarded the content of Bowden's books, both for said discrepancies and painful writing style; Haytham's character will, for that reason, forever be one of an arrogant
though confident man, dedicated unto death to furthering the Templar influence and someone who is unaffected by emotional factors when it comes to decision making and right/wrong scenarios.\footnote{Media Interaction, Group C; Media Chronology, Group B1.}

This response is interesting, but also conflicting. Group C respondents indicated that they had not read Forsaken, but this response suggests that the respondent had read it after all. The opinion could also have been formed on the basis of paratextual material, or the respondent might not have finished Forsaken and therefore indicated that (s)he had not read it. Either way, the response shows not only a conscious consumption decision, but also a conscious interpretive decision. Another way to explain potential discrepancies is Haytham’s tendency to mask emotions. One respondent points out that the novel complements the games and that one only gains access to Haytham’s true personality through reading it: “He cared, but he never showed it. [...] This trait is prominent when he talks about Edward to Adéwalé, saying things like he didn’t know his father had a sense of shame, whereas he killed a fellow Templar for killing his father.”\footnote{Media Interaction, Group D; Media Chronology, Groups A1/B2.} Some respondents also refer to Haytham’s background focusing on the fact that he was manipulated as a child, adding a tragic dimension to him and at the same time excusing the ruthless character he becomes. He is often also referred to as a victim, for instance saying that “[t]he war between Assassins and Templars has taken more from him than most participants, and because of that, his views on the world are skewed.”\footnote{Media Interaction, Group D; Media Chronology, Groups A2/B1.} Others claim that Haytham’s character made them question the way the Templar-Assassin struggle was conventionally portrayed in the series.

Generally, respondents are well aware of the character’s dimensions, although there are instances in Groups A and C indicating that they are curious about his background and his transformation from Assassin to Templar.\footnote{Those respondents apparently are not even aware of the novel’s existence, as they claim that they “wish [they] knew more about him” or that they “just want a sequel to know how he turned into a Templar despite his father Edward being an Assassin” (Media Interaction, Group C; Media Chronology, Group B1).} It is interesting to see that even within the groups, the interpretation of the character varies widely. One participant for instance refers to Haytham’s complex internal struggle, saying that “[t]he tragic fight between his love for his son and the ideals he represents makes him seem very human.”\footnote{Media Interaction, Group A. Translated from German: “Der tragische Kampf zwischen der Liebe zu seinem Sohn und den Idealen, die er vertritt, lässt ihn sehr menschlich wirken.”} Another claims that he is a rather flat character: “When he teamed up with Connor I felt distrust for him, because we hadn’t been led to believe he could cooperate with the other side without
betraying them. But really, there wasn’t much character development. We didn’t know him.\textsuperscript{216}

4.4 Conclusion
The narrative techniques employed in the Kenway Saga and catalysed by Haytham, namely nonlinearity and transmedia storytelling, can overall be understood to complicate reception and interpretation of characters and storylines. They place higher demands on the consumer to independently connect the different media texts, rather than having a clear cause-and-effect storyline presented to them as was the case in the Desmond Saga. Consumers are no longer required to be relatively passive, and of course in video games they never really have been. Rather, the variety of material available to enhance and alter interpretation offers a deeper sense of immersion in transmedia storytelling, ensuring that the interest in the series stays alive even in between the main releases.\textsuperscript{217}

The online survey shows some interesting and unexpected results when considering the previous hypotheses concerned with transmedia storytelling. Generally, the survey did not provide enough evidence to claim that media chronology plays a significant part in the interpretation of character and storyline. Those respondents who had read Forsaken only after playing AC3 have stronger and more positive responses towards the character than those who were aware of his background at the time of playing. As stated above, this could be because the last consumption experience provided the respondents with a more positive experience of the character, and therefore they associate more positive emotions with him. Playing AC3 and ROGUE in chronological order did not have a discernible positive effect on the reception of the character either. Both groups however are not big enough to make representative statements about this. It would seem, then, that it is not media chronology that makes a difference in interpreting a character, but the general media interaction, which yielded more diverse results. The more media texts that are consumed, regardless of the specific order in which they are consumed, the more positive the reaction to the character is in general. In particular Forsaken plays an important role in redeeming Haytham as a character, as the responses of players who had not read the novel are considerably more negative than the responses of those who had.

\textsuperscript{216} Media Interaction, Group A
\textsuperscript{217} See also Jenkins 2007, §2-4.
Discussion and Conclusion

This thesis focused on analysing Haytham Kenway’s ways of catalysing a variety of different media texts, storylines and characters in the Kenway Saga. The analyses worked towards the main research question: How does Haytham Kenway function as the pivotal character in the ASSASSIN’S CREED Kenway Saga? As the thesis shows, Haytham’s character is pivotal because he connects the different media texts on both content and formal levels. Through his narrative and gameplay ambiguities he catalyses fundamental changes in the understanding of the storyworld and the narrative shift from linear to non-linear with focus on transmedia storytelling.

To illustrate this, a bottom-up approach was taken. First, in Chapter 1, the theoretical framework, which served as a premise for the research as well as an introduction to the material as such, was established. In Chapter 1.1, I focused on video games primarily as interactive narratives. This introduced the issue of narrative agency, i.e. the player’s ability to directly influence a game’s story. Chapter 1.2 introduced the concept of character in narratology and specifically in video games, distinguishing between the character’s functions as player-character, non-player character and antagonist. Here, I focused once again on the influence of interactivity on strengthening the relationship between character and player. Chapter 1.3 focused on the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling and transmedia worldbuilding. Especially important here are the concepts of spreadable and drillable media, which denote horizontal and vertical consumption and distribution models. Drillable media in particular offer the consumer a deeper experience of the series by providing a variety of background information and narrative complexity. This model of drillable media can be related to transmedia worldbuilding in general, where a fictional world is created with enough detail to make the world feel real and complex, but also leaving enough gaps to be filled in by the consumer. Again, this leads to increased agency on the part of the consumer. The premises provided by the theoretical framework generally focus on such issues of agency and interactivity. Not only is it likely that video game characters have a stronger effect on the player (positive and negative alike) than characters in other media do because of video game’s interactive nature, transmedia storytelling in general demands a higher level of agency from consumers, by providing them with active consumption and interpretive choices.

Following these premises, Haytham was first analysed in his main media text, ASSASSIN’S CREED III, in Chapter 2, focusing on the first sub-question: How does Haytham Kenway’s presentation in the pivotal game ASSASSIN’S CREED III work towards the various transitions in the saga? In Chapter 3, Haytham’s impact on the changing portrayal of the transmedia storyworld was approached, in particular focusing on the depiction and
evaluation of the ancient feud between Templars and Assassins, working towards the second sub-question: How does the portrayal of the Templar-Assassin conflict change in the series, especially considering Haytham’s role in said changes? Chapter 4 completed the picture by analysing the general media interactions and chronology in the Kenway Saga, including an illustration of actual audience responses on the basis of the online survey conducted for the purpose of this study, to answer the final sub-question: How do transmedia storytelling techniques impact the experience and interpretations of the saga?

**Discussion of the Findings**

As Chapter 2 shows, Haytham combines various gameplay and narrative functions throughout the course of the narrative in AC3. His gameplay functions are threefold: he starts out as the player-character without the player’s knowledge of his ideological allegiance (Chapter 2.1.1), progresses to allied non-player character (Chapter 2.1.2) and, finally, to antagonistic non-player character (Chapter 2.1.3). These different roles serve to emphasise his development in the narrative, which mainly defines him as a father or lover through his connection with Connor and Ziio respectively (Chapter 2.2.1), and as the Templar Grand Master of the Colonial Rite, which characterises him solely through his ideology (Chapter 2.2.2). While the game provides ample opportunity for character development, his final function is that of a villain, which is in line with the typical portrayal of Templars in the series. It has to be pointed out, however, that although he is portrayed as one of the main nemeses, he is not actually the end boss or even a level boss of AC3, his function as nemesis mainly serving as a stepping stone for the real nemesis Charles Lee. Since the other functions precede his function as a nemesis, he is the first Templar that players are made to identify and empathise with.

As Chapter 3 discusses, Haytham heralds in a new saga in which the binary viewpoint of good and evil in the Templar-Assassin struggle is questioned. The Desmond Saga (Chapter 3.2) clearly introduces the Templars as the ultimate enemy without much ambiguity. The Assassins are considered noble and good despite their questionable methods, whereas the Templars are presented as morally despicable throughout, without much chance for redemption. It is not until the start of the Kenway Saga (Chapter 3.3) that this portrayal starts to change. ROGUE and Forsaken in particular take up this initial criticism of the conventional framework, with Forsaken focusing strongly on the ambiguity of the Templar-Assassin struggle via Haytham’s reflections on his dual heritage. This has an influence outside the Kenway Saga as well, as shown in Unity. The series shows that there is potential for the two organisations to work together, as demonstrated in Connor's willingness to work with Haytham and Arno’s cooperation with Élise. Generally, the texts of the Kenway Saga, especially in interaction with the conventional struggle in the
Desmond Saga, require the consumer to make conscious choices and to reflect on the reliability of the series' protagonists.

Chapter 4 illustrates the complex intermedial and intertextual dynamics of the Kenway Saga. Here, it becomes apparent that Haytham catalyses all main media texts of the saga in one way or another by being present in them either directly or indirectly. His significance is also exemplified by the fact that Forsaken encompasses almost the entire time span of the saga, disregarding AC4. The saga’s internal coherence is complicated by the narrative techniques of nonlinearity and transmedia storytelling, as shown in the sections on media chronology (Chapter 4.2.1) and media interaction (Chapter 4.2.2). Haytham can be seen as a means to catalyse these techniques, and he provides the basis for consumers to orient and position themselves within the saga. It is now to a large part up to the consumer to make conscious consumption choices and to independently connect the different texts, which gives the consumers a kind of narrative and interpretive agency. They may not be able to actively influence the plot, but they do have agency over which media texts they consume, how, and in what order. The online survey does not suggest that media chronology has a strong influence on character interpretation (Chapter 4.3.1). The general interaction of the media texts did however seem to have a stronger effect (Chapter 4.3.2), in particular whether or not the respondents had read Forsaken. However, as those players who had read Forsaken before playing AC3 viewed the character more negatively than the other group, it is likely that what matters most is the most recent experience, in this case AC3.

The empirical findings also support the premise that video game characters can have a stronger, more immediate effect on the player than characters in other media do. Overall, the lack of a strong negative response to Haytham despite his primary depiction as a Templar, i.e. a villain, might be due to his changing character functions, as well as the existence of a more consistent and more unlikeable nemesis in the character of Charles Lee, or the Templars in general. Again, because he is first introduced as a positive character a strong positive connection could already be formed between player and character, preventing a truly negative association. Another reason for this response might be temporal as well, considering that AC3 was released in 2012. It is likely that the immediate responses after playing were different. Some respondents had indicated that they could not remember the character well because they had played the game a few years ago.

As shown in the different chapters, Haytham’s role as pivotal character is manifested in a variety of aspects. On a micro level, Haytham’s gameplay functions are used to underline his narrative complexity, and on a content level this helps to drastically change the outlook on the storyworld as such, which is driven by the Templar-Assassin struggle.
Considering the Kenway Saga on a macro level within the dynamics of transmedia storytelling, this suggests that a character who is not one of the main characters may allow for the possibility of an alternative perspective. He or she can provide enough familiarity to make the consumer feel at home in the series, rather than having a plethora of changing characters and relationships that may not feel entirely connected with one another. An example of a game series that does not use common characters would be for instance THE ELDER SCROLLS series (1994-present), which uses its rich, complex fantasy world as common point. While this might work well for a video game series, maybe transmedia storytelling projects are in need of a more common and familiar factor than this, at least to connect single texts with one another. As Jenkins points out, “[a] good character can sustain multiple narratives and thus lead to a successful movie franchise. A good ‘world’ can sustain multiple characters (and their stories) and thus successfully launch a transmedia franchise.”218 This reinforces the importance of both characters as well as a complex storyworld in transmedia storytelling. Here, the characters do not even have to be active characters in a specific media text. Even Haytham’s minimal appearance in AC4 or his letters as a placeholder for his character in Unity create a feeling of familiarity and coherence even if the narratives themselves are not causally connected from the start. At the same time, the character can be made mysterious enough to serve as an incentive for consumers to delve deeper into the universe. Consumers are able to form a relationship with the character, which in turn pulls them into the other media texts as well. This is the core of Mittell’s concept of ‘drillable media,’ which is presented particularly well via Haytham in ASSASSIN’S CREED, where in the release order he is first introduced at the end of his life in AC3. The other media unravel the specifics of his life and the characters in it retrospectively.

Implications for Further Research
As of now, ASSASSIN’S CREED appears to be one of the more successful and more intricate transmedia storytelling projects, even though the use of the different texts within this context is still somewhat tentative. In general, consumers seem rather interested in the way the different media (texts) interact with one another. The majority of consumers however still only play the games, and of those, some do not even seem aware of the transmedia storytelling nature of the series.219 This means that the existence of transmedia texts needs to be communicated more clearly and organically within the main products themselves. So far, this was only the case in ROGUE. Other consumers are well

219 In this study, 342 respondents had only played AC3 without reading Forsaken, and of those, 262 respondents had not read any of the other novels in the series either.
aware of and willing to embrace the affordances of transmedia storytelling. These consumers tend to be quite critical of the way their interpretation of character and story changes with their consumption choices, as was shown in Chapter 4.3.

The large fan base likely enables more comprehensive empirical studies to discover in greater depth how the different aspects of transmedia storytelling relate to one another as well as the consumer. The scope of the current study prevented a more elaborate analysis; the survey was used mainly as an illustration of the previous arguments, as the differences between the group sizes was rather high. The study also had to limit the analysis to only one character and a limited number of media texts. Future research would do well to incorporate more media texts and their relations with each other, especially keeping in mind the role of paratexts in forming certain interpretations. A comprehensive study of the whole series and the distribution of story elements across the different texts in combination with the actual reception of consumers would be especially useful here, as it would show exactly how different products are consumed and how (or if) this actually matters for transmedia storytelling. The reception of the survey shows that the community is more than willing to participate in such studies.

Considering ASSASSIN’S CREED, the dynamics of the Kenway Saga suggest that the series will remain ambiguous and self-critical in the future, and make use of complex narrative structures to maintain consumer interest. If the series continues to show greater awareness of the confluent nature of the media texts, as it does especially in ROGUE, this could lead to a more coherent transmedia storytelling process and animate consumers more consistently to seek out other products. In constantly exploring and expanding the boundaries of transmedia storytelling, Ubisoft proves that, indeed, nothing is true, and everything is permitted.
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## Appendices

### Appendix A: List of released ASSASSIN’S CREED media at the time of writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Platform(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>ASSASSIN’S CREED</td>
<td>Main instalment</td>
<td>Xbox360, PS3, PC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Assassin’s Creed</td>
<td>Graphic novel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>ALTAIR’S CHRONICLES</td>
<td>Surrounding instalment</td>
<td>Nintendo DS, iOS, Palm WebOS, Windows Phone 7</td>
</tr>
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<td>Surrounding instalment</td>
<td>PSP</td>
</tr>
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<td>Graphic novel</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Short animated film</td>
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<td>Spin-off game</td>
<td>IOS</td>
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<td>Assassin’s Creed: Black Flag</td>
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<td>Graphic novel</td>
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<td>Graphic novel</td>
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<td>2011</td>
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<td>Book (illustrated)</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>ASSASSIN’S CREED UNITY</td>
<td>Main instalment</td>
<td>PS4, Xbox One, PC</td>
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<td>ASSASSIN’S CREED ROGUE</td>
<td>Main instalment</td>
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<td>Assassin’s Creed: Unity</td>
<td>Novel</td>
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220 Taken from [http://assassinscreed.wikia.com/wiki/Games_and_media](http://assassinscreed.wikia.com/wiki/Games_and_media)
<table>
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<td>Graphic novel</td>
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<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>ASSASSIN’S CREED: MEMORIES</td>
<td>Spin-off game</td>
<td>iOS</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>ASSASSIN’S CREED CHRONICLES: CHINA</td>
<td>Surrounding instalment</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>ASSASSIN’S CREED: IDENTITY</td>
<td>Spin-off game</td>
<td>iOS</td>
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Appendix B: Synopses

1. ASSASSIN’S CREED III

To prevent a global catastrophe predicted for 21 December 2012, Desmond Miles and his fellow Assassins take up position in a First Civilisation temple. He first relives Haytham Kenway’s memories, who in 1754 assassimates a familiar target and takes an amulet from him. Haytham is sent to Boston, where he is supposed to meet with men sympathetic to their cause and find the Precursor storehouse to which the amulet is supposedly the key. Together with his new associates Charles Lee, William Johnson, Thomas Hickey, Benjamin Church and Jonathan Pitcairn, he makes contact with the Mohawk tribe Kani'en'keh:ka and meets Kanieht:iio, also known as Ziiö. She reluctantly promises to show him the storehouse on the condition that he helps kill General Braddock, a former associate of Haytham’s who is keen on en-slaving the natives. Upon entering the storehouse, Haytham realises that his amulet does not open it after all. Haytham and Ziiö become romantically involved after this discovery. Returning to Boston, Haytham initiates Charles Lee into the Templar Order, a revelation that surprises Desmond and his fellow Assassins as they had been led to believe that he was an Assassin.

The game switches to the memories of Ratonhnhakéton, Haytham’s and Ziiö’s son, who is attacked by Charles Lee and the other Templars wanting to speak with the village elders. He finds his village burning upon his return. His mother dies in the fire. Years later, Ratonhnhakéton seeks out the elderly Assassin Achilles Davenport, who reluctantly agrees to train him and renames him after his late son Connor. Connor first encounters the Templars in Boston, where they frame him for the Boston Massacre, in which the fight between the British soldiers and the people of Boston escalates. Connor becomes an Assassin after months of training and, much to Achilles’s scepticism, takes it upon himself to eliminate the members of the Templar Order. In the process, he is framed for the attempted assassination of George Washington and barely escapes from the gallows. While helping Washington, Connor is forced to work together with Haytham to find and kill Benjamin Church, who has forsaken the Templar cause. When Haytham reveals that it was Washington, not the Templars, who ordered the attack on his village all those years ago and who is also prepared to do so again, Connor breaks with both of them and saves his village. Nevertheless, Connor is still intent on killing Charles Lee, so he pursues him. He believes that with Lee gone, Connor would be able to convince Haytham of the Assassin cause. Instead, he is ambushed by Haytham, who has helped Lee escape. Connor kills Haytham in the ensuing fight and assassinates Charles Lee as well. He takes the amulet, revealing its location to the contemporary Assassins. Because of this, Desmond can use the amulet to prevent the 21 December catastrophe, sacrificing himself in the process.

2. Assassin’s Creed: Forsaken

Shortly before his tenth birthday, Haytham Kenway loses his father Edward and several members of the household in an attack on their home in Queen Anne’s Square, with his half-sister Jennifer kidnapped. In his new diary, he reminisces about his sheltered but friendless childhood. With his mother in shock after the attack, their senior property manager and family friend Reginald Birch reveals to Haytham that he is a Templar. Birch takes him to Europe to find his father’s murderers and Jennifer, who knew the traitor was. The valet Digweed is the main suspect. Before their departure, Haytham is introduced to the Templar Edward Braddock, who carries out the investigations.

Twelve years later, Haytham is an accomplished Templar Knight himself, but their quest for revenge and search for Jenny has not been fruitful. When he finally finds Digweed, he discovers that his father’s killers had gotten there first. He finds out that Edward used to be an Assassin and was killed for something in his possession. He further finds a connection between Braddock and the killers. Haytham continues his investigation while serving in Braddock’s regiment, who shocks him with his increasingly violent tendencies. In 1753, Haytham is sent to kidnap the young rebel Lucio, who is guarded by an Assassin called Miko. In the ensuing conflict, Haytham takes Miko’s hidden blade for himself, but does not kill him. As he brings Lucio to Birch, he realises that Lucio is to be kept prisoner to blackmail his mother into decoding a journal, and is enraged because he has been lied to.

In 1754, he is ordered to assassinate Miko and take an amulet from him. Subsequently, he is sent to America to find the Precursor storehouse. He recruits his fellow Templars, meets Ziiö and falls in love with her. Haytham lies to her about Braddock’s death, having only wounded him
deadly, and their relationship ends when she finds out about it. Years later, Haytham finally finds his sister Jenny as a servant and former concubine in Damascus and rescues her, which leads to the temporary capture and castration of his close friend Holden. Jenny reveals that Birch was the traitor, confirming Haytham’s suspicions. They travel to France to kill him. Lucio stabs Haytham during their rescue. After Haytham’s recovery, Holden commits suicide due to the trauma he suffered in Damascus.

In 1774, Haytham learns of Zio’s death and finds out that he has a son, the Assassin Connor. He approves of Connor’s execution, but guilt overcomes him and he saves him from the gallows without being recognised. Nearly two years later, they finally meet in person and work together to find Benjamin Church. After Connor breaks with Washington and Haytham, Haytham makes a final stand, helping Charles Lee escape and confronting Connor. The epilogue to the diary is written by Connor detailing their final confrontation, in which Connor kills his father, and the assassination of Lee.

3. ASSASSIN’S CREED ROGUE

While conducting research into Shay Patrick Cormac’s memories, an Abstergo Entertainment employee triggers a virus that corrupts the servers, but is ordered to keep investigating the memories because they are crucial to Abstergo. Shay’s memories begin as an Assassin in training under Mentor Achilles in 1752. His laid-back attitude is challenging for his trainers Hope, Kesegowaase and Liam. An artefact stolen from the Templars reveals the location of a Precursor site in Lisbon, where Shay’s attempt to retrieve a Piece of Eden sets off an earthquake. Outraged, Shay confronts the Assassins, breaks with them and steals the manuscript necessary to decipher an artefact leading to more Precursor sites. He decides to jump off a cliff rather than give it back to the Assassins, but wakes up in New York City instead, having been rescued by a passing ship. Together with Colonel Monro, he takes out the gangs that control the city and aids the efforts of the British army against the French.

After a year of their cooperation, Monro reveals his Templar allegiance, claiming that despite Shay’s history, he has proven himself loyal to their cause. They kill Kesegowaase, in the process of which Monro dies, telling Shay that Liam has stolen back the Manuscript. Shay meets Haytham Kenway at his induction into the Templar Order. To prevent the Assassins from disturbing more Precursor structures, they take out his former mentors together until the conflict comes to a climax at another First Civilisation site, which Achilles and Liam have reached before them. Achilles stops Liam from killing Shay, realising that he has been right about the risks. The ensuing struggle inadvertently causes another earthquake. Shay kills Liam, but convinces Haytham to leave Achilles alive because he is no longer a threat. Haytham agrees, but cripples Achilles by shooting him in the leg anyway. In a memory from 1776, Shay kills the Assassin Charles Dorian in Versailles.

4. ASSASSIN’S CREED: Unity

Élise de la Serre loses her mother to tuberculosis at the age of ten. Born into a Templar family, she recounts how she was groomed to become her father’s successor, who is the current French Grand Master. She is first trained in secret by her mother and a fellow Templar, Mr Weatherall. Although it is customary to introduce children to the Order at the age of ten, she is told the truth after a failed assassination attempt on her mother and herself when she is eight years old. She now officially continues her training. Élise spends some years at the Maison Royale de Saint-Louis school at Saint-Cyr, where her temperament and disobedience cause many troubles for her until she manages to escape and follows Mr Weatherall to London. Here, according to his investigations, the man who attacked her mother and her can be found: an ex-Assassin called Ruddock. To prove herself to a befriended Templar family, the Carrols, she is sent to infiltrate the house of Haytham Kenway’s sister Jennifer Scott to retrieve letters that Haytham sent her in the past. When found out, she realises that the Carrols betrayed her and intend to destroy the letters, and helps Ruddock escape. The letters start to inspire her to bring together the Assassins and Templars.

Back in France, her father is murdered at her induction into the Order. The family’s warden Arno Dorian, who is of Assassin descent and also Élise’s lover, is framed for the murder and thrown into prison. Élise blames him for her father’s death and withdraws. Her reconciliation with Arno is sabotaged when he breaks out of prison together with a fellow inmate, an Assassin who helps him join the Brotherhood. Arno and Élise start working together again, aware of their opposing allegiances, and uncover political intrigues within both factions. Élise dies trying to take revenge for her father’s death on the new Templar Grand Master Germain. In the end, it becomes apparent
that Ruddock was sent by the Carrols to kill her and her associates, and Mr Weatherall kills him. Arno reads Élise’s dying wish in a final letter, asking him to carry on Haytham’s ideals to unite the Templars and the Assassins.

5. List of relevant characters

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Appearances</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adéwalé</td>
<td>Former slave-turned-pirate, Edward Kenway’s quartermaster, later Assassin</td>
<td>AC4 &amp; novel, ROGUE, FREEDOM CRY</td>
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<td>Albertine, Lucio</td>
<td>Assassin associate and scholar</td>
<td>Forsaken, Unity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albertine, Monica</td>
<td>Assassin associate, Lucio’s mother</td>
<td>Forsaken, Unity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berg, Juhani Otso</td>
<td>Former Finnish Special Forces, later Master templar and high-ranking official of Abstergo Industries</td>
<td>ROGUE</td>
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<td>Birch, Reginald</td>
<td>Templar Grand Master (British Rite)</td>
<td>AC3, Forsaken</td>
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<td>Braddock, Edward</td>
<td>Templar and General in the British Army</td>
<td>AC3, Forsaken</td>
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<td>the Carrols</td>
<td>Templar family (British Rite)</td>
<td>Unity</td>
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<td>Church, Benjamin</td>
<td>Templar (Colonial Rite)</td>
<td>AC3, Forsaken</td>
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<td>Connor (Ratonhnhaké:ton)</td>
<td>Assassin, son of Haytham Kenway and Ziio</td>
<td>AC3, Forsaken</td>
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<td>Cormac, Shay Patrick</td>
<td>Assassin-turned-Templar (Colonial Rite)</td>
<td>ROGUE</td>
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<td>da Costa, Violet</td>
<td>Modern-day Assassin-turned-Templar</td>
<td>AC3, ROGUE</td>
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<td>Templar (Parisian Rite), Arno Dorian’s lover</td>
<td>UNITY &amp; novel</td>
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<td>de la Serre, François</td>
<td>Grand Master (Parisian Rite), father of Élise de la Serre</td>
<td>UNITY &amp; novel</td>
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<td>de la Serre, Julie</td>
<td>Templar (Parisian Rite), mother of Élise de la Serre</td>
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<td>Digweed, Jack</td>
<td>Valet of Edward Kenway</td>
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<td>Dorian, Arno</td>
<td>Assassin (French Brotherhood), orphaned and raised by Templars, Élise de la Serre’s lover</td>
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221 The characters mentioned here are only those necessary to understand the analyses in the thesis. Only their appearances in those media texts that are analysed here are mentioned in this list.
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<td>Miko</td>
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<td>Officer of the British Army, slave trader</td>
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<td>Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, first President of the United States</td>
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<td>Zio (Kaniehți:io)</td>
<td>Lover of Haytham Kenway, mother of Connor</td>
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6. Sequences and Memories in AC3 and ROGUE

ASSASSIN’S CREED III

Sequence 1
1. Refresher Course
2. A Deadly Performance
3. Journey to the New World

Sequence 2
1. Welcome to Boston
2. Johnson’s Errand
3. The Surgeon
4. The Soldier
5. Infiltrating Southgate

Sequence 3
1. Unconvinced
2. Execution is Everything
3. The Braddock Expedition

Sequence 4
1. Hide and Seek
2. Feathers and Trees
3. Hunting Lessons
4. Something to Remember

Sequence 5
1. A Boorish Man
2. A Trip to Boston
3. Boston’s Most Wanted
4. River Rescue
5. The Hard Way

Sequence 6
1. Modern Tower
2. On Johnson’s Trail
3. The Angry Chef
4. The Tea Party
5. Hostile Negotiations

Sequence 7
1. The Midnight Ride
2. Lexington and Concord
3. Conflict Looms
4. Battle of Bunker Hill

Sequence 8
1. Something on the Side
2. Bridewell Prison
3. Public Execution

Sequence 9
1. The Stadium: MMA Night
2. Missing Supplies
3. Father and Son
4. The Foam and the Flames
5. A Bitter End

Sequence 10
1. Alternate Methods
2. Broken Trust
3. Battle of Monmouth

Sequence 11
1. Return to Abstergo
2. Battle of the Chesapeake
3. Lee’s Last Stand

Sequence 12
1. Laid to Rest
2. Chasing Lee
3. Desmond’s Decision

**ASSASSIN’S CREED ROGUE**

**Sequence 1; 1752**
1. The Way The Wind Blows
2. Lessons and Revelations
3. Tinker Sailor Soldier Spy
4. By Invitation Only

**Sequence 2**
1. One Little Victory; 1754
2. We The People
3. Fiat Lux
4. Kyrie Eleison; 1755
5. Freewill; 1755-1756

**Sequence 3; 1756**
1. The Colour of Right
2. A Long Walk and A Short Drop
3. Circumstances
4. Keep Your Friends Close

**Sequence 4**
1. Honour and Loyalty; 1757
2. Armour and Sword
3. Scars
4. Incomplete Memory 2; 1776

**Sequence 5; 1758**
1. Men O War
2. Bravado

**Sequence 6**
1. The Heist; 1759
2. Caress of Steel; 1759
3. No Laws But Our Own; 1759
4. Cold Fire; 1760
5. Non Nobis Domine; 1760
6. Incomplete Memory 3; 1776
### 7. Timeline of most important events across the different media texts

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<th>Forsaken</th>
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<td>1747</td>
<td>Death of Tessa Kenway</td>
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<td>Haytham finds out about his Assassin heritage</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Haytham starts serving under Braddock ➔ incident at Bergen op Zoom</td>
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<td>1753</td>
<td>Haytham kidnaps Lucio</td>
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<td>Haytham steals the Precursor Amulet</td>
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<td>Haytham becomes Grand Master of the Colonial Rite</td>
<td>Haytham becomes Grand Master of the Colonial Rite</td>
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<td>Haytham meets Ziio</td>
<td>Haytham meets Ziio</td>
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<td>1755</td>
<td>Relationship with Ziio</td>
<td>Lisbon disaster</td>
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<td>1757</td>
<td>Haytham rescues Jenny</td>
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<td>Haytham takes revenge on Birch</td>
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<td>1758</td>
<td>Holden commits suicide</td>
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<td>1759</td>
<td>Assassination of Hope</td>
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<td>1760</td>
<td>Struggle at First Civilisation site</td>
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<td>1760</td>
<td>Connor’s village is attacked</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ziio dies</td>
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<td>1769</td>
<td>Connor leaves his tribe</td>
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<td>Connor starts Assassin training</td>
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<td>1770</td>
<td>Boston Massacre</td>
<td>Boston Massacre</td>
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<td>1773</td>
<td>Connor becomes an Assassin</td>
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<td>Assassination of William Johnson</td>
<td>Assassination of William Johnson</td>
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<td>1774</td>
<td>Haytham finds out about Connor</td>
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<td>1775</td>
<td>Assassination of Jonathan Pitcairn</td>
<td>Assassination of Jonathan Pitcairn</td>
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<tr>
<td>1776</td>
<td>Connor’s attempted execution</td>
<td>Haytham saves Connor from execution</td>
<td>Assassination of Charles Dorian</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Connor stops the assassination of Washington</td>
<td>Connor stops the assassination of Washington</td>
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<td>1778</td>
<td>Connor and Haytham meet in person and collaborate to find and kill Benjamin Church</td>
<td>Connor and Haytham meet in person and collaborate to find and kill Benjamin Church</td>
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<td>1781</td>
<td>Connor kills Haytham</td>
<td>Connor kills Haytham</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connor kills Charles Lee</td>
<td>Connor kills Charles Lee</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Relevant documents in ASSASSIN’S CREED 3 and ASSASSIN’S CREED: ROGUE

1. Haytham Kenway (Animus database, AC3)
   
   B. 1725
   
   Haytham Kenway is a Templar who came to the American colonies in 1754. From what we've learned, Kenway was sent here by Grand Master Reginald Birch, with a dual mission: establish his own Templar group to rival the colonial Assassins - and searching for clues about artifacts related to the First Civilization. And when a Grand Master tells you to do something, you do it. Even if it's just a Chess Grand Master.

   Kenway didn't find the artifacts he was looking for. He did, however, recruit a small, dedicated band of Templars. He also attempted to forge a relationship with the Kanien'kehá:ka in the frontier, and one woman in particular, Kaniehtí:io. The two were briefly lovers - and however brief it was, it was enough, because Kaniehtí:io, unbeknownst to Haytham, ended up raising their son, Connor.

   I'm guessing it was Kenway who became Grand Master in the colonies, and therefore the man responsible for the 1763 attack on the Colonial Assassins. That attack wiped out most of the membership and almost all of our records from that era. It's never been clear exactly what happened in that attack, or how Kenway managed to make it such a complete surprise.

   In any case, I don't like this guy. Sorry to use such strong words.

2. Haytham Kenway (Animus database, ROGUE)
   
   Born: 1725
   Died: 1781
   
   Haytham was born in London. His father was Edward Kenway, a former pirate who trained him with a secret purpose. One day before his tenth birthday, young Haytham's home was burned, his half-sister Jenny was taken, and his father was killed. Reginald Birch, a family friend, offered to help and revealed he was a Templar, though the boy hardly understood what this implied at the time. Haytham was introduced to Edward "The Bulldog" Braddock, a soldier in the Royal Army and fellow Templar, and the two took an instant dislike to each other.

   Years passed in a fruitless search for his half-sister, and Haytham and Birch settled in Troyes, France. Haytham became a ruthless and efficient killer for the Templars. While searching for his father's killer, he met Braddock in Germany and served in his Coldstreams unit in the War of Austrian Succession.

   In 1754, Haytham killed in Assassin named Miko in London to acquire an amulet needed to find a First Civilization storehouse. Birch sent him to the colonies to establish an official Templar presence while he searched for the Precursor site. He secured the assistance of Kanien'kehá:ka natives by freeing several captives, including a woman named Ziio, with whom he had an ill-fated but passionate affair.

   In 1755, Haytham got word from his European contacts that Jenny was found in the Ottoman Empire. He left the colonies to rescue her, and was shocked when she revealed that Birch and the Templars were behind the attack on his home. Their father was an Assassin, and Birch had him killed for his secrets. Together, they traveled to Troyes and killed Birch. Haytham returned to the colonies in 1758.

   (Fun fact: Haytham kept a diary! I wonder why he never mentioned Shay in it. -V.)

   
   The Assassins would have you believe that Al Mualim was a great Mentor who became corrupted with greed… and that he schemed with the Templars to acquire an Apple of Eden. I see instead a shrewd and cunning leader. A man who used his best Assassin, Altaïr ibn-l'Ahad, to eliminate his
conspirators in order to keep the Apple for himself, so that he could use it to enforce world peace. While it must be stated unequivocally that Al Mualim was not a Templar, it is interesting to me that his vision of peace was more in line with Templar philosophy than Assassin. In the past, both sides had the same goal, that of peace. Our only difference was how we chose to achieve it. Had Al Mualim not been killed by Altair and allowed to carry out his plan, perhaps we would not be fighting now. It was only after Altair reformed the Brotherhood with its new ideals of “free will” that the conflict truly escalated and spread across the planet. For if the so-called “Wise Man of the Mountain” can see things from our point of view, surely the same can be said for other Assassins.

4. Berg’s Inspiration: Baptiste (1725-1766)
François Mackandal saved Baptiste from slavery, and inducted him into his so-called Brotherhood. Mackandal was a vicious Mentor, and in his desperate attempt to liberate slaves, he broke his own Creed by indiscriminately killing nobles. Misguided as they are, some Assassins are honorable. Mackandal was not one of them. Thanks to the calculating genius of Madeleine de L'Isle, the Templars made an example of Mackandal by way of public execution in 1758. His pathetic excuse for a Brotherhood quickly fell apart. When his comrade and childhood friend Agaté fled to Louisiana, Baptiste saw the futility of his former life in Mackandal's Brotherhood. Madeleine saw Baptiste's potential and instructed her Templars in New Orleans to strike a deal with him. If he could draw Agaté out of hiding and eliminate him, he would be granted a place in the Templar Order. Although Baptiste was killed by the Assassin Aveline de Grandpré, his path clearly demonstrates the inherent superiority of Templar ideals over Assassin terrorism.

5. Berg’s Inspiration: Duncan Walpole (1679-1715)
Duncan Walpole rose through the ranks to become a Master Assassin, but he was restricted by a Brotherhood which chose to send him across the ocean to the West Indies, rather than find a way to nurture his potential. Once there, Duncan attracted the notice of Laureano Torres, former governor of Cuba and Templar Grand Master. Through their correspondence, Torres offered a less violent way to achieve their mutual goals, by using Precursor artifacts as a surveillance system rather than the murders and scheming favored by the Brotherhood. Sadly, Duncan was killed by a pirate before the Templars could help him achieve his potential. Although Duncan’s story does not have a happy ending, it clearly demonstrates that the Templars’ highest goals of peace and order need not exclude personal success and achievement.

Haytham Kenway remains a controversial figure for me. I have great respect for him. After all, he was the Grand Master of the Colonial Rite, charged with finding a Precursor site. Haytham was cunning and ruthless, but he had a streak of emotional weakness that ultimately triggered his downfall. He lost his father when he was a child and the British Grand Master, Reginald Birch, raised him to become a Templar knight. Haytham eventually learned that his father Edward had been an Assassin. That he chose to stay a Templar rather than follow in his father’s footsteps indicates to me that he believed he was already on the right path. When Haytham discovered that Birch was the one who murdered his father, he and his sister killed him in revenge. I believe this was the beginning of his downfall. Templars kill for efficiency, not petty emotions. When he discovered that his son Connor was an Assassin working against him in the Colonies, the same emotional weakness stayed his blade. A pity Connor did not show him the same mercy.

Like Haytham Kenway, Daniel Cross came from an Assassin bloodline, as the Orelov family had at least two generations who served the Brotherhood. Daniel Cross’s history of drug addiction and Animus-induced psychosis should not take away from his many accomplishments for the Templar cause. Under the influence of Warren Vidic, he was planted into the Brotherhood and earned their trust, eventually meeting their reclusive Mentor. Then his subliminal programming activated, and he killed the Mentor, triggering the first “Great Purge” of the modern age. Al Mualim. Haras. Vali cel Tradat. Baptiste. Duncan Walpole. Haytham Kenway. Lucy Stillman. Daniel Cross. These are but a few prominent examples of something I’ve always felt... that there will always be Assassins who are willing to abandon their cause to serve ours. Yet there is no one who embodies this idea better than Shay Cormac, and I want the Assassins to confront this painful reality.
Appendix D: Online survey

1. Survey Questions
   ● indicates only once possible answer, □ indicates multiple-choice options

Q1 How old are you?
   - <20
   - 21-30
   - 31-40
   - 41-50
   - 51-60
   - >61

Q2 As which gender do you identify?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Non-binary/Other
   - Would prefer not to say

Q3 What is your nationality?

Q4 Did you play (or watch walkthroughs / Let's Plays of) one or more of the Assassin's Creed games after or including Assassin's Creed III and/or read the novels Assassin's Creed: Forsaken or Assassin's Creed: Unity?

Q5 When was the last time that you played a video / computer game (including casual and social media games)?
   - Today
   - Yesterday
   - This week
   - Last week
   - This month
   - In the past 6 months
   - In the past 12 months
   - longer than that
   - I have never played a video /computer game.

Q6 At what age did you start playing video / computer games?
   - <10
   - 11-20
   - 21-30
   - >30

Q7 Which platform do you primarily use for gaming?
   - PC
   - Wii / WiiU
   - Nintendo DS / 3DS
   - Sony PlayStation (2, 3, 4)
   - Sony PSP / PS Vita
   - Microsoft Xbox / Xbox360 / Xbox One
   - Mobile / Tablet

Q8 Which platform(s) do you use to play the Assassin's Creed games?
   - PlayStation 3
   - PlayStation 4
   - Xbox 360
   - Xbox One
   - WiiU

Q9 If at all, how do you normally combine the use of (video) walkthroughs / Let's Plays with the Assassin's Creed games?
   - I only use walkthroughs / Let's Plays without playing the game.
   - I combine the walkthroughs / Let's Plays with playing the game.
   - I read or watch the walkthroughs / Let's Plays after having played the game myself.
   - I only play the game without using walkthroughs / Let's Plays.
   - I neither watch or read walkthroughs, nor play the games.

Q10 Which of the following Assassin's Creed games have you played or watched walkthroughs / Let's Plays of? (It does not matter whether you have finished them or not.)
   - ASSASSIN'S CREED
   - ASSASSIN'S CREED: ALTAIR'S CHRONICLES
   - ASSASSIN'S CREED: BLOODLINES
   - ASSASSIN'S CREED II
   - ASSASSIN'S CREED II: DISCOVERY
   - ASSASSIN'S CREED: BROTHERHOOD
   - PROJECT LEGACY
   - ASSASSIN'S CREED: REVELATIONS
   - AC: RECOLLECTION
   - ASSASSIN'S CREED III
   - ASSASSIN'S S CREED III: LIBERATION
   - ASSASSIN'S CREED IV: BLACK FLAG
   - AC: PIRATES
   - ASSASSIN'S CREED: UNITY
   - ASSASSIN'S CREED: ROGUE

Q11 How far are you in the main storyline of Assassin's Creed III?
   - Just started
   - About 1/4 along
   - About halfway
   - About 3/4 along
   - nearly finished
   - finished
Q12 How far are you in the main storyline of Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag?
- Just started
- About 1/4 along
- About halfway
- About 3/4 along
- Nearly finished
- Finished

Q13 How far are you in the main storyline of Assassin's Creed: Unity?
- Just started
- About 1/4 along
- About halfway
- About 3/4 along
- Nearly finished
- Finished

Q14 How far are you in the main storyline of Assassin's Creed: Rogue?
- Just started
- About 1/4 along
- About halfway
- About 3/4 along
- Nearly finished
- Finished

Q15 Are you an active participant in the Assassin's Creed online community?
- Yes
- No

Q16 Do you consume any other Assassin's Creed media?
- Novels
- Art books
- The short animated films
- Comic books/graphic novels
- The official print Encyclopedia
- Other, namely
- None of the above

Q16.1 Which of the following Assassin's Creed short (animated) films have you watched?
- ASSASSIN’S CREED: LINEAGE
- ASSASSIN’S CREED: ASCENDANCE
- ASSASSIN’S CREED: EMBERS

Q16.2 Which of the following ASSASSIN’S CREED comic books / graphic novels have you read?
- Assassin’s Creed 1: Desmond
- Assassin’s Creed 2: Aquilus
- Assassin’s Creed 3: Accipiter
- Assassin’s Creed 4: Hawk
- Assassin’s Creed 5: El Cakr

Q16.3 Which of the following Assassin’s Creed novels have you read?
- Assassin’s Creed: Renaissance
- Assassin’s Creed: Brotherhood
- Assassin’s Creed: The Secret Crusade
- Assassin’s Creed: Revelations
- Assassin’s Creed: Forsaken
- Assassin’s Creed: Black Flag
- Assassin’s Creed: Unity

Q17 What kind of promotional or additional material have you consumed before, while, or after playing / reading, if any?
- Pre-/Reviews (online or print)
- Assassin’s Creed Wiki
- Wikipedia
- Official interviews
- Other, namely
- None of the above

Q18 Did you play/watch the games in the order in which they were published, or did you choose an alternative narrative order?
- Release order
- Chronological order
- Alternative order, namely

Q19.1 When did you read Assassin’s Creed: Forsaken in relation to playing / watching Assassin’s Creed III?
- Before playing / watching the game
- At the same time as playing / watching the game
- After playing / watching the game

Q19.2 When did you read Assassin’s Creed: Black Flag in relation to playing / watching Assassin’s Creed IV: Black Flag?
- Before playing / watching the game
- At the same time as playing / watching the game
- After playing / watching the game
Q19.3 When did you read *Assassin's Creed: Unity* in relation to playing / watching *Assassin's Creed: Unity*?
- Before playing / watching the game
- At the same time as playing / watching the game
- After playing / watching the game

Q20 Who is your favourite lead character in the series?
- Altair Ibn-La'Ahad
- Ezio Auditore da Firenze
- Connor Kenway
- Aveline de Grandpré
- Edward Kenway
- Shay Patrick Cormac
- Arno Dorian

Q21 If your favourite character is not one of the Assassins already mentioned, who is it? (If you do not remember the name of the character, please describe him or her)

Q22 What kinds of emotions do you associate with Haytham Kenway? (*AC III, AC Rogue, AC: Forsaken*)
- Caring
- Jealousy
- Pride
- Disappointment
- Respect
- Annoyance
- Like
- Dislike
- Loyalty
- Pity
- Other, namely

Q23 What kinds of emotions do you associate with Connor Kenway? (*AC III, AC: Forsaken*)
- Caring
- Jealousy
- Pride
- Disappointment
- Respect
- Annoyance
- Like
- Dislike
- Loyalty
- Pity
- Other, namely

Q24 What kinds of emotions do you associate with Shay Patrick Cormac? (*AC Rogue*)
- Caring
- Jealousy
- Pride
- Disappointment
- Respect
- Annoyance
- Like
- Dislike
- Loyalty
- Pity
- Other, namely
Q25 If applicable, what was the emotionally strongest moment for you in the series?
Q26 In a few short sentences, how would you sum up the character of Haytham Kenway?
Q27 In a few short sentences, how would you sum up the character of Shay Patrick Cormac?

2. List of codes and code families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code families</th>
<th>Individual codes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assassin [potential or former]</td>
<td>Assassin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>background</td>
<td>background</td>
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<td>bad character, bad game(play), noncanonical</td>
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<tr>
<td>good character/game</td>
<td>good character, love to hate, real, twist,</td>
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<td>ideologies</td>
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<tr>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>British, father, political, powerful, professional, realistic, strict</td>
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<tr>
<td>other characters</td>
<td>Edward, Ziio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pop culture</td>
<td>Darth Vader, James Bond</td>
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<tr>
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<td>caring, classy, father [good], good intentions, hero, humour, integrity, intelligent, leader, likable, positive values, pragmatic, redemption, respectable, sensitive,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Personal interview with Maxime Durand, 24 March 2015

S: Okay, yeah, so I guess I’ll just start off with describing my own research real quick so that it’s easier to put my questions into context. Okay, so I’m in a Research Master called Visual Arts, Media and Architecture at the VU in Amsterdam, and I’m researching the character development and reception in transmedia storytelling, so I’m focusing on Haytham Kenway in particular. And I’m just analysing how his function and representation and reception changes in the different media texts, and also in the interaction with one another, so the interaction between the media texts. So basically I’m assuming that the interpretation of the character changes depending on someone’s consumption behaviour, especially when for example in Forsaken; there is so much more information on his background and ideology and intentions, and of course it also provides a different context for parts of the game. And with the online survey I also want to add an empirical part to that and just see how the consumption behaviour actually influences the interpretation of the character. So that’s basically my research, do you have any questions about that?

D: So why did you choose Haytham? [laughs]

S: Why – why did I choose Haytham?

D: Yeah.

S: Well, I really have a thing for villains. [laughs] I’ve basically been researching villains for a really long time, and I think that especially with Haytham the whole narrative strategy really changed because he seems to be the focus of all these different games, he’s basically like that one character that ties together all these different media texts. So that’s really interesting, so that’s why I’m looking at him.

D: Okay. Well, I was just curious because, I was curious to know why you would choose Haytham instead of Charles Lee, for instance. It’s not a judgement, I’m just curious. [laughs]

S: Oh, no, no, no, no, I understand. But I mean, Charles Lee for example doesn’t really have much to do with the other texts. I mean of course a little bit in Forsaken, but that’s basically... so I’m looking at ASSASSIN’S CREED III and ROGUE, and the novels Forsaken and Unity. So yeah, that’s why.

D: Okay.

S: Okay? Okay, cool, then I’ll just start with my questions. So first I just have some general questions about the production process, just to get a feeling for what it’s like. So, do you guys actually see ASSASSIN’S CREED as transmedia storytelling, or what kind of terminology is officially used to describe it?

D: Some people call it edutainment. I think for us at Ubisoft, when we create a game like ASSASSIN’S CREED, our goal is really to make a video game – a fun video game. Obviously, we use history and we’re really interested in using history, I mean obviously they hired me as a historian five years ago to help them with that. But really our focus is to create a fun video game. So we do transmedia, we do, as you mentioned, we do other games and we do links in our universe, so it’s a very rich universe in the brand. We do novels, comic books, all of these are linked and their background, their characters, everything is linked within the universe of the ASSASSIN’S CREED.

S: Okay. I’ve also seen that Ubisoft often used the term ‘confluence’ to describe that. Does that add anything to the idea, just, I don’t know if that is the same as basically what I would see as transmedia storytelling?

D: Just make sure you mention the word confluent. Actually I’m not exactly sure actually. I’m sorry if I tell you I cannot answer this. I don’t know.

S: Yeah, sure, no problem. Okay, then my second question would be – so how would you basically describe the transmedia production process of the franchise? So basically, who ensures and how that the franchise remains coherent? Because with so many different media texts interacting, I guess that would be really difficult to coordinate, and how are the decisions made that disperse the content across the different media texts?

D: Okay, so, I’ll answer in two parts. The first part is how we create every product and specifically our video games, and then I’ll tell you how we link that to the brand, so the transmedia products as you mentioned. So basically when we create a game like this, there’s about a team of 10 people, so, it’s called the core team. Basically there’s the Creative Director, the Producer, most of the time also a Game Director, a Cinematics Director, so basically the people that will make the decisions in the game, the process, that’s usually also when I come in, as a historian. So our goal at first is to create a concept of the game, so finding the time period, making sure it will fit in the lore of the universe that we create normally. So that process usually takes part about 2 or 3 years before the shipping of the game. So at that moment we really focus on the story plot, so basically that’s when Haytham Kenway came in. So just to mention him. So about 3 years, 2 years and a half before the game was released we already have a very good idea normally of who is gonna be
the main villain, who is gonna be the good guy also, and we try to create a story plot around that, so really early in the process most of the time we already have a very good idea of the story line, that's really, that comes really first in the process. And then the more we go into development the more we know what our technology is gonna enable us to do, so then we can define what we're gonna be the specific events in the game. So let's say for instance we know that we can fly with a hot-air balloon, then we can add a mission that takes place in a hot-air balloon. So, and technology and narrative are very intertwined in the process. On the side with that, there's a team that's called Brand Team. They're based in Montreál at Ubisoft. That team is composed of a Brand Creative Director, a Brand Director, and a [static] Brand Game Director. So these guys, their mandate is really to make the link between all the games, so it's a team of six people basically, that really – their goal is to make the link and the bridge between all of our games and make sure it's consistent. So let's say Monopoly has an ASSASSIN'S CREED game, which is the case, well it has to be consistent with the universe too. So that's really their goal, basically.

**S:** Okay. So basically the whole storyline is already starting to be planned out like years in advance.

**D:** Yeah, exactly. So, I mean, sometimes it's gonna change, but most of the time, about 2 or 3 years before a game is released, we already have a very good idea of what the game is gonna talk about. Sometimes it changes, sometimes it stays the same, but that's usually the process, yeah.

**S:** Okay. And considering that the storylines from the games and the novels also overlap of course, how much collaboration is there actually between the author of the novels and the writers of the game, or the team that is in development, or is that really just, I don't know, directed by that Brand Team?

**D:** There's a lot of collaboration, specifically, well I mean, in every game there's collaboration, and it's linked with the novels too, so some ideas that writers can come up, I mean writers from novels, they're from outside Ubisoft, and even these guys, they can bring ideas and share ideas and that can make it into the game. So people who have had read the novels will find these links into the game, people that haven't read them are not penalised neither. So let's talk about ASSASSIN'S CREED III, with Daniel Cross. So he was the subject of three or four comic books, and I mean for people who have not read them it wasn't compelling to see him in the game, he was just a character – cool character – but for people who did read these books, I mean, then it was really interesting because you could actually and finally see him in the game. So it's for us important, I mean it's not only the games are brought to the books, but the books also bring elements to the game too.

**S:** Yeah, because for example when I just read Forsaken, of course, you know, just for example the execution scene, just being like – what, he saves him actually? And yeah, so I guess it really does add a lot. And of course then also to how people interpret the character I guess. And in what way – well considering that you guys plan so much in advance, or so long in advance, how does the reception of the games actually influence the production process? Because for example, I mean with, well, now just talking about my survey, I basically just scanned the responses very roughly and they show that Connor wasn't really that well received, in ASSASSIN'S CREED III of course. So do you guys do your own surveys to actually see how the games are received? Or how do you deal with that kind of issue?

**D:** So as I said, the general plot, we have a good idea what it's gonna be like as I mentioned before, and then it changes, it depends on the technology that we can develop during game. Let's say near the end of ASSASSIN'S CREED III, some of the technology that we'd hoped we would have in the game, we couldn't get it, so we did have to cut some of the scenes that we had already filmed, that the characters already had done, so the casting was done. So it's a process where we have to be able to change very swiftly, very quickly. Again sometimes it's things that we will have, sometimes it's things that we remove, again it's, we have a good idea of the plot, but then every scene that we have in the game, let's say we have about, I don't know, three hours' worth of cinematics. So these are fixed cinematics that are cast and filmed with real actors. All of this we can do up until very late in the process, so at least that's where we can change some of the stuff. But yeah, it does happen sometimes that we have to cut more than we want, sometimes we have to add also. It's a process near the end where everyone works really fast and tries to make it happen.

**S:** Okay. I meant more specifically how really gamers reacted to that character. Because a lot of people didn't like Connor, for example, and I was just wondering, were there actually any plans, like any more plans for Connor or were there never any more plans for Connor and that was just it? Or did you cut, I don't know, further plans for Connor because people weren't that enthusiastic about him?
D: Sorry, I had got the question wrong then. I cannot tell fully, what I can tell you is that when we were making ASSASSIN'S CREED III, we already knew we were going to Paris with ASSASSIN'S CREED: UNITY, and that Connor was probably not gonna be in Paris as a main character. So I'm not sure how much the reception to the character really changed the way we made the future games, the last games we did. I think from the start we already knew we were gonna do something about his whole family, rather than just about him. So I think some people really, really liked him, some people as you mentioned disliked him. I'm always surprised to see how opinions differ on this character specifically. I'm not sure we're gonna see him ever again. I don't know. [laughs]

S: Okay. And then Arno kind of seems to, well, use Ezio as comparison, or well, when marketing Arno, it just seems that he was a lot more like Ezio, so was that because that was already like a formula that was well received or was that just because the character demanded that?

D: I think we have to – the way we see the process here internally with characters, obviously we do some comparison with the past, with our past characters, and for instance we try to – every time we try to have a character that's different from the other ones we had, which sometimes becomes, I mean, it's a challenge because we've been having some characters so far in our series. We try really to come up with a unique character every time that makes sense in its historic set. So let's say for Arno, we tried to come with a character that was charismatic, that made sense in the French Revolution, in the story love – in the love story scene, too. So it's not always about comparing with the past, it's really more about creating new characters that the team likes, that the Creative Director likes also. So I know for a lot of people it's really important to compare with previous characters, for us it's not as important. For us, for our team what's really important is to create a new game, a fun new game, and it's really about that.

S: Yeah, makes sense. [laughs] Okay, and then I just have a couple more questions about specifically, like, the Kenway Saga. So, of course starting, as I already said, starting with ASSASSIN'S CREED III, the narrative strategy seems to really have drastically changed, I mean that it seems to be more consciously focused on transmedia storytelling, like that really the novels add something, whereas previously, especially in the first couple years of the franchise, the novels seemed to be rather an alternative for the people who didn't want to play the games. And then of course Haytham basically just ties together a lot of the different media and the stories. And I was wondering if there was actually a specific reason why the narrative strategy has changed so much? Like so drastically?

D: I think that's a question I should – I can get you the answer, I have to ask, I don't know about the strategy. So maybe I'm not the best person to answer this one, but I can try to find someone to answer.

S: Okay, that would be useful, because that was just really such a drastic cut basically. But do you know what actually the reasoning was behind releasing the games in this non-linear way, so that it just starts with the end of the saga and then it goes back and forth, also historically?

D: So just to make sure, again the connection sometimes is a bit rough. You ask me why we go on and back sometimes in history, or we always go up to modern times in history?

S: I mean that you basically start with, well with the end of, well in this case Haytham's life, and then all of a sudden you go a couple years back to Edward, and then you release something that is in between these two, but then also something that is after this too, you know what I mean?

D: I think it's a matter of exploiting that century, the 18th century. I guess we knew we had a lot of things to distil with the 18th century, and all that storyline about the Assassins in America. I think it was so rich that we couldn't just stop there. I mean when we started ASSASSIN'S CREED III, we didn't know exactly which time period we were gonna make, so we knew it was gonna talk about the American Revolution at some point, but we also had looked at the French and Indian wars, which we finally did with Haytham’s storyline. But it was so rich, so interesting, so the Golden Age of Piracy was the same. It was just such a rich period for us, I think it's maybe like we didn't do fully that whole time period, which is so nice and so interesting, with the creation of America. So, I guess that's one reason, it's because it's compelling and interesting for us.

S: Okay. And do you think that that kind of strategy is also gonna be kept for future instalments, or – so basically just this non-linear going back and forth between the games?

D: I think you can expect anything from now.

S: [laughs] Okay. Okay, and also, what was the reason then for actually deciding to suddenly portray the war between the Templars and the Assassins in such an ambiguous way? With like, less noble and idealistic characters, and characters that doubt the whole system, like with Shay, and then also with Haytham, whereas before, it seemed to be a very kind of black and white 'Assassins are good, Templars are bad' kind of situation?
D: I think it depends on your interpretation. To me it’s still like, actually, even in ASSASSIN’S CREED III, or specifically starting with ASSASSIN’S CREED III, we came up with characters that actually had doubts, even for villains. So again maybe it’s just a way we realise the game, but even for Haytham, he’s not a villain. He’s not actually a bad guy, he’s trying to come up with a new way to show the world, and I think maybe we didn’t make the game, or we weren’t able to have the game that, to make that understood by players. And I think that’s why ROGUE was so interesting to show that, to explain furthermore how Assassins and Templars are actually just two freaks. [laughs] Well, they’re just two terrorist groups. But they [static] have extremist ideas, but they have ideas and it’s not black and white as you mentioned. I think it’s something that we already had in AC3, but maybe it wasn’t as clear as in ROGUE. But that’s something that I think we can expect for the future. It’s a hard balance because a lot of people I think like bad guys, they like when it’s clear in a game who’s the good guy and who’s the bad guy. For a long time we’ve been wanting the series to show that it’s more grey than that. So I think it’s a matter of realisation now. We can come up with something that’s more mature, let’s say.

S: Yeah. I really like that change, so I was very intrigued by that. How difficult is it actually to incorporate these kind of things within the historical framework? I mean, speaking specifically of course to you as the historian. Kind of like, ‘Oh we have to pick, this guy is one of the bad guys, he’s like a Templar,’ and trying to incorporate that whole struggle within history, so to say?

D: Let’s take the example of Charles Lee, for instance. So how we came up with this guy that, well, first the best reason to have a bad guy in a game or a good guy in a game is that, in ASSASSIN’S CREED games, that he dies at the right moment. So in the right context. So it’s a little a matter of, how can I say, [static], so because we look for people who die in the right moment, let’s say in the American Revolution, we came with Charles Lee, but he was very unknown to everyone.

He was fairly unknown to the American Revolution, which was a good thing for us, because then we can come up with a character that we can explain the character to people. Then, like for Charles Lee, it was actually neatly founded, because he was a very dark character, he was very, as I mentioned, fairly unknown, so it was a matter of researching, reading history books, going back to the library, and trying to find what’s available on the guy. And when I started, and I explained that to the team, everyone agreed that he was like, he was interesting because he left England to come to America, and he really cared about the American Revolution, because liberty was important, but then he was also a bit of a freak in some ways, he didn’t want to share any power. So for us it made sense that he would be a Templar because he could live in that fantasy that we created, in that lore that we created about the Templars, so in terms that he was all bad, he was not all bad, but he had a strong character, he was duelling, he was charismatic, too, so that’s why he was interesting. And that’s how we come up with most of the characters in the game also, we try to see if they fit into being Assassins or Templars. So if you played ASSASSIN’S CREED: UNITY, a character like Mirabeau, he’s very important to the French Revolution, so one of the reasons he was important to us in the game, he died, and then he’s a complex character because he betrays the people, he’s a turncoat for the King. So for us, that is interesting for our story plot. So it’s not only bad guys or good guys, it’s characters that matter, that really have history. So that’s how we can come up with characters in the game that are interesting for us.

S: Yeah, so you guys just try to match historical facts or something to that framework, and feel, yeah that works the best.

D: Exactly, because otherwise we create fictive characters.

S: Yeah. And I was also just thinking, of course you said that it doesn’t really matter that much whether the people have read the novels, or basically that they’re not gonna lose something – too much, but don’t you think that people otherwise completely misunderstand the character if they only play the game and not read the novel? Or are those basically just two versions of the character that you are completely okay with presenting?

D: I think it’s, you know every medium has to bring something that’s unique. Obviously our main focus here is to make video games. I think we want to reward people that go read transmedia products, and I know a lot of people don’t play the games, they just read the books, because they feel like... For instance I have a lot of friends that are girls, that don’t play the games, they watch their boyfriends play the game. So they have an idea, they like the cinematics in the game, so they prefer to read the book than actually playing the game. I think then it’s interesting for both of them with two different products. Some people both play and read, I think we don’t want to forsake people who don’t play the game, we do our best to bring to every product our touch, the touch of our creativity.