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Semi-fictionalized History as Teaching Aids

Opportunities for learning history in Assassin's Creed II as a digital game and novel

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ABSTRACT

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Titel: Semi-fictionalized History as Teaching Aids – Opportunities for learning history in Assassin's Creed II as a digital game and novel.

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This study is a hermeneutic content analysis of both a digital videogame, in this case *Assassin's Creed II*, and the written story based on that game, *Assassin's Creed Renaissance*. The analysis is done from the perspective of using these two accounts as study material when teaching about Italy, especially Florence. The study investigates how reliable the game and the book are as historical sources, what differences in ways of portraying history between the book and the game, and how the game mechanics affect the portrayal of history. The findings show that the game and book often in themselves cannot be seen as reliable sources since the designers and writer have taken some artistic freedom, moving or adding structures, adding fictional characters, altering historical facts, focusing on spectacular events and artefacts and neglecting to include facts that are not important for the story line. The game portrays history differently from the book by being able to show actions and pictures, and letting the gamer walk around, free to explore the cities and towns. The game also gives a somewhat askew portrayal of history by introducing story elements that builds solely on the game's mechanics. The book is more linear and detailed when it comes to describing how the structure of objects felt like. The findings are discussed in relation to the possibilities of using games in the classroom. It is argued that the semi-fictionalised nature of these accounts means that one skill that must accompany the use of either the game or the novel is the ability to distinguish when the game is supposed to be documentary and when it is purely fictional. Something that is only obvious when you already have previous knowledge about the events, places and people represented in the game and the book.

Keywords

Assassin's Creed, COTS, games in the classroom, renaissance, games and learning

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Preface

I have always loved both history and computer games. When given the task to produce a paper for my master's degree in *Learning, Communication and Information Technology* my thoughts soon turned to what I could do around *Assassin's Creed*. Since I have studied both history and English literature at a university level I wanted to combine all of my interests so I decided to compare the game with the written story. This is especially interesting because the game came before the book and not the other way around. Research has been done on books, and their movie counterparts since the birth of the motion picture, but books based on games are relatively new.

As a teacher to teenagers, age 13-16, I always try to find ways to connect my students' own interests with the area we are studying. I believe that you could learn a great deal of things from computer games given that they are put in the right context. It is my job as a teacher to guide the students in the jungle of information that is out there and to teach them which sources to trust and which ones not to trust.

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1 INTRODUCTION

History is not only something we learn from schooling. There is no doubt that fiction is a very important source for the ways in which we make sense of, and perceive our past (Chapman A. , 2013a). For previous generations, books, for instance the classics, were a primary source to knowing something about the past. Today, when thinking of D-day and Normandy our thoughts are more likely to go to scenes from *Saving private Ryan* than to a lesson in school. Coming generations will have other points of reference, digital games surely being one of them.

Our knowledge about history can be said, for better or worse, to be mediated by entertainment products. Clearly, the portrayal of history in these sources will be made with the entertainment value in focus. The author will make judgments about what to tell, and what to leave out based on narratological principles, i.e. which character's story arc can be developed, and which settings will facilitate drama. The director will make similar judgments about what to tell but also have visual aesthetics in mind when portraying her/his version of an historical event. Today, books and movies are supplemented with new media, digital games. This media has another layer that neither books nor movies have, games have game mechanics, i.e. rules for how to interact with them. While there is a long tradition of using both movies and novels in formal education as resource material, digital games are just recently finding its way into history classes. There are some special challenges with digital games though. Where movies only needs one television set in order for the whole class to see, digital games demand one platform per player, and they are utterly time consuming (Linderöth J. , in press). Furthermore, the ways in which games tell history will have to do with their unique

constitution as a media, they contain stories as books and movies, they have visual aesthetics just as movies and they have rules for game play (Linderoth J. , 2004).

In this study I have compared a game with the written story based on that game. I have made a hermeneutic content analysis of both the game *Assassin's Creed II* (hereafter referred to as AC2) and the book *Assassin's Creed Renaissance* (ACR) by Oliver Bowden. My analysis is done from the perspective of a teacher critically investigating the potential of these two accounts of a specific historical period and place; renaissance Italy, especially Florence. If these sorts of games are to be implemented in classrooms it might be a good idea to first scrutinize how they portray history in relation to other, more traditional sources. By doing this comparative analysis I have been able to look at the mechanics of the game in order to see how the history that is told is affected by this media specific element of games. I compare the historical accounts in both the novel and the game with more traditional, scientific sources about renaissance Italy. From this analysis I discuss the pros and cons of using the book and the game in classroom situations.

In my background studies I will look at what research says about what can be learnt from educational literature, what arguments there are for using AC2 for educational purposes, analysis for historical video games, videogames as historical form and an example where AC2 has been used in the classroom.

1.1 Research Question

My overarching aim with this essay is to find out what gamers are offered to learn about the renaissance era from playing a game compared to reading a book with the same story-line to see if either, or both, of them can be used as teaching aids.

In order to answer this I have three research questions:

1. How reliable is the game AC2 and the book ACR as historical sources?
2. What are differences in ways of portraying history between the book ACR and the game AC2?
3. How does game mechanics in AC2 affect the portrayal of history?

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Games and education

Games as means in education can be dated back at least as far as the Roman era. In fact, their word for game, *ludus*, was also used for school and Quintilian, founder of a public Rhetoric school in AD 70, wrote about the importance of having fun in order to learn (Betrus & Botturi, 2010). In spite of this, games have not always been a natural part of the classroom situation. It has often become a treat, a way to reward the students, and not seen as a serious method of education. Through pedagogical methods developed by educators like Maria Montessori, an Italian educator in the beginning of the twentieth century, non-digital games have become more accepted as pedagogical tools. Quintilian's notion that learning should be fun is finding its way into the curriculums and thus new methods are being tested. Different types of games; card games, board games etcetera, are being used to, for instance, increase vocabulary, and to let students explore different mathematical problems (Betrus & Botturi, 2010).

The rapid development, during the latter half of the twentieth century and into the next, of computers has led to an increase of digital games fabricated and adapted for educational purposes. According to Linderoth (in press), educators see how much time young people spend in front of computers and consoles, playing digital games, and want to be able to find pedagogical ways that are to be used in the classroom, to enthuse students the same way digital games do. This interest has led to an increase in the use of commercial 'off-the-shelf' (COTS) titles in the modern classroom in order to motivate students to learn more. This has in its turn led to research on usage of COTS in the classroom.

2.2 COTS games as learning tools

Sandford (2006) has done an overview of how COTS can be, and are, used in the classroom. Research done in the UK, in 2001 and 2003, show that these games have both strengths and weaknesses when being used in formal curricular settings. On one hand they have an 'ability to promote collaboration, foster engagement and motivation, and to develop students' thinking skills' (2006, p. 1) but on the other the insufficient equipment and the boundaries of time weigh heavily against the use of COTS. However, a DfES report from 2005 also shows that most teachers who use these games become experts at them while playing them for fun during their own free time (Sandford, 2006).

Sandford claims that in order to really understand the potential of COTS as learning tools, ways of how to use them have to be studied in detail, looking at real life examples. Such research has been done, through the *Teaching with Games* project, with further positive findings. 'Teachers are using games as simulations and models for exploration and experiment, as texts to respond to through writing and drama, as challenging activities to promote awareness of thinking techniques and collaboration, and as the means of producing their own media, all within existing curricula' (2006, p. 3). Other positive findings are that teachers want to use the expertise the students already have and thus some students are given the chance to be more active and participate more during the lessons in a way they otherwise are not able to.

The study I present here is focused on a specific COTS game and thus I limit my arguments to one specific "niche" in the whole field of gamebased learning.

I follow in a tradition of research on text aimed for educational purposes. Even though AC2 is not educational material as such, the idea that it, and the other games in the serie (Heick, 2012) (Nyhart, 2012), can be used in educational settings makes it relevant to use similar methodologies as when studying textbooks and what they offer students to learn.

2.3 Research on educational material

There has been a lot of research done on textbooks and educational material, which a quick search in the database ERIC will show you. Much of the research focuses on the language in textbooks or how a certain area, like gender and different ethnic groups, is portrayed in different times and books. Here follows a record of some research that come the closest to the study on how reliable digital games are as resources.

In *The Great Depression: A Textbook Case of Problems with American History Textbooks* Miller and Rose (1983) look at how textbooks in history for junior and senior high school fail to use economic analysis to explain economic events and thereby causing misguided discussions and giving the wrong impressions of the causes and consequences.

On their research on advantages and disadvantages in using textbooks in higher education Healey and Ilbery (1993) list some of the dangers with textbooks. One textbook could mean the exposure to just one viewpoint. Neither do students gain much experience of selecting and synthesising material from different sources. There is also a risk of students reproducing instead of developing their own perspective and critical approach. The advantages were that students like to have a textbook that covers the majority of the course material and it also makes them more self-reliant.

Textbooks are products of their time. The reader is affected by the stand point of the author and the time it is written in. The more freedom the writers have, the more differences can be found between different textbooks. The freedom depends on how much the state controls the press and how strict the curriculum is. Therefore, it is very important that the teacher teach the students to look at texts, even the textbooks, critically (Bäck & Wallsby, 2009).

This research is structured around the idea that by closely reading the educational material one can make statements about what students are offered to learn. My study here echoes this approach, even though the objects I study are not produced specifically for educational purposes. My approach also taps into a tradition of studying historical videogames and what they can contribute with.

2.4 Analysing Historical Videogames

According to Chapman, the analysis of historical videogames is still in an early stage. He advocates methods that look first and foremost at 'form over content' (Chapman A. , 2012). It ought to be more fruitful and interesting to see in what ways you can engage with the historical form than debating over how accurate it is. Videogames, unlike other historical forms, allow "doing" as well as "reading".

Historical film has been criticized as a medium to learn about history just like historical games are today. Books have been considered a better source of information than films, even if they too are based on historical artefacts and are second hand sources. Chapman argues that historical videogames have to be approached on their own terms, and not be compared with other forms of conveying history. A historical videogame can give 'the "feel" of a period or location, the life, colour, *action*, and *processes*' (Chapman A. , 2012), factors that can be hard to mediate in a book.

In short, Chapman wants us to look at what we can learn from history by doing, and by experiencing. I use this when I analyse what historical facts AC2 can teach students through their actions in the game compared to reading ACR. Chapman also argues for videogames as historical form.

2.5 Videogames as historical form

It has been debated if videogames can be considered to be history. Chapman, arguing against Galloway, claims that games can be history because they contain 'normal markers of historical narrative' (Chapman A. , forthcoming 2013b). Galloway's critique of the turn-based, "4X"-type, strategy video game *Civilization* is that the gamer controls the actions. It is only algorithms. Chapman, on the other hand, claims that algorithms can be history and that *Civilization* is 'a fairly empirical-analytical history' (forthcoming 2013).

Chapman hereby establishes that games can show history, and that they give us a way to empirically explore history. Stuart (2010) and Rice (2013) claim that the game I have chosen to study is exceptionally well suited for learning about history by exploring.

2.6 Arguments for using AC to learn about history

The game AC has been suggested to offer education unique learning possibilities. For example Stuart (2010) argues that 'games are the perfect medium for historical fiction' and that Assassin's Creed in particular has the ability to put the gamers in historical cities 'with a sense of place and life that is almost unique in the video games sector'. He also points out that while other games in the genre only put the story in an interesting environment; AC also gives the gamers insights into the social economics of the time.

It is believed that AC2 can find its way into history courses, especially if some modifications are allowed. Rice (2013) cites *The Wall Street Journal's* report on the game, how detailed the architecture, the clothes, weapons, urban planning and more are. These details will give the students a relatively accurate world to explore and learn about.

On the topic of cognition and literacy Steinkuehler (2008) claims that 'video games are sites for socially and materially distributed cognition, complex problem solving, identity work, individual and collaborative learning across multiple multimedia and multimodal 'attentional spaces' and rich meaning making' (Steinkuehler, 2008). This is made possible due to the online groups that evolve around the games. Therefore videogames offer gamers to engage in discussions, in discourses, that the American schools fail to offer even though it is on demand from the global market.

These examples and arguments, together with an example of how a teacher has used the game, are included in my discussion on how AC2 can be used.

2.7 Using AC2 in history classes

Norwegian history teacher Magnus Henrik Sandberg has used AC2 for students to learn about the renaissance (Sandberg, 2012). The students used half a day to play the game, walking around in Florence, and to write articles in a Wiki about different aspects of the renaissance, such as architecture, courtesans or the medical profession during the era. The other half of the day the students were asked to discuss if games are good tools to learn about history and what part can professional historians play in game development. They could also form questions to the historians who worked with AC2. The feedback Sandberg got from his students were positive; 'Now I know school does not have to be boring', 'Playing is a historical experience!', 'It is easier to understand the époque in a game than in a book'.

Sandberg's example show how AC2 can be used within a reasonable time by waking the students interested and thereby motivate them to further explore the era.

3 THEORY AND METHOD

As stated in the previous sections, the study reported here has two historical accounts about renaissance Florence as its unit of analysis. I have made a hermeneutic content analysis of the game AC2 and the book ACR, looking at the historical facts they contain. In the game I study the information in the database as well as the story line and the actions the gamer can perform through the mechanics of the game. In the book I see what historical facts there are both in the story itself and additionally offered throughout the book. By doing this I make an account for what the gamer is offered to learn about history opposed to the reader. Furthermore I compare these facts with other

sources on the subject of the renaissance era to work out how much of the content is reliable, to see if the game and/or the book can be used in a history class.

My reason for choosing AC2, and not the first AC game, is that the original game does not contain a database with information like its sequel, and would therefore not make as good a subject to study, lacking the richness in information. It also happens that Bowden chose to write ACR first. It is not until his third book in the series, *Assassin's Creed the Secret Crusade*, that Bowden records the story of Altaïr, the main character in the first game.

There has been some research done where the accuracy of the historical facts in video games have been looked at. When looking at the video game *Brothers in Arms* Rejack (2007) found that the gamers had no way of knowing if the facts they were presented were accurate or not within the game. They had to either complete the assignments and thereafter be presented with information about what they had just finished playing, or go outside the game and look up the facts themselves. There were also the unrealistic possibility of healing the entire squad and regain lost members in order to make the game more enjoyable. In an overview of Asian games set in real world Asian countries and time periods Snow (2010) discusses the historical settings and the actual play mechanics of the games; looking at the background of the game, storyline, the design of the set and costumes as well as the music. The conclusion is that the games are very loose when it comes to historical accuracy.

When looking at the mechanics of the game I have used Sepulveda's (2010) structure and definitions. He has created a list, based on the games AC2 and *Red Dead Redemption*, with thirteen different markers for game mechanics. His aim is to try to understand what makes people spend so much time on video games and how the mechanics can be applied to other environments. The markers are; rewards , character improvement, story line, side quests, mini-games, in-game awards, game publisher awards related to the game, game publisher awards, console awards, add-ons, multiplayer mode, real-life mode and sequels. The markers I have found in AC2 are more closely described in chapter 4 together with a section on core gameplay.

3.1 Theoretical point of departure

In my theoretical point of departure I follow Chapman (2013a). Chapman points out that postmodernism see history as something that has been created by the historians: 'all historians, regardless of form, make a series of similar choices when they construct a history' (Chapman A. , 2013a, p. 15). They select what to write and what to keep out, they decide what is interesting within a certain context. What it all boils down to is that there is a difference in what we mean with the past and what we mean with history. A postmodern theory on history means that you view history as a narrative, always told by someone from a specific position.

In this study I follow this line of reasoning by looking at how history is made through the game of AC2. I show how the creators have chosen what to bring into the story, what to stretch, and what to keep out in order to make a game that is exciting and playable while still being based on certain facts.

3.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the critical analysis of texts. Originally hermeneutics was the study of biblical texts but in modern days it is used as an interpretive method in a number of disciplines, preferably on literary texts (Klomp Stevens & Stewart, 1996). I have chosen a hermeneutic standpoint since I

cannot theorise about what the gamer and reader actually learn, only what they are offered to learn. This method comes from the area of literature studies and even though it is not a method constructed for video games it has been used by other game researchers. Carr uses it as a tool 'that make[s] it possible to articulate the differences between game textuality and games structure' (2009, p. 6) when looking at the horror-survival game *Resident Evil 4*. She breaks a sequence of the game down into lexia and thereby explores the relationship between text and play. Sunnen (2000) makes a textual analysis of *Tomb Raider II* in his master's dissertation. There he has a record of different methods of studying videogames, all depending on the aim of the research, and gives examples of researchers using the methods. For example Provenzo who uses content analysis to give an account of how women are portrayed in video games. Sunnen's own aim is 'to produce a description of the nature of the social relations established in and through the computer game' *Tomb Raider II* (Sunnen, 2000, p. 31). He treats the game as a text while he looks at what is called the box, the introduction movie, the training level, and the first two levels of the game.

3.2.1 Doing hermeneutics on games

According to Arojanta (2011) doing hermeneutics on games mean that you have to take a special approach. In my work I follow this suggestion which means that I also take into account the Interactive nature of the history portrayed in the game through the actions the player can perform. Games, unlike film or literature, has a real-time hermeneutics where the analysis is done by performance. This means interpreting the text that unfolds through my gaming action.

However, it should also be stressed that a large part of the analysed game, especially when it comes to the parts portraying history, can be found in the database and in the cutscenes, thus making these parts rather easily studied with a classical hermeneutic approach, to interpret the parts in order to understand the whole. i.e I treat these parts as text following Gadamer (Kinsella, 2006).

3.3 Collecting data from the game

In order to get access to all the content of the game's database I had to play the whole game since the information is revealed one piece at a time. By doing this I also got to understand the mechanics of the game and was able to take screen shots and notes about which information the story line offered. An alternative, that would have saved me some time, would have been to get access to a game already played by another gamer and interview that person to get the basics of the mechanics and the story line but that would be a second hand source. Mortensen supports the method of doing research by playing the game; 'analysing a role-play game from the position of a spectator permits, at best, description of the event without understanding it. It becomes very difficult to know what the player's words and actions entail' (2002).

Not all of the information in the database is about places and people who have actually existed. I therefore choose to focus on the information that I can find facts about in other sources. A list with people who have been semi-fictionalized in the game series is the base for my research on historical characters (Assassin's Creed Wiki).

I systematically went through the database and gathered information on the topics of *Cities and Towns*, *The People*, *Architecture and Interior Design* and *Businesses and Occupations*. I intertwined the information from the database with those from the mechanics and the storyline. The topics are not taken directly from the database but the way I found most reasonable to arrange the data in, to

make it easy for the reader to comprehend. I focus on historical facts in order to explore the potential of using the game as a pedagogical tool to learn about the Renaissance.

3.4 Collecting data from the book

While reading the novel I underlined all the information that had to do with specific places, people or other facts that could have historical foundations. I then went through the book again and arranged the data under the topics of *The Core Story*, *Cities and Towns*, *People*, *Architecture and Interior Design*, *Occupations*, *Fashion* and *Miscellaneous*. As with the game I intertwined the facts with the data from the storyline of the book.

I tried to follow the topics of the data from the game as far as I could but *The Core Story*, *Fashion* and *Miscellaneous* had no direct counterparts in the game.

References to the pages in ACR are written out throughout the text in parentheses without any information about the author. I have chosen to do this to ease both the reading of the text and eventual further research.

3.5 Analysing the data

To establish the accountability of the data in AC2 and ACR I consult literature, texts that in general are considered to be more historical sources, on Renaissance art (SCALA Group S.p.A., 2010), Florentine history and architecture (Bietoletti, o.a., 2005), life during the Renaissance (Cohen & Cohen, 2001) (Burckhardt, 2002), the life of Caterina Sforza (Lev, 2011), the Templars (Bonnier Publications International AS, 2012) and the Assassins (Lewis, 2003) (Wasserman, 2001). I do not examine the accountability of all the data since it is not the primary aim of this essay to dissect what is true and what is not. It would also take a lot of time and many more sources to be so thorough. The areas I examine are chosen for their magnitude in the story, except for the literature on Caterina Sforza which I happened to come across in my search for literature on the life in Renaissance Italy, but which proved to be informative on several areas.

3.6 Summary

I make a hermeneutic analysis to see what gamer and reader are offered to learn from the game AC2 and the book ACR. The method has been used on other video games by Carr (2009), who uses the method to make distinctions between game textuality and game structure, and Sunnen (2000), who wants to produce a description of the nature of the social relations established in *Tomb Raider II*. They look at the games as texts to be able to organize and thereby be able to draw conclusions.

Rejack (2007) and Snow (2010) have done similar research when it comes to looking at how much of the game is based on actual facts and what results that may have. I have picked certain facts to look closer at, focusing on some main characters and life in during the Renaissance in Italy.

I have first played the whole game and then organized the facts from the story, the mechanics and the database. With the book I took a similar course; reading and underlining and then organizing the facts. Finally I compare some of the facts from the game and the book with other sources.

RESULTS

The following three chapters contain my results. Chapter 4 breaks down the mechanics and frame story of the game in relation to history. Here I follow Sepulveda's (2010) structure and definitions in order to create an organized text. The exception is the section about *Core gameplay*. The chapter explains the story line and the main task, the main objectives of the game, it describes the side quests, the in-game awards, it gives a description of the core gameplay, explains the game publisher awards, and it also describes the add-ons part in the story.

Chapter 5 is a recollection of the information given in the database, the gameworld and story of AC2. I here look closer at the information that can be proven to be more or less accurate by comparing them with other sources. The information had been organized into different categories with the structure of the database as a template.

In chapter 6 I do the same thing as in chapter 5 but here I look at history in Oliver Bowden's book *Assassin's Creed Renaissance*.

4 RESULTS – HISTORY IN RELATION TO MECHANICS AND FRAME STORY

4.1 Story Line and tasks

AC2 takes place in Italy during the Renaissance, from 1476 to 1503. The exception to this is the frame story which is about Desmond Miles from the 21st century who relives the genetic memories of ancestral, renaissance, nobleman Ezio Auditore through a machine called Animus 2.0. Ezio, who is controlled by the player and is together with his family a character created by Ubisoft, sees his father and brothers hung after they have been betrayed by a friend of the family. Behind the betrayal are the Templars, also known as the Order of the Knights Templar, a monastic military order. They want to create the perfect world, where they would have control over the freedom of individuals. Ezio's father was a member of the Assassin's Order, the sworn enemy of the Templars. Ezio decides to avenge the deaths and in the process he becomes a skilled assassin, guided along the way by other members of the Assassin's Order, his uncle Mario being one of them. Throughout the story Ezio unfolds the plot behind the betrayal of his family and thereby also the plans of the Templars to gain more power. The plans include two artefacts, a golden apple and a staff, that are believed to have exceptional powers and make the person who has both artefacts invincible.

Ezio, and thereby the player, is given different tasks to get to the next part of the story. The story is divided into 14 sequences, which in their turn is divided into several tasks, several of them being assassination missions. For each task that is finished, Ezio receives a sum of money, the amount depending on the difficulty of the task, and is given access to the next part of the story.

There are no experience points in the game to make the character evolve. Instead, the improvement of the character is interwoven with the plot. Throughout the game Ezio evolve as an assassin, gaining new equipment and learning new tricks as part of the tasks in order to get to the next part of the story.

The tasks in the beginning are there to guide the gamer into the mechanics of the game but as soon as his family members have been hung the "real" tasks take centre stage. Ezio has to find out information about the traitors and one by one assassinate them until he stands in front of the leader Pope Alexander VI, aka Rodrigo Borgia, aka the Spaniard.

4.2 Side quests

The side quests are optional tasks which are not required in order to finish the game.

The game is open world which means that the player can move around rather freely on the map. There are “off limits areas” which Ezio gains access to one by one. In this way the player is very restricted in the beginning as to where he or she can go but it also means that the player can explore that part of the city and become comfortable with the mechanics.

Apart from the main story line there are several side tasks that the player can accept, like beating up the husband who has cheated on his wife, or accept a challenge to see who is the quickest runner. There are also contracts on killing people and delivering messages. The rewards for these tasks are money within the game that Ezio can use to buy equipment or pay for travels by caravan or ferry.

Pigeons are used to send messages and these can be found in cages on roofs. Ezio can accept missions from Lorenzo de Medici through these doves and in return he receives money.



Figure 1 Cage with pigeons

By buying maps in the artist's shop the gamer can locate treasure chests hidden in various parts of the cities and towns. The chests contain money and can be found on balconies, in gardens, on city walls etcetera and are not very well hidden.



Figure 2 Buying map pointing out treasure

On some of the historical buildings there are hidden glyphs. These glyphs are part of the frame story and were put in the memories by another memory traveller. When found the player is given puzzles to solve in form of paintings that either have an apple hidden somewhere, have something in

common, or are disarranged. For each glyph puzzle solved the player is given a short video clip and together the clips reveal *The truth*, showing that the apple Adam and Eve really got their hands on was one of the artefacts that both the Templars and the Assassins are looking for.



Figure 3 Glyph on wall



Figure 4 He carries it with him. Find his inheritance

4.3 In-game awards

The in-game awards are not necessary for the completion of the story, but help the character improve his skills and equipment.

Ezio can look for six seals which together will unlock the reward of Altair's equipment. Altair is the character in the first Assassin's Creed. The seals are hidden in tombs of dead assassins and can be rather challenging to get to.



Figure 5 Altair's equipment

In the town of Monteriggioni there are eight statues of roman gods spread throughout the town. When collected, and put on their pedestal in the garden of the Villa Auditore, Ezio finds money hidden in the pedestal.



Figure 6 Roman statues



Figure 7 Statues revealing treasure

Collecting feathers and buying armour, weapons and paintings increases the value of the town of Monteriggioni, as does repairing buildings and opening up certain facilities of the town. In return the player can collect money from a box in the Villa. Buying armour and weapons increases the player's protection against attacks and enhances his damage to his enemies. These improvements make the completion of the tasks easier.

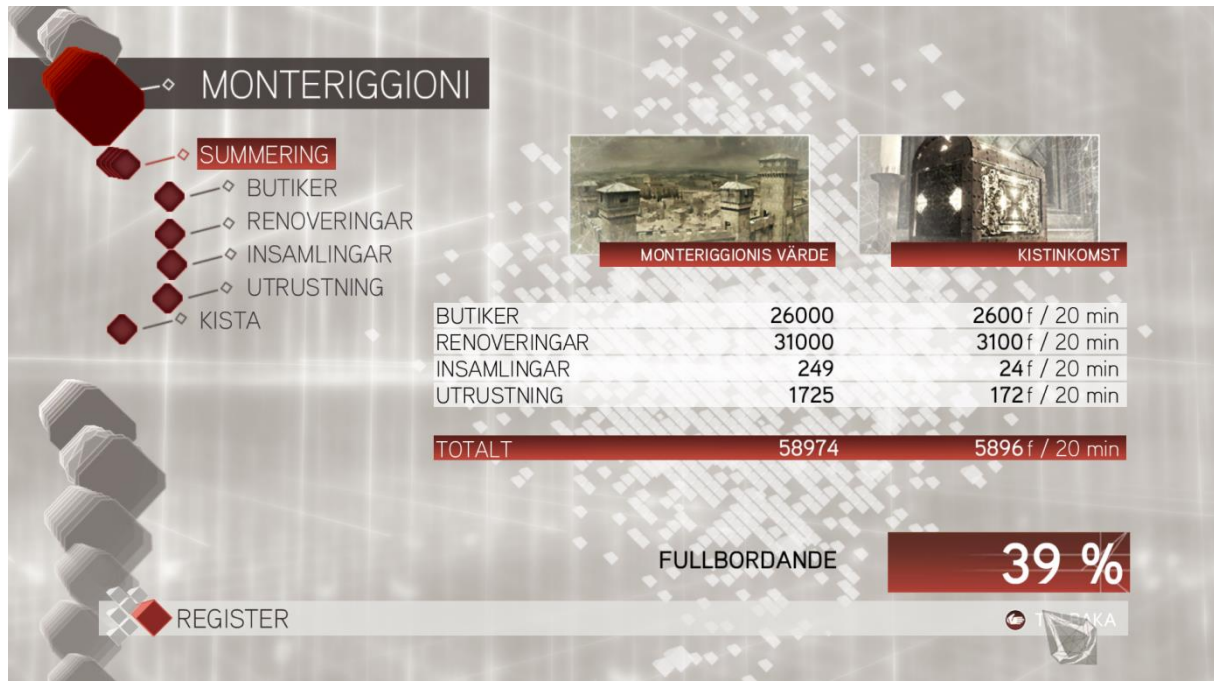


Figure 8 Improving the value of Monteriggioni

4.4 Core gameplay

The game is played from a third person view, i.e. the player sees the back of the protagonist moving in the world. The game is in the so called sandbox genre, meaning that the player is free to explore a somewhat open game world. In this world the player can walk to specific nodes that are story missions i.e. makes the main plot continue. Basically the player is doing things, traversing, stealthing/hiding and fighting.

4.4.1 Traversing

One core game mechanic in AC2 is to move from place to place, this is done either by walking, running, climbing, jumping, steering a gondola or riding a horse. There is also the possibility to go by ferry or a caravan, but the gamer does not control them. Here, Ezio's ability to climb over rooftops stands out as a basic property of the game. The player can steer Ezio's movement and decide which means of transportation to use but some missions demand quick actions and forces the player to run, climb, jump or ride within a certain given time and/or route. There is also the challenge to avoid being noticed by guards, forcing the player to take another route and/or travel by stealth. Sometimes traversing in the game world is in the form of a chase, either Ezio chasing somebody or being chased himself. The chase ends when Ezio either captures or loses the escapee or when he is captured by or loses his antagonists.

The climbing on buildings and running on the roof tops gets harder the further the gamer comes into the game. It shows that it was not the normal way to get around. The only other characters that move around the same ways are thieves, people running from Ezio, and guards.

4.4.2 Stealthing/Hiding

Unlike what many thought about the game upon release, AC2 is not much about sneaking even though there is some gameplay that is about avoiding detection and blending in. Stealth is accomplished by blending in with either a crowd of random people or hired courtesans. It is used to avoid detection by guards in order to be able to sneak up on a victim or get access to an artefact necessary for finishing the task. Other ways to avoid detection is to sit down on a bench, jump into a bale of hay or hide in a small hut on the roof tops and wait for guards to pass by. Hiding in bales of hay and small huts can also make the guards lose you in a chase, as will hiding in the water under a bridge.

4.4.3 Fighting

Ezio is a well adapted fighter that can take out a dozen of enemies in one fight. Fighting in AC2 is very much about timing attacks. While some mindless button mashing leads to long grinds of taking out the enemies hit points, properly executed moves can take out an enemy with one attack. In general fighting happens when Ezio is caught. Even though many enemies attack they tend to take turns, making it possible for the player to survive.

Ezio, and thereby the player, learns how to execute the different techniques throughout the game. At his disposal he has different types of weapons; fists, metal cestus, hidden blade, hidden gun, poison blade, swords and maces, heavy weapons, spears and halberds, short blade, throwing knives, smoke bombs and improvised weapons such as hoes, rakes, brooms etcetera.

4.4 Game publisher awards

Game publisher awards are, in Ubisoft's case, points received when certain tasks have been finished in the game. The points can be used to receive equipment, or to get access to a maze beneath the Villa in the game. They could also be used to buy merchandise outside the game, such as Ubisoft related wallpaper for the monitor, or equipment and rewards for other Ubisoft games.

4.5 Add-ons

In the original game there are only 12 sequences. Two additional sequences could be bought and added to the game; these take place before the twelfth sequence and thus become number 12 and 13, to make the experience longer. They are not indispensable for the storyline but in later versions of the game they are included from the beginning and therefore unavoidable. The story in the add-on, however, is a part of what really happened in Florence at this point in history and subsequently gives the player another lesson in history.

4.6 Summary

The mechanics of the game are important for the storyline. They guide the player in the beginning of the game and help Ezio to get to the next part of the story. The side quests and in-game rewards enhance the possibilities to improve the character and his equipment along the way, as do the game publisher awards. The later ones give the player extra bonuses for playing the game, the more you play the more you receive. The add-on is a way to elongate the playing experience and to gain more

information about what happened. Seen as historical accounts however, my analysis point out that entertainment value here has overridden any attempts to be historical correct.

As shown later, the story about the Templars and the Assassins are exaggerated to create an interesting game. It is also very similar to other conspiracy theories in popular culture, such as the fiction of Dan Brown. The storyline, together with tasks and mechanics, show a violent era where murderers can be hired just as easily as buying a loaf of bread. People are often out for revenge and want a person either killed or beaten up. Treasure chests can be found basically anywhere, there are even maps that can be bought to show their location. Pigeons come with messages and finds the receiver wherever he may be, and they never end up in the wrong hands.

The town of Monteriggioni show how parts of the economy worked during the renaissance. The value, and appeal, of a town increases with the number of paintings owned, how much weaponry and armoury the protector of the town owns, and what kind of establishments there are access to, and what condition they are in.

In conclusion, the mechanics and the story line is a mix of facts and exaggerations to create an interesting and exciting game that should not be too difficult to finish.

5 RESULTS - HISTORY IN THE DATABES, GAMEWORLD AND STORY OF ASSASSIN'S CREED II

When the player encounters a famous landmark or person of interest these are added to the database which could be accessed at any given time. The database can give additional information about the actual, historical, buildings and people. The facts are, however, meant for the character Desmond and all of it is not historically correct. The information is not required in order to finish the game but could give helpful hints to the player.

5.1 Cities and towns

The game plot takes you to the city states of Florence, Forli, San Gimignano and Venice. The walled town of Monteriggioni, in the Tuscany area, also has a central part in the story. The final scenes take place in Rome but there is no option of exploring the city.

5.1.1 Florence

The first city the gamer encounters is Florence. It is a large, inland, city with many grand and beautiful buildings. A river runs through the city, and there is a city wall around it with several guarded gates.



Figure 9 Florence with six city gates and Leonardo da Vinci's studio

There are a lot of different kinds of people moving around, such as guards, soldiers, people carrying crates, priests/monks, courtesans and rich men and women. There are, however, no children and no animals. In the outskirts of the city there are fewer buildings, small sheds, trees, green meadows or pens, and less people moving around than in the more central parts. This is the area of the more common people.



Figure 10 Outskirts of Florence



Figure 11 People in the outskirts of city.



Figure 12 People in the center of the city



Figure 13 View of Florence with Santa Maria del Fiore.

The information in the database gives a record of the history of the city, its rulers, number of inhabitants and their occupations. The city was founded in 59 B.C. by Julius Caesar and it quickly became a center for commerce. The AboutFlorence.com page (2013) support these facts but it also shows a more complex picture with many more details with an earlier settlement and the city's location being a key factor, and also compares the cities importance with others of the time.

In the 5th century the Ostrogoth took over the city but they were under constant attacks from the Byzantines and the population was cut down to less than 1000 people. In the 6th century the Lombardians came into power and the attacks ceased. Here the database leaves a huge gap in history, cutting out information about the Carolingian period, the early middle ages, the period of the "Communes" (About Florence, 2013) and the thirteenth century. Instead it tells how the population grew in the 14th century to 80 000 inhabitants. Cohen and Cohen (2001) disputes this number and claims that the number never came higher than 60 000 during the time of the Medici, whereas Bietoletti et. al. (2005) says the city had 100 000 inhabitants in 1342 but halved when the Black Death came in 1348. 25 000 out of the 80 000, according to the database, worked with wool and in 1378 they revolted and took over power for a couple of months before the nobility took it back. When read about on AboutFlorence.com (2013) this episode seems extremely exaggerated by the creators of the database. Bietoletti et. al. only mentions the incident in passing and puts no larger weight to it. In reality the shift in power was much more peaceful and less important than the database would like the reader to believe.

The database continues to give a recollection of parts of the city's history. The Albizzi family came to rule but felt threatened by the Medici family who had become wealthy and influential through banking. Cosimo Medici became the ruler of Florence after some disputes with the Albizzi and Florence flourished during the ruling of the Medici family. They built magnificent, public, buildings and supported enlightened people like Michelangelo, Leonardo and Botticelli. Florence became the center of the Renaissance. AboutFlorence.com claims that it was when the artist Brunelleschi

finished the Duomo that the Renaissance, “Europe’s richest cultural period”, began. On the subject of the Medici and art, it confirms that the Medici family had a “great influence on the architecture and arts”, building “an abundance of palaces all over the city” thus confirming the facts in the database. Jones (2011) further supports the database when he calls the family one of the “most renowned art patrons in history”, “the greatest bankers of their age” and “among the architects of the modern economy”. There can be no doubt about the family’s importance for the city, or the city’s importance for the renaissance.

The database also gives information about the four different districts of the city. San Giovanni, the oldest area, is named after the patron saint John the Baptist and holds buildings like Palazzo della Signoria and Santa Maria del Fiore. The district of San Marco was developed in the end of the 14th century. Its most important landmarks are the Santa Croce church and Palazzo Medici. Santa Maria Novella is named after its church, the first large Basilika of Florence, and has a fine market, Mercato Vecchio. The fourth district is the Oltrarno district and is situated on the other side of the river Arno in comparison to the first three districts. It is one of the oldest areas and it is the home of several craftsmen. The cloister and church Santo Spirito, and the Pitti Palazzo, are two landmarks in the area. The database explains how the Medici later in history bought the Pitti Palace and connected it through secret passages with Palazzo della Signoria and the Uffizi. The online magazine The Luxury Traveler (2013) describes the passage between the Pitti Palazzo and the Uffizi, also known as the Vasari Corridor, and gives a summary of its history. The creators have again chosen to stress the spectacular and tickle the imagination of the reader.

5.1.2 Monteriggioni

Ezio, together with his mother and sister, escape Florence and head for the family Villa in the town of Monteriggioni. The gamer can see that the town has a wall around it for protection and that its larger and more distinctive buildings are Villa Auditore and the church. Ezio’s uncle Mario is the protector of the town and informs the gamer about the feuds with other cities such as Florence. The town is rather worn down and in need of restorations. There are not much people moving around and only a doctor and a blacksmith whom to buy goods from. Throughout the game the gamer can make restorations and open up new shops and facilities, such as the courtesans’ house, the thieves’ guild, the mine, the church and the art shop. All these improvements make more people move around and the value of the town increases.



Figure 14 Miniature of Monteriggioni

Through the database the player can learn that the lords of Siena built Monteriggioni during the 13th century, and the city had a part in defending Tuscany against attacks from Florence. It also says that the Auditore family, who built the walls around the town, was its rulers and protectors. In 1554 Monteriggioni was betrayed by Giovanni Zeti who was offered to return to Florence if he handed over the key of the town to the Florentines. The information on [Monteriggioni.info](#) (2013) and [Tuscany Tours](#) (2013) agree with the database, except from the part about the Auditore family's involvement. It was built in the beginning of the thirteenth century by the Siennese as a military garrison and the wall was added, also by them, later the same century. They also confirms Zeti's involvement in Florence overtaking the town.

As previously mentioned, the Auditore family are made up and there is no Villa mentioned on the websites with information about Monteriggioni ([Monteriggioni](#), 2013) ([Tuscany Tours](#), 2013). The database mixes facts with fiction and there is, as in the case of [Rejack's](#) (2007) research on *Brothers in Arms*, no way within the game to see which is which.

5.1.3 San Gimignano

San Gimignano is a city which does not have as large area as Florence or Venice to explore by the gamer but it has an impressive number of towers which can be climbed by Ezio.

San Gimignano was, according to the database, founded in the 3rd century and was named after Saint Geminiano. The city started to expand in the nine hundreds due to its location along the road to Rome, the goal for many pilgrims. The city was under the rule of the bishops of Volterra until 1199 when the city declared itself free from other rulers. The many towers of the city is a result of rich families competing against each other to show who was the richest. At the most the city had 72 towers, but during a plague the number of inhabitants decreased and the city started to fall into ruins. Florence took control over the city after being inquired to do so by the city Council. The [San Gimignano website](#) ([San Gimignano](#), 2013) gives a different account of the town's history. It claims

that the foundation dates back to ancient times with the first relevant settlements taking place in the Etruscan period. During the Roman era people preferred to settle in the valley by the river, rather on top of the hill. Apart from that the recollection in the database is coherent with the website's information.

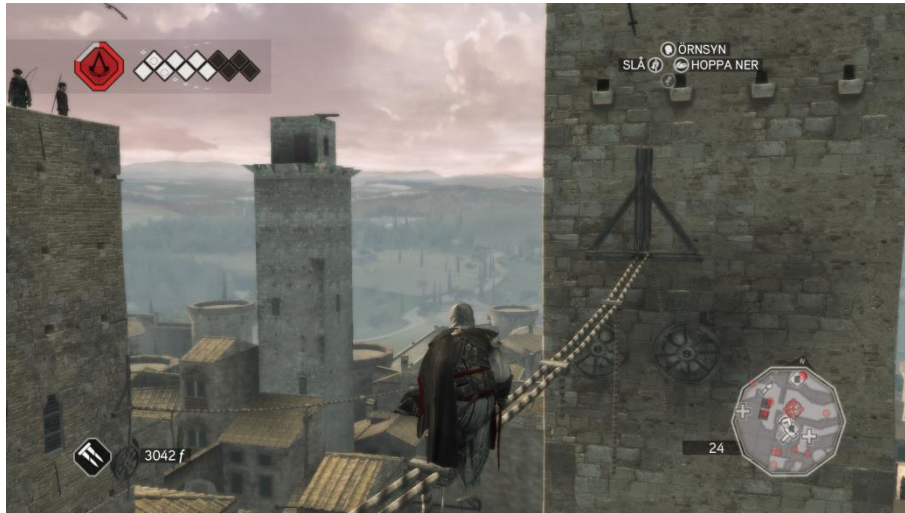


Figure 15 San Gimignano with towers

Outside the city walls of San Gimignano are the ruins of a Roman theater which the gamer is taken to during one of the missions. I have not been able to find any proof of there being any ruins outside of San Gimignano but there are some in Volterra, a city with Etruscan and Roman origin, which is situated about 10 miles south west there off (Evans, 2013). There was also more development in Volterra than in San Gimignano during the Roman era (San Gimignano, 2013), which strengthens my theory that the game developers have moved the ruins to better suit the game's story line.

5.1.4 Forli

Forli, the gamer sees, is a city by a river which means there is the possibility to transport goods and people by ships. It is a much smaller city than Florence, San Gimignano and Venice but larger than Monteriggioni. The impression the player gets is that it is an older and more worn down city than Florence. The land is marshy but there is quite a lot of people moving around which indicates that it is a city of importance.

According to the database the city dates back to around 800 000 B.C. when Palaeolithic cavemen founded the city because of the access to flint stone and has been an industrial centre ever since. The information on Wikipedia (2013) confirms that there has been people living in the area since 800 000 B.C. and there are rich findings of chipped flint. To claim that a city was founded back then is to stretch the truth.

The database continues with further information about the city. The name comes from its roman name, Forum Livii. After the romans, the Lombardians and later the church came to rule Forli. The city became independent in 889 and the Vatican spent 400 years trying to get it back. Apart from being flooded every year the city also had to endure attacks and pillaging by Goths, Byzantines, Lombardians and Franks. The problem with the flooding was solved in 1050 when the rivers were diverted away from the city. The city became a military totalitarian state and later ruled by the Ordelaffi family. In 1480 the pope put his nephew Girolamo Riario to rule the city but he was

murdered and his wife Caterina Sforza took over. She fought to protect the city against the Vatican but was defeated and the church once more took control over the city. This is an accurate account of what happened, even though it is a rough summary of all that happened. The University of Bologna (Università Di Bologna, 2013) gives a more detailed recollection of the events from the Romans founding the city up till present date.



Figure 16 Forli City Walls.



Figure 17 Marshy area around Forli.

5.1.5 Venice

Venice is probably the city that players will recognise the most from movies with its distinctive buildings, canals and gondolas. Ezio and Leonardo are given a tour by Alvise Da Vilando, another made up character. He shows them the Rialto Bridge, Santo Stafano and the Ducale palace which is inhabited by the Doge who runs the city in a totalitarian way. The common people and merchants of the city are upset and want to overthrow the leader.

The information database states that the Byzantines probably founded the city during the 7th century. They were trying to defend themselves from a Lombardian invasion. By the middle ages the city had grown into a strong naval force. All the merchandise that came by sea had to pass Venice and pay toll in order to enter the country. Venice came to hold great influence both on other city states and on the church. In 1202 the crusaders wanted to travel with Venetian ships and the doge, Enrico Dandolo, consented. In return, the crusaders had to retake the city of Zadar and conquer Constantinople. The Venetian fleet pillaged Constantinople, and stole four bronze horses to decorate St Mark's Basilica. Venice was probably the richest city on earth at the end of the 15th century, and, after Paris, the largest city in Europe. It had a large navy fleet to defend them. France, Spain, Austria and Hungary formed an alliance with Pope Julius II to crush Venice but the city managed to survive, and keep most of its land areas. Venice had been busy defending itself against France when the Turks attacked them and crushed their navy, which they never managed to rebuild. Its expansion ended when, in the 18th century, it was attacked by Turkey and in 1797 Austria managed to take control of the city. The origin of the city is described differently on a website about Venice (Venezia.ws, 2006). There it is claimed that, according to tradition, the city was founded as early as 421 AD, two hundred years earlier than the database's claim. It also says that Venice was spared from much of the turbulence that took part in the rest of Roman-Catholic Italy at the time. They looked eastward for trade and took part in the crusades because they saw it as a business opportunity. The site also verifies the taking of two bronze horses that were brought to Venice to decorate St Mark. Another site, Lonely Planet (2013), agrees more with the database, confirming ties with the Byzantine Empire but not that it was the founder of the city. The Crusades and the pillaging are confirmed as well as the Turks taking over large areas from the Venetians and the Austrian takeover in 1797. They also mention that it was Napoleon that first arrived that year and that the city went back and forth between France and Austria as a trophy of war. This, the database neglects to mention.

Further information in the database is that there are five districts in Venice; San Marco, San Polo, Cannaregio, Castello and Dorsoduro. San Marco is the administrative heart of Venice. The palace of the Doge and the cathedral of St Marc are its most famous landmarks. San Polo contains the Rialto Bridge and the oldest church in Venice, San Giacomo, which originates from the 5th century. It is also the area where the merchants go to sell their goods. Here is a contradiction within the database itself. It states that the city was founded in the 7th century but the oldest church originates as far back as the 5th century. The information about the markets in San Polo can also be found on the website Loving Venice (Loving Apartments Limited, 2013) along with the Rialto Bridge.



Figure 18 The Rialto Bridge in Venice.

Cannaregio is a worker's district that in 1516 became a Jewish ghetto. It was surrounded and guarded to keep the Jews isolated from the rest of the city. Landmarks in the area are the churches San Giobbe and Madonna dell'Orto. Castello is the largest district and it grew up around the Arsenal. San Zaccaria is the church of the district. Loving Venice (Loving Apartments Limited, 2013) confirms the information about the Jewish ghetto but gives further information than the database, about its dissolution when Napoleon took over the city.

Dorsoduro is the centre of festivals and is favoured by artists. Gondolas are built at Squaro di Trovaso and the district church is Santa Maria della visitazione. The carnivals started in 1296. They were a holiday before the fast and came to consist of masked balls, theatre, parades, street performers, flirting and different kinds of spectacles. In the game Ezio takes part in a competition in order to win a golden mask which will get him into the area where one of his targets will be. According to Loving Venice (Loving Apartments Limited, 2013) the area is still the place where the gondolas are repaired but it says nothing about the carnivals. Tieuli (Tieuli, 2013) describes the origin of the carnivals and dates them further back than the database, to 1092 or 1162, but they are tied to the Christian tradition of Lent.



Figure 19 Carnival in Venice

5.1.6 Rome

When the player reaches Rome he, or she, is on the final sequence of the game. The mission is to enter the Vatican and assassinate the pope, Rodrigo Borgia. The player cannot move freely around the city like he is used to and does therefore not see, or learn, much. There are only three places in the database; Castel Sant' Angelo, St Peter's Basilica and the Sistine chapel.



Figure 20 View of Rome.

5.2 THE PEOPLE

During the game the player is introduced to several characters that have real life, historical, counterparts. Some, however, are more fictional than real and there are several sites on the Internet that discuss how much is or is not actual fact (see Appendix 2). There is one wiki that lists historical

characters that have been semi-fictionalized in the Assassin's Creed game-series (Assassin's Creed Wiki). Here follows a record of the allies and the enemies.

5.2.1 Friends and Allies

The database's data on Ezio, and his family, are written in such a way that it is easily believed that they have existed. The diary of Ezio's mother, for instance, is claimed to have its place in the Uffizi Museum in modern day Florence.

Leonardo da Vinci is an artist who tells Ezio that he wants to do more than just paint. He wants to explore the human body, be an architect, an inventor, a scientist and a designer. He wants to change art. In the game he has bodies delivered from the hospital so that he can find out how the human body works. He has also designed a contraption which Ezio flies in one of his missions. The database tells about his origin and his education with the artist Verrocchio. It mentions two of his greatest works; "The last Supper" and "The Mona Lisa". Leonardo comes across as a man who is very curious about life and the database confirms this. It also says that he wrote down his observations in mirrored handwriting. His sketches show a helicopter, a tank, solar energy and a calculator. Leonardo's employers were not always happy with him since he often postponed things and they took longer than promised or were never finished. The love life of the artist was complicated since he was probably a homosexual and he was in 1476 accused of buggery. His assistant Salami was probably his lover and was used as a model for several paintings. Leonardo died in 1519 and in his testament he gave the painting of Mona Lisa to Salai. Bietoletti et. al. (2005) mentions Leonardo as one of several important artists of the time that studied with Verrocchio, while SCALA clearly states that he was an apprentice of the master (SCALA Group S.p.A., 2010). Jones (2011) writes about how Leonardo "surrounded himself with beautiful young men" and that he was accused of Sodom twice when he was young. He also confirms that Salai received "The Mona Lisa" after Leonardo's death.



Figure 21 A young Leonardo da Vinci.

The members of the Medici family who the player meets in the game are the brothers Lorenzo and Guiliano. The database says that their grandfather, Cosimo, had founded the Medici bank which became one of Europe's most powerful financial institutions. The Medici family became very rich and powerful. In 1469, when he was twenty years old, Lorenzo became the head of the family and took

over the power in the Florentine government, the Signora. He did so through the help of friends, bribery, marriage and threats. According to the database Lorenzo was the ruler of Florence when the city was at its peak but Bietoletti et. al. claims that 'the city was at its zenith' as early as in 1342 (Bietoletti, o.a., 2005) .

Lorenzo was a patron of art and culture. The database claims that it is an interest he owes his mother for since she introduced him to promising artists and poets. Works of artists like Botticelli and Michelangelo were created during this period. When Lorenzo died in 1492 most of the family money had been wasted and the Medici Empire had declined.

In the game Ezio attends the unveiling of Andrea del Verrocchio's statue of David, commissioned by Lorenzo. This takes place in 1476 but the statue was probably finished about ten years earlier (SCALA Group S.p.A., 2010)



Figure 22 Lorenzo de Medici

Further information about the Medici family in the database is about Lorenzo's brother Guiliano and his son Giulio. His brother Guiliano, who was assassinated during the Pazzi conspiracy, is said to have been famous for his playboy lifestyle with tournaments and several bastards. Guiliano had a son, Giulio, with his mistress, a daughter of a merchant. He was declared legitimate by the pop because it was claimed that Guiliano and his mistress had been betrothed. Giulio became pope Clement VII and he escaped the sacking of Rome in 1527 by dressing as a simple merchant. The database points out the irony in the fact that the grandson of a simple merchant became pope and escaped dressing as his grandfather would have done. Burckhardt (2002) confirms that the whole Medici family shared the passion of tournaments. Thurston (2013) describes the life of Pope Clement VII, from his birth a few months after his father had been murdered, through his time as a pope up until his death in 1534. He does, however, not mention the escape from Rome, only his confinement in St. Angelo. The creators could of course have access to a much more detailed description of what happened during the sacking.

The murder of the Medici brothers take place outside the cathedral in the game but in reality, according to Lev (2011), it took place inside the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore. Otherwise Lev's description and the game's picture of how Guiliano is murdered and how Lorenzo is only injured at the neck are rather similar. The reason to the movement from inside the cathedral to the outside by the game developers could be to simplify the gameplay. A fight inside the Cathedral would take place in a much more crowded area, and therefore much more difficult for the creators to produce an

enjoyable gaming sequence. Outside the gamer has more room to move around and for the guards to take turns attacking Ezio and Lorenzo.

Caterina Sforza is, according to both database and game, a headstrong woman who has had her husband killed by the Orsi brothers and now she rules the town of Forli on her own. The game shows her as a mature woman, somebody who is quick with the insults and who is not afraid to speak her mind. The database tells of her background at the court in Milan as a daughter to a duke who taught her the art of war. She had several interests. Engaged and married to Girolamo Riario, the nephew of the pope, at an early age she became part of an influential family. She was outgoing and a force to be reckoned with, as shown when she defended the Vatican seven months pregnant. The family moved to Forli in 1484 and Caterina became its ruler, as well as of Imola, after Girolamo was murdered. She worked hard and cooperated with surrounding villages. She was a proponent of peace but was merciless to those who did her unjust. In 1499 Forli fell to the Borgia family and Caterina was taken prisoner. Rodrigo Borgia held her captive for a year, probably raping her, and when she was released her hair was white. She died of pneumonia, in Florence in 1509. The database's recollection of Caterina's life conforms with that of Lev (2011) in most part. A difference is that it was Cesare, Rodrigo's son, who did the raping.

Ezio's first encounter with Caterina is when he is on his way to Venice together with Leonardo da Vinci. He helps her get from a small island to the shore and is rewarded with a pass that will get him to Venice. The second time is when he arrives to Forli, several years later, together with Niccolò Machiavelli right after Girolamo's assassination. The Orsi brothers Ludovico and Checco manage to capture two of Caterina's children and threaten to kill them unless she hands over a certain map. Caterina, standing on the edge on one of the ramparts, tells the brothers that they can kill her children, lifts up her skirts to show her private parts, and says that she has the means to create more. Lev (2011) describes what really happened and parts of this have historical accountability. The Orsi brothers did hold Caterina's children, sister and mother captive and threatened to kill them if they did not get access to the fortress. The sources, contemporary historical documents, that tell about Caterina's actions and response to this vary. Some say that she never even came out to respond to the threat and only one claim that she acted as shown in the game (Lev, 2011). The creators of the game have chosen one of the versions to be portrayed in their gamer, one that is rather spectacular, and disregarded the others. They cannot show all versions; they have to choose only one. It is up to the player to search for the truth.

Niccolò Machiavelli only plays a small part in the game where he is a member of the Assassin's Order but he was according to the database a philosopher, an author and a politician. His main area was realism and he thought that all people are evil and that they always act in their own interest if they get the chance. As a diplomat he was sent between the courts of France, Spain and Rome. He held the responsibility of the Florentine militia and the city's defences. He stayed on as one of the rulers even after the Medicis had left the city. When they came back into power they accused him of conspiring against them and tortured him. In Santa Andrea he wrote his most famous books; *The Prince*, *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius* and *History of Florence*. Machiavelli died in 1527. Lev's book (2011) supports the database's information about Machiavelli being a diplomat and being responsible for the militia and defense of Florence.



Figure 23 Niccolo Machiavelli

Agostino Barbarigo plays another small part in the story. The database says he was Doge of Venice from 1486 to 1501. Charles VIII of France was driven out of Italy during his reign and the Turks declared war against Venice in 1499. The later had disastrous consequences for the Venetian navy which was annihilated. The Turks then took siege of important cities along the route to the Orient. This information is the same as the one on Wikipedia (2013) but Cocke (2004) confirms Agostino's time as a doge.

Bartolomeo D'alviano is a condotieri who fights alongside Ezio in Venice. The information the database gives is that he fought with the Orsini Family against Pope Alexander VI, formerly known as Rodrigo Borgia. He was later hired by the king of Spain, Ferdinand II, to help the Spanish army defeat the French and to reconquer Naples. At first he was very successful but he lost a battle against the French in 1509 and was taken prisoner. Venice was disappointed and refused to assist Bartolomeo. When he was released from prison in 1513 he fought for the French against Switzerland. After returning to Venice he died during the siege of Brescia. Wikipedia (2013) is the only non-Italian source that gives information about Bartolomeo, and that is not about the character in the game, and it agrees with the information in the database.



Figure 24 Bartolomeo D'alviano with Ezio.

5.2.2 Enemies

The database names the following people as enemies of Ezio.

The Pazzis was a noble banking family in the Tuscany district. They were part of the Pazzi conspiracy to murder the Medici brothers. Other Pazzi conspirators were Bernardo Baroncelli, a banker, Stefano Bagnone, a priest, Antonio Maffei, a priest who had seen his home city Volterra sacked, and Francesco Salviati, the archbishop of Pisa. Behind the conspiracy, in the game, are the Templars with Rodrigo Borgia as their leader. Apart from the Templars' and Borgia's part in the assassination, Lev's (2011) account of who the conspirators were agree with the database.



Figure 25 The Pazzi conspirators.

Further information on the enemies given in the database is about Rodrigo Borgia. He was of Spanish descent and changed his name to Alexander VI when he became pope. He had several illegitimate children of which Lucrezia and Ceasare are mentioned. The database furthermore describes Borgia as a ruthless man who killed everyone who got into his path. The Borgia family have interested several writers and in 2011 two television series were aired; *Borgia* (IMDB, 2013) and *The Borgias* (IMDB, 2013). The first shows a power hungry family that is ready to do anything for the good of the family. The Swedish title to one of Hibbert's (2008) books translates as "The Borgias – The Tale of an Evil Family". He calls the Borgias warlords, poisoners and the most evil family in history. Rodrigo was most often not holding the knife himself, but his son Ceasare did a lot of the dirty work.

Girolamo Savonarola was a Dominican friar in Florence. Savonarola wanted to reform the church and ruled in Florence after Lorenzo de Medici had died. In the game he is depicted as a religious fanatic who brings Florence back into the dark ages. Unlike the other enemies, Savonarola is not a Templar member and the Pope, Alexander VI, tries to stop him. The people of Florence finally have enough and burn him on a stake. Ezio feels pity for him and shots him before the flames takes him completely. Buckhardt (2002) gives a similar picture of Savonarola, that of a mad fanatic who runs the city with the help of terror. Lev (2011) and Cohen and Cohen (2001) give less dramatic account of the Franciscan preacher who wanted to reform the church. He is well spoken, an excellent orator and a counselor of Caterina Sforza. All and all the database does not give much information about Savonarola, a man several authors have written books about (amazon.com), the game itself tells more.

Checco and Ludovico Orsi took part in the assassination of Girolamo Riario, ruler of Forli and husband of Caterina Sforza. According to Lev (2011) they not only took part but were the instigators as well as the executioners. They had not been hired by anyone, they were simply fed up with Riario's way of ruling.

Marco Barbarigo was a doge of Venice, just like his brother Agostino. Wikipedia's information on him is just as sparse as the database's but it confirms that Agostino and Marco were brothers and doges of Venice (Wikipedia, 2013).

5.3 ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN

The cities have many special buildings and landmarks, such as churches, cathedrals, towers, palaces, citadels, abbeys and bridges. Apart from seeing the buildings the player can also learn more about them in the database. There is information about who built them, why they were built and when they were built. There is often also information about the style they were built in.

Here are a couple of examples of what kind of information about Florentine buildings that can be found in the database. In appendix 1 is a record of which buildings are included in the database.

Ponte Vecchio, a large bridge crossing the river Arno, is said to have been built by the romans but is first mentioned in writing in 996. The current bridge was built in 1345 after the second bridge was washed away. The bridge is equipped with towers to defend the bridge and it has three segmented arches. It was common to have shops built along the sides of bridges during the renaissance and Ponte Vecchio is no exception. The shops were originally occupied by butchers, but have later become the place for jewellers and souvenir shops. Apart from a picture of the bridge Bietoletti et. al. (2005) only mention the flood and the bridge in passing.



Figure 26 Ponte Vecchio

Santa Maria del Fiore, one of Italy's largest churches, is considered to be the first masterpiece of renaissance architecture. The drawings were made in 1296 by Arnolfo di Cambio but it was not built until the beginning of the 15th century. The structure came with some interesting challenges since it was forbidden to have supportive pillars. Filippo Brunelleschi won the contest of the cathedral's commission and he constructed machines that would transport building blocks to the workers so that it could be built without scaffolding. The dome consists of over four million building blocks and was

finished in 1436. On the subject of the Duomo Bietoletti et al. (2005) are very thorough on describing the different aspects of the cathedral, both architecture and decorations, made by some of the best artists of the time.



Figure 27 Exterior design.

The outdoor walls of several houses are beautifully decorated, even if they in certain areas are quite worn. Some churches have pictures of the Madonna built into the walls.

Some of the tasks in the game requires climbing walls and running across the rooftops. To enable this buildings have ornaments, ledges and building blocks that stick out from the walls. There are also plenty of small roofs sticking out and other decorative structures that Ezio can climb or jump from/to. This might seem exaggerated in order to make climbing and jumping between buildings possible but the case is quite the reverse as ‘older quarters were often a jumble of closely set buildings, some with jutting upper stories. Arching buttresses and elevated passageways vaulted the street, so that little sky showed” (Cohen & Cohen, 2001, p. 152). Unlike the other cases, where gameplay leads to a more free interpretation to historical sources on behalf of the gamedesigners, the architecture has thus not been that obscured in order to become “climbable”. It shows the importance of not disregarding elements as exaggeration and the creation of gamedesigners, but to investigate and research every aspect of a game if it is to be used in the classroom as an inspiration to look further into a subject.

Compared to the imagery and possibility to explore the outdoor environment the opportunities to explore what houses looked like on the inside are far less. Several of the rooms Ezio visits look the same or are part of a scene played out like a movie with no possibility of exploring. The standard room has a large desk which is facing the door. On one wall hangs a huge portrait of a man in fancy clothes. There are panels on the walls and patterned wallpaper.



Figure 28 Interior decorations.

In Villa Auditore Ezio can walk around rather freely. There are rooms on the bottom floor for his weapons and armory but also two studies. On the first floor lies the bedroom of Ezio's mother and there is a set of stairs and a ladder leading up to a room containing information about Ezio's targets. The Villa is most likely a creation of Ubisoft and according to Cohen and Cohen's (2001) description of what the inside of a renaissance home was like, with the *sala* and the *camera* being the main rooms for both business and normal day-to-day life, the Villa does not seem very accurate.



Figure 29 Bedroom in Villa Auditore

The first floor also contains rooms for the paintings Ezio can buy to increase the value of Monteriggioni and thereby get more money.

5.4 BUSINESSES AND OCCUPATIONS

One of the Auditore servants help Ezio's mother and sister escape the family's home in Florence and she becomes a helpful ally of Ezio. Housekeeping, as described in the database, was one of the few

respectable jobs lower class women were allowed to have during the renaissance. The turnover of servants was high and therefore the job not a very secure one. Cohen and Cohen (2001) agree with this but they give a broader picture with domestic servants who almost become part of the family and women who play an important part in the family business.

When injured, Ezio can look up a doctor to be healed. The gamer can also buy both healing potions and poison from the doctor. The database gives further information on science, which was becoming just as important as, or even more important, than spirituality in the beginning of the fifteenth century when it came to people's health. The art of medicine had been under the influence of the Arabs during the middle ages. During the renaissance the doctors started to study the human body and making drawings of it. The Black Death haunted Europe in the 1350's and this led to several doctors dressing in special clothes (figure 30) when they treated patients. They wore coats covered in wax and a form of gas mask in the shape of a beak. Cohen and Cohen explain that most Italians had little to do 'with the university-trained physicians' (2001, p. 248) but the rich consulted them. People less fortunate turned to other professionals or amateurs, such as sergeons and barbers.



Figure 30 Doctor in wax covered coat and mask with beak.

Banking as we know it today, according to the database, evolved during the renaissance. A new form of bookkeeping meant that the banks could easier keep track of how much their clients put in, or drew, from their accounts. Even though the catholic church forbid people from using interest, and thereby making a profit, the banks never really followed the rules. The Pope himself demanded gifts from the banks, the value of the gifts depending on the amount he put in. Interest with another name. As mentioned earlier, banking today is based on the system established by the Medici family (Jones, 2011).

Ezio can buy weapons and armor that the blacksmith's as well as have them mended there. The database says that blacksmiths were a common site in the renaissance community. Metall was used for swords, locks, knives, nails and armour and iron was becoming a regular ingredient in architecture. Cohen and Cohen (2001) list weapons as one of the important goods that were produced during the Renaissance, thus making the blacksmith as an important person as the database claims.



Figure 31 A blacksmith

After assassinating somebody Ezio becomes a target for the city guards. To avoid this, and to more easily walk around unhindered in the cities, Ezio can bribe a herald so that he does not call out information about the assassination. The database information on these heralds are that they called out messages from kings, news, local laws, dates for markets and other ads. Most people could not read and this was a way to get important messages to them. Special laws that protected the heralds had to be made to prohibit violent actions when taxes were raised.



Figure 32 A herald

Tailors, described by the database, became middle class. They were paid well to dress the nobility according to the latest fashion and they often tied lasting bonds with their clients. Ezio can buy clothes in the colours of the different cities and towns. Cohen and Cohen (2001) strengthen the

database's claim of the importance of clothing. People, the wealthy especially, started to care about fashion and clothing became more elaborated and decorated.

In the game Ezio is educated by some prostitutes in Florence on how to blend in and how to pick pockets. He can also hire courtesans to help him blend in, to avoid being detected by the enemy or city guards. Again, the database gives a negative image of the situation of women. They did not have many occupations to choose from if they did not want to stay at home or join a convent. Prostitution was very common and some brothels were even owned and controlled by the government. Regulations were however enforced at the end of the fifteenth century and courtesans had to wear special clothes to separate them from the respectable citizens.

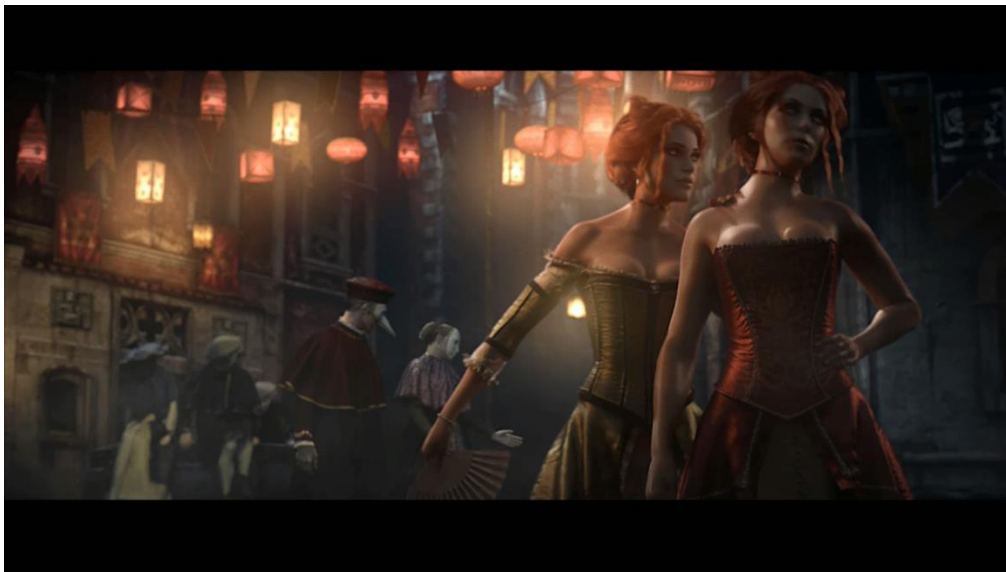


Figure 33 Courtesans in Venice

Apart from the courtesans, Ezio can also hire band of thieves to distract guards. The database continues to enhance a dark picture of the era; robbery and murder were common during the renaissance. Night time was not a safe time to be out alone in the larger towns and cities. People were attacked, robbed and murdered and their bodies were disposed of in the nearest canal. Thievery was severely punished. Torture was not rare and the executions were often public. To avoid getting caught the thieves exchanged information and came to depend on each other. Cohen and Cohen (2001) confirm how dangerous it could be to move around in the cities during the night, that bodies were dumped in canals and that torture was used to make thieves confess their crimes. Nothing contradicts the database's dark picture of the era.



Figure 34 A band of thieves.

To go back and forth between the different locations in the game Ezio can travel either by foot, horse, swimming, gondola, a caravan or ferry. Out of these four ways of travelling the database gives further information on caravans and ferries. Caravans with armed escorts were used for safe travel. Bandits were everywhere along the roads and travelling was very dangerous. *Vetturino*, a sort of guide, could also be hired to show the way and book rooms at inns. These were however often in league with the bandits. The database gives a dark description of what perils the traveller could encounter during the renaissance but its facts are accurate. People often travelled 'in large, armed groups', or dressed to appear poorer than they were (Cohen & Cohen, 2001, p. 49). Ferry stations were in the hands of the guilds. Every station had its own rules saying who could work there or how many passengers could go on each ferry. The boats could be small ones, for carrying passengers on canals, or big ships for longer voyages between Venice and the main land.

Sometimes Ezio needs support when fighting guards and enemies. Then he has the possibility of hiring mercenaries. On mercenaries the database gives the information that they could be hired by condottiere, professional captains who were paid by the cities. They could come from Germany, Switzerland, Hungary or other parts of Europe. The city states hired the mercenaries to fare war against each other. The soldiers, often without scruples, raped and pillaged where ever their contracts took them. If they did not get the money they had been promised they could easily take hire with the city state they just had attacked and turn against the one they had protected. A few mercenaries fought for a cause and they were highly sought for. I have not been able to find any larger amount of information about mercenaries in Italy during the Renaissance. I only found that Burchardt (2002) claims that Italy was the first country to use mercenary troops.

Throughout the game Ezio can buy paintings to increase the value of Monteriggioni. In the Villa the player can take a closer look at the paintings and learn who made them and what they depict. The paintings are bought in artists shops in the different cities and towns. Artists were, according to the database, considered to be common craftsmen rather than visionaries. Shops, small in most cases

and driven by masters who got parts of the profit, offered first and foremost religious decorations. They were often copies of what was popular at the time. Cohen and Cohen (2001) confirms that artists being nothing more than an artisan who tried to make a living. They also write that often the home and the workshop were one and the same.



Figure 35 Lady with an Ermine by Leonardo da Vinci

An occupation that is not mentioned in the database is that of the monk or priest. The game is full of religious connotations with several churches, monasteries, monks and priests. It gives a picture of how central the church was in the everyday life of the Renaissance European (Cohen & Cohen, 2001).

5.5 SUMMARY

The game, together with the database, gives a vast variety of information about miscellaneous aspects of life in Italy during the Renaissance. The creators have clearly done a lot of research but have taken the artistic freedom to keep facts out and to exaggerate others. They have moved structures and scenarios in order to make the game more enjoyable for the player. The information is rather shallow, it gives a general overview of what happened with a selection of spectacular events, and for somebody who has not studied the renaissance they will probably not get a better understanding of what the renaissance really has meant for the eras that came after, or what led up to it for that matter.

The general picture the game gives of the era is that it was a dangerous time to live in, and a rather accurate picture it is. Also, the church had a lot of power and was not afraid to use it to its advantage. The people the gamer interact with are mostly of upper class and it is difficult to say what life really was like for most people. Furthermore, the main people in the story are depicted as either purely good or absolutely evil and vicious. The creators of the game have chosen some interesting facts that suited their story and disregarded the rest. There is no way for the gamer to know which facts are true and which ones are fabricated by Ubisoft while in the game. The fans have, however, done research on the characters and settings of the game and created forums where they discuss the authenticity (Appendix 2).

The game gives a unique opportunity to explore the towns and cities of the time and what they may have looked like. The database and art gallery in Villa Auditore complements the experience with information about people, occupations, places and art. This information is optional for the player to look at and in most cases not necessary for the completion of the game. The rich imagery can on the other hand not teach the gamer what different artefacts are called unless they are stated in the database. Stuart's (2010) claim that the game can give insights into the social economics of the time is clear in the case of Monteriggioni, where improvements in the city leads to more income.

6 RESULT - HISTORY IN THE BOOK ASSASSIN'S CREED RENAISSANCE

The story starts in 1476 (2). It is described as a "dangerous and uncertain" time for the Italian peninsula (226). The final chapter takes place in 1503 (449).

6.1 The Core Story

The core of the story, both in the game and the book, is the fight between good and evil, between the Order of the Assassins and the Order of the Knights Templar. The book gives a summary of the history of the Knights Templar, something that is not found in the game.

The Knights Templar was founded

'soon after the first Crusades, and became an elite fighting force of warriors for God – effectively they were monks in armour. They took a pledge of abstinence and a vow of poverty. But the years rolled by, and their status changed. In time, they became involved in international finance, and very successful they were at it, too. Other Orders of Knights – the Hospitallers and the Teutonic Knights – looked on them askance, and their power began to be a cause for concern, even to kings. They established a base in southern France, and planned to form their own state. They paid no taxes, supported their own private army, and began to lord it over everyone. At last, nearly two hundred years ago, King Philip the Fair of France moved against them. There was a terrible purge; the Templars were arrested and driven away, massacred, and at last excommunicated by the Pope.' (118-119)

In the story the Templars are still a powerful order, working behind the scenes and in the end the new pope, Alexander VI, is a member of the Knights Templar himself and the leader of the order. According to Bonnier Publication's book on the subject of the Crusades the Templar Order came to an end when the last grand master Jacques de Molay was burnt on a stake July 4, in 1314 (2012, p. 68). The order had always been surrounded with mystique and myths about their secrets lived on (Bonnier Publications International AS, 2012). These myths have been the inspiration for authors and moviemakers in modern time, such as Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), and Disney's *National Treasure* (Turteltaub, 2004). There are no sources that show that the Templars were active between 1314 and 1804, when the order was founded again by Fabr -Palaprat (Knights Templar International, 2013).

The book does not offer much information about The Order of the Assassins, and neither does the game. They are claimed to be the only organization working against the Templars (119) in the plot of the made up story. Lewis (2003) describe how the original assassins, belonged to the Shia branch of

the Muslim faith and their founder was a man called Hasan-i-Sabah. In 1094 he became the supreme head of the Nizari movement, an independent Islamic sect that worked in most of the then Muslim world. In fact, the proper name for the assassins is Nizari Ismailis. Wesserman (2001) explains how the word assassin derives from the word *hashishim*, or *hashishiyya*, that it was the name Sunni and non-Nizari Shiites used in their anti-campaigns against the Nizari. They thereby implied that they used hashish and therefore were considered people of low status and social outcasts. Westerners heard the word, transformed it into assassin and brought it with them to Europe where it came to mean hired murderer (Wasserman, 2001). Lewis (2003) gives further information about the Nizari Ismailis early history. Their first assassination victim was Nizam al-Mulk who was murdered in 1092 by Bu Tahir Arrani, and after that they continued to use murder as a form of terrorism against their enemies, who saw them as 'criminal fanatics' (Lewis, 2003, p. 48). Hassan died and his predecessors continued his work. The crusaders first came in contact with the Syrian branch and the assassins now had two enemies, the Sunni Muslims and the crusading Christians. Under the leadership of Hassan III the assassination of other Muslims ended but the war against non-Muslims continued. The Mongols managed to take over the assassins' base, Alamut, in 1256 and after that the power of the Syrian branch withered. The Persian Assassins, nevertheless, were exterminated by the Mongols. They, in their turn, were driven out by the Mamelukes, who let the Syrian Assassins stay alive and be their subjects, supporting themselves by selling their services as assassins.

Today the Nizari Ismailis live on. Their Imam, Aga Khan IV is their leader and works hard to improve the conditions of his people (Wasserman, 2001).

Since the plot, both in game and book, is a mixture of fact and fiction one might think that the creators have taken a lot of liberty in placing descendants of the Assassins in Renaissance Italy but the fact is, according to Lewis, that some Assassins became refugees around 1130 and found their way to the 'Frankish lands' (Lewis, 2003, p. 108)

6.2 Cities and Towns

The reader, much like the player, is taken to the city states of Florence, Forli, San Gimignano and Venice, as well as to Monteriggioni and Rome. The difference is that the reader cannot choose what to explore but is lead through the story and the facts. Furthermore, there is information in the book that is not clearly given in the game. For example how the city states formed alliances against each other but could just as easily break them, just to reinforce them again. The smaller towns that belonged to the city states were also drawn into the feuds and alliances (114).

The book only contains a map of Italy with a close up on the area of Tuscany. Thus it does not give the reader any information on how the cities or towns were planned, how big they were or what the buildings looked like other than through some short descriptions here and there throughout the story.

6.2.1 Florence

It is a dark picture of the era that continues throughout Bowden's story (2009). The leading banking and merchant families were in constant rivalry against each other (2). The chief of justice is called Gonfaloniere (30) and the city guards function as a sort of police force (49). Some areas of the city are safer than others. The Baptistry is described as a better area than a red-light district (46). Mercato Vecchio is an area where a lot of thieves hang out. (154-155) People in general tried to stay

away from the district (161). If people were arrested they were taken to Palazzo Vecchio, which is “fortified like a castle keep”. The prisoners are kept in the tower. In front of the palace lies Piazza della Signoria. At night torches burn on the battlements which are guarded by men who are equipped with crossbows (50-52). The perils of life during the renaissance are confirmed by Cohen and Cohen. ‘It paid to be wary’ and trust no one, not even the holy figures were reliable (2001). The use of the tower in Palazzo Vecchio as a prison is confirmed on visitflorence.com (Visit Florence, 2013)

Despite their fighting the leading families of Florence had made the city into one of the richest in the world (2). It is said to be a good city for financiers and artists, the later due to all the rich patrons (41). Most artists lived close to the cathedral (38).

The story gives a hint of how unpleasant it must have been in cities and towns. The Arno is a river that runs through Florence with “heavy, slow-moving, yellow waters” (158). Sewage and debris wash up on the shores along the river (159). Apart from the stench from the river (2) there is also a reek of urine in dark alcoves. Other filth is the rats that can be found here and there (70). The river, according to Cohen and Choen (2001), was not the only source of stench. People seldom washed themselves really clean, and since scented oils and perfume were rarely used, there were a lot of body odours in more crowded areas. Other smells were newly baked bread, the reek of stale blood from the butcher ‘and animal and human excrement’ (Cohen & Cohen, 2001, s. 15).

The façade of the church of Santo Stefano al Ponte is not finished and the bridge Ponte Vecchio is full of crowded shops (3). Thus not giving any recollection of its history, like in the database of the game.

A network of catacombs can be found under the city (165). They consist of damp stone corridors; narrow enough for a man to touch both walls at the same time. Carved into the walls are niches where corpses of dead people have been put instead of graves dug in the ground (166-167). There are indeed catacombs in Florence (Florence Online, 2013) that today are open for tourists.

6.2.2 Monteriggioni

Monteriggioni is a little walled town in a district “effectively ruled” by Mario (108). There is a castle, built in the 1250s, refined and is more a villa than a castle when Ezio comes there. Its walls are high and many feet thick. Instead of a garden there is a large practice-field (114). Apart from this the town of Monteriggioni does not play as big part in the book as in the game. In the game the restoration and improvement of the town leads to improvement in Ezio’s equipment but in the book it is redundant. This means that the book lacks the possibility to teach the reader about how some of the economy worked during the renaissance, with paintings and certain establishments increasing the value of a town.

As stated earlier, in 5.1.2, the Auditore family is made up and can therefore not have ruled Monteriggioni. Nor is there any support for the fact about the large practice-field in any of the sources.

6.2.3 San Gimignano

San Gimignano is built on a small hill. The town has several square-built structures; tall towers built close together (125). They were built by the dominant families of the area (130). The city walls, made of dressed stone, are more than fifty feet or more (126). The gates are ten-foot-high oak doors, opened through a lever operating the heavy iron bolts that keep the doors locked. The mechanism

was designed to need more than one man to operate it (127). The town's main square lies in front of the citadel, not far from the cathedral.

There is no further information about the towers and their history in the book such as there is in the database of the game. The facts about the location of the main square, the height of the city walls and the mechanism of the door is not mentioned in the database but can be estimated by the gamer. The accuracy of the height of the walls cannot be confirmed in any of the sources.

6.2.4 Venice

Situated in a marshy area, the city is "built on a foundation of hundreds of thousands of huge wooden stakes" (230). There are several "alleyways, twisting canals, low arches, little squares and dead ends (246). The canal sheds an awful stench (263) and rats can be seen swimming in it (351).

In the thirteenth century the Doge of Venice used his power to eliminate the city's commercial and military competitors by diverting the Fourth Crusades from going to the Holy Land to instead attack the heart of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople. Four bronze horses were brought back to Venice to decorate the façade of St. Mark's Basilica (231, 240).

La Serenissima, another name for Venice, made more business with the east more than the west and was under the influence of the Ottoman Turks. The later were conquering lands closer and closer to the Italian peninsula (230). Venice had, at the time the story of the book takes place, signed a peace treaty with the Turks (211). In 1481 the Doge is Giovanni Mocenigo. With his steady rule, and the peace with the Turks, Venice is a calm and attractive place to be at. It is a prosperous city with lots of trade and commerce (240).

Apart from mentioning a Doge that has some power in the city there is also the Council of Ten (242). How these two authorities run the city and how they were elected is not explained further.

The information about Venice in the book is not as vast as in the database of the game, but still gives a much more elaborate description of the politics of the city and the time than what is written about Florence. The information about the dealings with the Turks has been dealt with in 5.1.5.

Leonardo da Vinci describes the Venetians as dressing ostentatious and having "magnificent painters". Their music and masked festivals are wonders to explore and they are masters at the art of poisoning (231). They guard their independence, have great political power and are keen on making money (230).

The comment about how the Venetians dress could be explained by the fact that the Republic of Florence had strict laws about how the inhabitants should and should not dress. Neither men nor women were allowed to wear luxurious clothes or accessories and instead they often wore simple attire made of wool than those out of silk. This was in great contrast to how the nobility dress in other cities, like Milan or Venice for instance (Lev, 2011).

In 1492 a Genoese seaman called Christoffa Corombo had asked the city to finance his expedition to India. He wanted to sail west to get there since the Ottoman Turks stood in the way to the east, meaning that trade had decreased. Venice turned him down and instead he went to Spain where he got his funding (418-419). Wikipedia's article on Christopher Columbus (2013) confirms that his Italian name was Cristoforo Colombo, his Genoese origin and that he requested support from several

states, Venice being one, before being financed by the Spanish Crown to undertake his westward voyage to reach India.

6.2.5 Forli

Forli is an ancient town and a small city-state (234) in the Romagna area (388). It lies a bit inwards from the eastern sea boarder, west of Ravenna. The citadel is walled (374), unassailable and has stood there since the middle of the fourteenth century (376). The city was ruled by Girolamo Riario together with his wife Caterina Sforza. After his death she ruled the city-state on her own (376). The accuracy of these facts are confirmed in 5.1.4. The database of the game, again, gives a much vaster range of information than the book.

In the story there is a small village, without a name, not far from Forli. It is described as a typical, small and poor serf-village. The water of the nearby river has recently flooded the village. Its houses are roughly whitewashed and have thatched roofs (388). Cohen and Cohen (2001) give record of villages on the country side as often being big, fortified, lying close to each other and several of them being founded in the early Middle Ages. So this small village close to Forli seem to not be as typical as the author claims.

6.2.6 Monticiano

Monticiano is a 'little hill town' (213) with an ancient castle.

In the story there is an abbey, the Abbey Asmodeo, located near Monticiano. The building is rather new and 'built of expensive imported yellow sandstone and built round a vast courtyard with a church at its centre' (213-214). There is a vineyard and the monastery's wine is claimed to be famous, even exported to Paris (214).

In my research I have found no proof of an abbey or a monastery by the name of Asmodeo. There used to be an abbey called San Galgano a few miles from Monticiano. The original building is a hermitage from the 12th century, followed by the abbey that was built in the early 13th century (Castellitoscani.com, 2013).

My search on the word *asmodeo* led me to some Italian sites. There is a post on Italian Wikipedia and the English counterpart has information about Asmodeus, the Zoroastrian demon of wrath and the Hebrew king of demons (Wikipedia, 2013).

6.3 People

At the end of the book there is a list of characters that gives a short explanation of the person's connection to the story and/or the main characters. For the characters that have real life counterparts there are the years for their births and deaths (471-477). Unlike the database there is no division into friends and enemies.

Lorenzo Medici (lived 1449-1492) was elected to be the leader of Florence when he was twenty years old. He brought a sense of order and calm to the city which was often in turmoil due to rivalry (2). Even so, the Gonfaloniere accuses Lorenzo of having seized power of the city without the formal consent of the Signoria (96). Lorenzo's nickname was Il Magnifico. He had a prominent nose and a determined face (96). He was married to Clarice Orsini (lived 1453-1487) and together they had Lucrezia (lived 1470-1553), Piero (lived 1471-1503), Maddalena (lived 1473-1528) and Leo (173). On April 26, 1478, Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano (lived 1453-1478) were the victims of a plot of

assassination which took place in the cathedral during mass. Lorenzo manages to survive but Giuliano is not so lucky (172-175). Giuliano Medici, never married but had made his mistress, Fioretta, with child (173). The record of the assassination of the brothers has been confirmed in 5.2.1. What the database and game do not give closer details about is the wife and children of Lorenzo. His looks are not described in the game but is shown as the character Ezio interacts with Lorenzo.

The Pazzi family's crest has golden dolphins and crosses on a blue background (3). They were involved in a plot to murder Lorenzo Medici (38) and his brother Giuliano (169). They are connected with the town San Gimignano (132). Lev (2011) describes who the people were behind the so called Pazzi conspiracy against the Medici brothers and the Pazzi family were indeed the agitators behind the plot.

Antonio Maffei is a priest and conspirator. Together with the Pazzis he plots to murder the Medici brothers (167-169). He was born in the city of Volterra wherefrom he claims to have been driven by the Medicis (168). Lev (2011) confirms his origin and part in the Pazzi conspiracy.

Leonardo da Vinci (lived 1452-1519) becomes a close friend of Ezio and takes part of the story throughout the book. At first he is mentioned as a young painter who has just finished his apprenticeship with Verrocchio (31). He lives in the area, close to the cathedral in Florence, where many other artists dwell in their workshops and studios (38). His appearance is described to be handsome and well-dressed. He is young and "almost dandified but athletic-looking, with a shock of dark brown hair and a luxuriant beard". In his studio are skeletons of birds and small mammals, jars filled with fluids containing organic objects (39). Leonardo's looks and the location and state of his workshop are only described in the game through the imagery, not in text.

Later Leonardo's work takes him to different cities; Florence, Venice and Milano, where he is hired by Lodovico Sforza (327). Lev (2011) mentions Leonardo as one of the artists that are drawn to Milan where Lodovico decided but says nothing about who hired him. Jones (The lusts of Leonardo da Vinci, 2011) on the other hand writes that he was hired by Sforza.

There are at first hints to the speculations that da Vinci was gay. He surrounds himself with young, handsome youths (40) and calls them "dear" (41). Later into the story Leonardo tells Ezio that he had been involved in the Saltarelli case, where a young male model had been accused of prostitution and Leonardo accused of patronising him along with three others. In Florence it was against the law to be a homosexual. None the less, the German nickname for homosexual men was Florenzer (92). Towards the end of the story homosexuality has become a capital offence in Florence (430). Jones (The lusts of Leonardo da Vinci, 2011) debates Leonardo's sexual preferences, showing that there is no hard evidence whether he was gay or not. Turnbaugh (2013) somewhat agrees with Bowden when he states that the word Florenzer is German slang meaning sodomite.

Leonardo seems to detach himself from his fellow beings or having "his head in the clouds, like so many other artists" (41). He says that he has a hard time finishing his paintings because he can see the end before he gets there and that he wants more purpose with his work. He wants "to understand life – how it works, how everything works" and to explore architecture, anatomy and even engineering (42). His handwriting is almost indecipherable (84), mirrored, and he writes with his left hand (87, 210). It is also believed that he was a vegetarian (85). Leonardo's experiments and

research would most likely have been frowned upon by the church if they had found out about all of it, and would have led to an early death (88). In order to understand how things worked Leonardo studied a number of things, for instance how the human body worked by cutting up and observing corpses of criminals (93). Among Leonardo's work was a model of a round wagon, weapons all around, and covered in armour. There is a drawing of a boat in the shape of a shark with a tower on its back, sailing under water (148-149). The Museum of Science (1997) confirms that Leonardo wrote with his left hand and he also wrote from the right side of the page to the left, so called mirrored writing. The book thus gives much further information about Leonardo and his life than the game and its database.

Other famous artists are mentioned. Such as Alessandro di Moriano, who goes under the nickname Botticelli. Verrochio, apart from being da Vinci's teacher, is also the creator of a bronze statue of David with the head of Goliath. Florence associated itself with the biblical hero, being located between the giants of Rome and France. The Medici family ordered and paid for the statue and the model was probably a young Leonardo da Vinci (94-95). The information about Verrochio and his David is in agreement with Bietoletti et. al. (2005) but there is no information on how the city saw itself.

Caterina Sforza (lived 1463-1509) is described as "a spirited redhead with fiery eyes (236). She is the daughter of the Duke of Milan, Galeazzo Maria Sforza (lived 1444-1476) and her husband, Girolamo Riario (lived 1443-1488), is the Duke of Forli and a nephew of the Pope (239). Girolamo is a "weak-looking type" and is about twenty years her senior (236). Girolamo was part of the Pazzi conspiracy against the Medici family, a fact supported by Lev (2011), but his life ended when he was assassinated by the Orsi brothers Checco and Ludvico (376-377). After her husband's death Caterina ruled Forli on her own (376). The book's description of Caterina and the facts about her fall well in with the picture Lev (2011) gives. But there are other parts in the story about her that seem to differ more from reality.

Ezio's first encounter with Caterina takes place in Venice sometime in the late summer or early fall of 1481. They have both just arrived and are about to travel from the pier into the city in private gondolas. Caterina argues with her husband, calls him spineless and says 'God knows why I ever married you' as if she had a choice in the matter. It seems that the couple is having trouble getting sufficient transport into the city. Ezio comes to her rescue after she has been helped into a gondola by her husband who then pushes the vessel out from the pier without anybody who can steer it. Historical documents (Lev, 2011) show that Caterina and Girolamo actually did travel to Venice in early September, 1481. They 'cruised into Venice on special gondolas constructed for the arrival of exalted guests. The ruler of Venice, Doge Giovanni Mocenigo, accompanied by 115 members of the nobility, sailed out to meet them (Lev, 2011, p. 70). Caterina was at this point of her life eighteen years old and eight months pregnant with her third child, a fact that Bowden has left out. She had been betrothed to Girolamo when she was only ten years old as the result of her father wanting closer ties with the Pope, Girolamo being his favorite nephew. Caterina had thus nothing to say about who she should marry. 'Caterina's voice was never heard or solicited during this period, nor would she have expected anyone to ask her opinion' (Lev, 2011, p. 18). Caterina's feelings for her husband at this point are difficult to persay but according to Lev (2011) she had by Chirstmas 1482 realized the true nature of her coward husband and felt rather embarrassed about it. The reason for

betraying Caterina as a mature woman rather than a teenager could be several. Her pregnancy is probably left out because it is not needed to bring the story forward.

Ezio and Caterina's next encounter happens some years later, in 1488. Caterina tells Ezio that she has had her husband killed by the Orsi brothers, Ludovico and Checco. They have now been hired by Rodrigo Borgia to acquire a map from Caterina, hence turning against their former employer. Historical sources show that Ludovico used to be close friends with Girolamo. Their friendship ended when they had different opinions on taxation on the townspeople and the Orsi brothers murdered Girolamo soon after that. For a while they held Caterina's children, sister and mother captive but Caterina outsmarted the brothers and became the sole ruler of Forlì. There is no proof of Caterina hiring the brothers to get rid of her husband nor of Borgia's involvement (Lev, 2011). As for the map it is a part of Ubisoft's creation.

Bartolomeo d'Alviano is a condottiero who once served the Papal States but has now turned against it (326). In the story he is on Ezio's side and another assassin. There is more information about him in the game's database (see 5.2.1).

Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli (lived 1469-1527), the author of *The Prince*, is another historical figure who becomes friends with Ezio. The story does not tell much about him apart from that the character himself says that he will one day write a book about dictatorial rulers, the "most effective and the nastiest kind of prince you could wish for" (433). Machiavelli is yet another assassin that helps Ezio on his way to become a full-fledged assassin. Again, the book is much more scarce on information than the database of the game (see 5.2.1).

When Ezio goes to Forlì in 1488 he is accompanied by Machiavelli, who then ought to be nineteen years old and several years younger than Ezio (Lev, 2011). It is therefore hard to believe that Machiavelli had anything to teach Ezio about assassination. It is true though, that Machiavelli met Caterina Sforza as a young man, but not until 1499 according to Lev (2011)

Rodrigo Borgia was born in Valencia in 1451 and died in 1503. He studied law in Bologna and became a member of the Curia in Rome and thereby one of the most powerful men in Europe (142). He even had great influence over the pope himself (168). When Rodrigo became pope he chose the name Alexander VI (421). In the story Borgia is the leader of the Templars and the real mastermind behind the plot against Ezio's father. The Pazzi conspiracy was actually a plan made up by members of the Pazzi family and Girolamo Riario, Caterina Sforza's first husband. There are no indications that Borgia was part of the conspiracy (Lev, 2011).

The Pope, Sixtus IV, made sure his relatives got jobs in high positions and was also a part of the conspiracy against Lorenzo Medici. The construction of a new chapel in the Vatican was ordered by him (142). The Sistine Chapel was ready around 1480 but in 1503 only the walls had been decorated. The artists were Ghirlandajo, Botticelli, Perugino, and Rosselli. The great vault of the ceiling was still to be painted (454). Lev's (2011) account on who were involved in the conspiracy against the Medicis say that although Sixtus IV was no friend of Lorenzo he did not want anyone killed. He was informed about the plans of the assassination but was not happy about them. However, Lev's book confirms that the pope favoured his relatives and did everything to help them to get more wealth and power.

Girolamo Savonarola (lived 1452-1498) was a Dominican monk who started preaching about the return of Christ. He condemned commerce and money-making (441) and it was not until after the death of Lorenzo de Medici that he was able to really be heard. He managed to expel Piero Medici, son of Lorenzo, from Florence (426) and took over the government of Florence in 1494 at an age of forty-two (429). The Pope wanted to excommunicate the monk because of the reformation of the church that Girolamo preached of (432). This information, as well as the one in the database, agree with Lev (2011) and Cohen and Cohen (2001).

6.4 Architecture and interior design

Walls of buildings are roughcast (12) or grey stonework (22). The roofs rounded red tiles and streets have hard granite cobbles (12). There are shutters for the windows and some houses have balconies. Rings of iron that are attached to the walls of the houses are used to tethering the horses (22). Rich and noble families live in grand palazzos. The office of a rich banker lies on the first floor overlooking the garden. There are two sets of windows which open on to a broad balcony. The room itself is panelled in dark, scrolled oak, has ornate plasterwork in the ceiling (25) and a fireplace with carved giants that hold “the marble mantelpiece on their shoulders” (56). In order to get to the office the visitors walk through an oak-lined corridor (44). Another home has a brass pedestal clock standing on a desk (60). The gardens were often surrounded by high walls (78). Cohen and Cohen say that walls in cities were made of brick or stone and ‘often faced with plaster’ (2001, p. 218). This agrees well with Bowden’s description. But they also give a much more elaborat picture of what the inside of the houses might have looked like with frescos, tapestries and other decorations.

An establishment for courtesans is housed in a grand Florentine building. The parlour is large, with a high ceiling, and richly decorated, much in coherence with Cohen and Cohen’s (2001) description of the decorations of the era.

Bietoletti et. al. (2005) confirms the information that Giotto’s campanile, the tall clock tower next to the cathedral, had “dominated the city for almost one hundred and fifty years, and the great red mass of Brunelleschi’s cathedral dome, completed only fifteen years earlier” (83-84).

6.5 Occupations

Ezio is injured in the book, as well as in the game, and has to see the family doctor. The room where the family doctor receives visits is filled with “mysterious instruments and phials of brass and glass”. Dried herbs are hanging from the ceiling and the tables are made out of oak (9). As stated in 5.4 only the rich consulted doctors.

Most households of better statue have housekeepers (33, 48) and servants (60) such as scullery-maids (286). Other occupations for people of lower statue can be as a tutor (23, 35) or a wet-nurse of young noble men and women (73). As written in 5.4, there were not many respectable jobs for women from the lower classes.

Other occupations that the reader encounters are condottiere, artist’s assistants and courtesans.

6.6 Fashion

There are some descriptions of how people from different parts of society and different occupations dress. Men of noble families wear cloaks with the family crest over suits made of velvet and carry swords (3), Florentine bankers wear black velvet suits and gold chains (11), wealthy businessmen

solemn black, merchant's brown and red clothes (24). Ezio's mother has long black hair that is braided and kept under a white muslin cap, edged in the family's colours; black and gold (37). On his belt Ezio has a pouch, a belt-pouch in which he carries notes and envelopes, and on his feet he wears soft leather boots (51). Lorenzo Medici is at one point "richly dressed in a red cap and cloak, over which he wore a silver-grey tunic (96).

A typical peasant wore a woollen cloak that hung down below his knees (389) and "humbler folk" in comparison to the rich wear homespun tunics (24). People from the country wear leather clothes (47).

Monks are described as black-cowled (24). Dominican monks have black cloaks and white habits (403).

Courtesans wore "silks and satins in green and yellow, cut in the Florentine fashion but with skirts slit to the top of the thigh, and plunging necklines that left nothing to the imagination except the promise of where it should not venture" (75).

The condottieri is dressed in "dark leather gear" (347). Other soldiers wear chain-steel hauberks (385).

All this shows how your clothing depended on your social stature. Cohen and Cohen (2001) confirms this and explains how there were laws around what type of clothing a person could wear depending on your occupation and place on the social ladder. They also describe how pricey cloth and accessories could be, thereby explaining why the rich wore expensive and elaborate clothing while the simpler folk wore home-made woollen clothes.

6.7 Miscellaneous

Authors and thinkers of the time are mentioned in passing, like the scholar and poet Petrarch (31). It was believed that the sun revolved around the world, a geocentric view of the universe, as opposed to what we know today, that earth revolves around the sun, a heliocentric view (371).

Miscellaneous facts that can be noted are that letters are wrapped in vellum and sealed (44), messages can be carried by pigeons that fly to their coop (42) and, eyeglasses have been invented and taken into use (61). Oil-lamps were used to lighten up dark rooms (148), common food was bread, cheese and wine (107) and, a still rare occurrence, coffee was brought to Europe by Turkish merchants (256). Fireworks came from China. There is a shipment to Venice with "coloured powder in little tubes" (293). Pigeons have in fact been used to carry messages as early as 2900 B.C. in Egypt. It was the fastest way of communication from the Dark Ages up until Morse invented the telegraph in 1844 (Fang, 2008). As for eye glasses, Salvino D'Armate invented the first wearable ones around 1284 in Italy (Bellis, 2013) and is therefore rightfully mentioned in the ACR. Fireworks, on the other hand, are an Italian invention (Pyro Universe, 2013). The Chinese had invented the first firecrackers and used them to scare away spirits. They later invented gunpowder which found its way to Europe and the rest of the world, changing how wars were fought. Marco Polo brought some firecrackers with him from his travels to the east in 1292 and the Italians developed them into, what we today call, fireworks during the Renaissance. It is possible that fireworks were used at the time when ACR takes place but they would really have been a novelty, and they would not have come from China. The author is stretching the truth as well as giving the wrong information.

A public hanging is arranged at Piazza della Signora and a platform has been erected to hold the gallows. The attendant priest shakes Holy Water over the heads of the condemn (66). The bodies of common criminals and paupers are thrown into lime-pits (70). Cohen and Cohen describe how public 'executions were special events, part of life, but hardly daily' (2001, p. 122). But they also claim that it was more normal for criminals to pay for their crime in money and to be banished than it was to be executed.

6.7 SUMMARY

In the story there are both references to historical facts and artefacts, as well as pieces that are designed to make the story more interesting, for instance the Templars and Borgia's involvement with them. The author has also removed, or neglected to write about, facts such as Caterina's pregnancy when she was in Venice. There are some longer inserts about certain people and appearances, like Caterina Sforza and the Templars, but overall the information in the book is shallow, spread out, and found in small pieces here and there. The book gives an accurate image of a hard and dangerous time to live in but people are either good or evil. It is the life of the rich that is described and not so much about the ordinary man.

The information that is given about cities, towns, and buildings, is much thinner than in the game. In the game the database has, in comparison, a rather vast amount of information regarding their history and facts. As in the case of Ponte Vecchio in Florence, where the reader only learns that it is full with shops while the gamer can learn when and by who it was built and also see what it looked like. The gamer also encounters a great deal more buildings with historical interest that are not even mentioned in the book. On the other hand, there is information in the book that is not found as clearly in the game, such as the history of the Templars and the relationship between the city states. Also, some of the information in the book has to be pieced by the gamer himself and is not spelled out as clearly as in the book as in the case of the stinking river, where the thieves hang out or the torches that burn on the battlements.

The list of characters in the end of the book can both help the reader keep track of who is who and give some additional information about when they lived. Apart from this list the reader goes through all the information while reading the story.

The book, despite its name, gives very little information about what the renaissance was all about if the reader is not familiar with the concept. There is no insight in the economics of the time and nothing what came before or after the era.

7 CONCLUSION

1. How reliable is the game AC2 and the book ACR as historical sources?

Both the game and the book are based on people that have existed and events that have taken place. There is a rather large amount of facts, more so in the database than in the book, about cities, districts, people, buildings, occupations and miscellaneous aspects of the renaissance. Most of it is rather shallow, and both Ubisoft's game developers and the author Oliver Bowden have taken some artistic freedom in order to create a thrilling and exciting story, stretching the truth and choosing some facts while disregarding others, much like any writer of history (Chapman A. , 2013a). Neither the game nor the book give an explanation of what the renaissance meant for the people of the time

and what it led to later in history. They only give isolated pictures of a small, although important, part of the era. As in the case of Miller and Rose's (1983) textbooks, the lack of explanation could end up in a misguided discussion. There is also no way for the reader or gamer, as with Rejack's (Rejack, 2007) analysis of *Brothers in Arms*, to know what information is an actual historical fact, for example the structure of the cities with their jutting upper stories, arching buttresses and elevated passageways, and what is pure fiction, like the Templars' and Assassins' ongoing fight through the centuries, without leaving the book or the game.

The conclusion is that AC2 and ACR are to be treated as any other second hand source; with some scepticism. They, just like any school book, are an extraction from what is considered to be history.

2. What are differences in ways of portraying history between the book ACR and the game AC2?

The game shows history both through actions; riding, steering a gondola, taking a caravan or a ferry, sword fighting, buying from merchants, restoring Monteriggioni, as well as through the imagery; movie clips, how people looked and dressed, the city planning, paintings and architecture. There is also the opportunity to look up more information in the database which has mostly written information but also pictures, maps and a few movie clips. However, the open world character and the interactive nature of the game makes it impossible to say if a player will take a path or see a full cutscene, i. e. will they actually have been offered to learn history?

The reader of the book will get more detailed information about what fabrics the clothes and interior decorations were made of. There is no possibility to look up more information within the book, apart from the list with characters in the back of the book with the information about when they lived. The book takes the reader from point A to B on a straight line without diversions. There is no way to explore the cities and their surroundings but the reader will go through all of the information given in the story. There are no pictures in the book, only descriptions of what places, things and people looked like, the rest is up to the imagination of the reader. On the other hand it is up to the gamer to look at the information in the database and could very well play the whole game without once using the database. When playing it is also easy to just focus on the mission, what Ezio has to do to get to the next mission, and not pay so much attention to the surroundings and information that is not needed in order to finishing the game. The linearity of the book makes it easier to predict what content the reader will encounter. It is of course impossible to really know if a learner is focused on what they read, yet to say that the game offers us to learn things when playing, but only if the player take certain actions is more like saying that the books on the shelf in a library offers learning if they are read. Thus, the sometimes claimed more engaging nature of a game have to be seen in relation to the fact that some content, at least in a sandbox game, might not be offered at all.

The game, in conclusion, portrays history in more ways than in the book. It uses both actions, pictures, movie scenes and reading while the book only offers written information.

3. How does game mechanics in AC2 affect the portrayal of history?

The mechanics of the game affect the portrayal of history in several ways. The in-game awards teach the player that there are maps of where chests with gold are situated, and statues hide gold beneath them. But there is also the economic aspect when restoring Monteriggioni, that buying paintings and

opening up facilities make the town more appealing and valuable. They also show that if you have better equipment; better weapons and better armour, the chances of surviving a battle increases, as does the use of effective techniques learned along the way.

The stealth/hiding techniques show that you could easily hide in a crowd, a pile of hay or just sitting down on a bench. The guards will not recognise Ezio, even though he is wearing his assassin's gear.

A positive advantage with the mechanics of the open world game world is that the gamer can partly experience what the cities and towns looked like while walking around. The ability to climb the buildings and to run on the roof tops gives the player a unique overview of the architecture of the era. Yet many of the things that are directly added to the game come from the will to make the renaissance world "playable". Example of this is when Ezio can finance his equipment through buying maps that show where he can find treasure chests with money and when he runs across the rooftops in order to quicker get to the other side of the city.

To summarize it the mechanics have both advantages and disadvantages when it comes to portraying history accurately. The gamer can learn a lot but he or she can also be misled if the game is taken too seriously as a portrayer of actual history.

8. DISCUSSION: AC2 AND ACR IN THE CLASSROOM

As for the question if *Assassin's Creed II* can be used in history classes as a reliable source the answer is yes, but not on its own since it is a mixture of facts and fiction. There is also a risk if only using one source, as Healey and Ilbery (1993) points out, that there is only one viewpoint and that students do not get much experience in selecting and synthesising material from different sources. It could be used as an inspiration to look up information about different aspects of the Renaissance, for example architecture, design, art, and what life was like during the renaissance, as in Sandberg's example (2012), using several sources to eliminate said risks. Based on Steinkuehler's (2008) claim that forums offer gamers the possibility to engage in discussion that schools fail to, it could be used to talk about criticism of sources in existing forums, and, if modified as in Rice (2013) suggestion, it could be a place to explore some of the most interesting aspects of the Renaissance era. Students could also discuss what they learn from the actions within the game, deriving from Chapman's (forthcoming 2013b) advocated method of looking at form over content. The only thing that really hinders usage of the game in history classes is the imagination and motivation of teachers and students.

The book could, to some extent, be used the same way as the book. It could be used as an inspiration to investigate further, and to discuss source criticism as previously mentioned. However, the game is superior when it comes to imagery and being able to letting the gamer, more or less, experience what it would have been like to walk around in Renaissance Florence. There are thereby more limitations in methods, and scenarios, when using the book.

The perhaps most interesting finding in my analysis is that neither the book nor game has cues for when we are to treat something as a documentary of a historical period or when we are to see it as pure fiction. How are we to know that the Auditorie family is made up while the Borgias are not? This distinction can only be made by comparing sources and/or using previous knowledge of the facts.

Semi-fictionalized accounts of history might be engaging and speak to a media saturated generation. Yet the artistic move of keeping the audience ambiguous about fact and fiction has a lot of problems. It might be really hard to distinguish what we are to take as historical accounts and what we are to understand as fiction. This skill takes that you already have previous knowledge about the things that are represented. The teacher is therefore very important as a guide to the world of source criticism and as a creator of a good lesson plan where AC2 is implemented.

The risk at hand is that semi-fictionalized accounts are completely framed as being “just” fiction, in other words, the learning potential is ignored instead of acknowledging that games can be history just as well as literature or movies.

Appendix

Appendix 1

List of buildings in the different city states and cities with historical facts in the database

Florence	Torre del Diavolo	Santa Maria dei Carmini
Palazzo della Signoria	Torri dei Salvucci	The Venice armory
Santa Trinita	Torre Rognosa	San Zaccaria
Ponte Vecchio	Old Roman Thetre	San Pietro di Castello
Palazzo Pitti	Monte Oliveto Maggiore	Santi Giovanni Paolo
San Lorenzo	Romagna	Scuola Grande di San Marco
Santa Maria Novella	Abbazia di San Mercuriale	Madonna dell'Orto
Mercato Vecchio	Rocca di Ravaldino	San Giobbe
Ospedale degli Innocenti	Palazzo Communale – Forli	San Giacomo di rialto
Santa Croce	Venice	The Silk Palace
Palazzo de Medici	Ponte di Rialto	Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari
Giotto's Campanile	Santo Stafano	
Santa Maria del Fiore	Basilica did San Marco	
Loggia dei Lanzi	Campanile di San Marco	Rome
Toscani	Torre dell'Orologio	Church of St. Peter
Torre Grossa	Palazzo Ducale di Venezia	Castel Sant' Angelo
Santa Maria Assunta	Santa Maria della Visitazione	The Sistine Chapel
Villa Salviati		
Palazzo Communale	Squero di San Trovaso	

Appendix 2

List of sites on the Internet that discuss what is or is not real in Assassin's Creed II

<http://www.gameinformer.com/b/features/archive/2010/10/12/the-real-life-characters-of-assassins-creed.aspx?PostPageIndex=1>

<http://www.neoseeker.com/forums/43205/t1349252-setting-characters-of-assassins-creed-2/>

<http://gamercrash.com/2012/02/03/history-behind-the-game-assassins-creeds-the-borgia-family/>

<http://fronttowardsgamer.com/2011/07/26/learning-through-gaming-assassins-creed-ii/>

<http://www.gamefaqs.com/boards/996093-assassins-creed-brotherhood/57333738?page=1>

<http://tehyb.hubpages.com/hub/Assassinscreedtruth>

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