World Literature Representation via Video Games

Ali Alshhre
Department of English Language
Faculty of Sciences and Arts
King Khalid University
Muhayil, Assir Province, Saudi Arabia
Email: dr.alshhre@gmail.com

Abstract
This article aims to answer the following question: can video games be a dynamic medium for globalizing an adapted work of literature to be later played and received by gamers who might learn and increase their literary and cultural knowledge? World literature scholarship, gamer-response theory, game studies research, and my experience of playing *Assassin's Creed* (2007) were used to explore how video games can globalize world literature to increase readership. The video game *Assassin's Creed* (2007), adapted from Bartol's *Alamut* (1938), was used to both discuss how world literature can be transmitted via video games and demonstrate how video game adaptations can be beneficial for learning and increasing global readership among gamers. The process of globalizing *Alamut* via *Assassin's Creed* is shown by focusing on how the game employs different themes taken from the novel, its narrative, and some actual historical characters and places, such Acre, Jerusalem, Damascus, and Masyaf castle. Using literary novels and adapting them as video games can be adequate for incorporating those novels into world literature because the novel's narrative is transmitted and exposed to gamers worldwide, thereby facilitating the transmission process of the novel's content. Thus, it is recommended that the possibility of expanding world literature should be explored via adaptations of novels into video games.

Keywords: Assassins, *Assassin's Creed game*, gamer-response theory, game studies, reader-response theory, ludology, world literature, video games

Introduction

World literature has recently gained much focus in academia. This article consults different interdisciplinary fields to discuss its argument pertaining to world literature. In addition to world literature scholarship, I consult scholarship written on video games, gamer-response theory, and reader-response theory to investigate not only how gamers, as dynamic readers, can be exposed to world literature depicted in video games but also how their gameplaying can be a core tool to learn more about works and ideologies in world literature. Therefore, they might, for example, become more interested in reading and examining works adapted from video games. Thus, this article adds an important viewpoint to ludological studies to explore how gamer-response theory can be positively exploited to push the world literature canon to ludology, and how ludology can be an effective space for world literature's dissemination. Further, this article presents a new approach in looking at video games from a world literature perspective, explores a new method for works in world literature to be represented and read, and recommends how languages/translations in video games can be integral to representing world literature in ludology.

Since the emergence of game consoles, many games have been interested in adapting novels into video games. Rad (2015) explores how some games were adapted from, or at least largely influenced by novels. In his novel *Parasite Eve* (1995), pharmacologist Hideaki Sena includes substantial medical vocabulary and information, and the game serves as a visual continuation of the main crux of the novel, leading gamers to be exposed to a "bizarre exploration of human biology" (Rad, 2015, *ign.com*). The present article focuses on *Assassin's Creed*, a game adapted from Vladimir Bartol's *Alamut* (1938) (Rad, 2015). The game's publisher, Ubisoft, with the support of the game's producer Jade Raymond, not only depicted the novel in the game, but also created a vision important for gamers to experience and share with other gamers. Although the game has different settings and time periods, Bartol's novel is the underpinning for or the main pillar of *Assassin's Creed*.

Alamut (1938) depicts a group of rebellious figures whose master, Hassan al-Sabbāh (1050−1124), trained and motivated them to achieve social and political outcomes to strengthen his political and religious position. The novel is set in the eleventh century, in a castle called Alamut, which was under the rule of al-Sabbāh (Sutcliffe, 2017). He previously travelled to different regions to increase his communicative and political skills for his future religious endeavors. He travelled to Egypt at the end of the eleventh century to build an alliance with the Fatimid Caliphate (909−1171), but ultimately developed different goals after he saw the caliphate was at the brink of political and social downfall (Daftary, 2007). He then returned to Persia, where he settled at Alamut castle to build a political religious sect called *Hashashin,* or "Assassins." This sect was destined to fight an occupying force called the al-Saljuk empire (1037−1194) that occupied Persia (Daftary, 2007).

Assassin's Creed depends on Bartol's *Alamut* (1938), especially in terms of the *Hashashin* sect. The game continually employs the idea of assassination in all parts where the main character uses creative methods like hiding, eavesdropping, and climbing houses to recognize and assassinate iconic characters. The first part of the game series, released in November 2007, was centered on events in the 12th century at Masyaf, a castle in Syria. After the first part marked a resurgence of historical events and characters depicted in the video game, to which gamers can be exposed during gameplay, the game began to attract gamers' increasing attention, leading Ubisoft to develop more parts of the game with different settings and fictionalized versions of historical

characters. Consequently, the researcher will discuss how the first part, which is based on Bartol's *Alamut* (1938), has presented to global gamers more literary and historical information inspired by the novel's main theme, assassination. Thus, the researcher will explore how the first part of the game helped present some of the narrative of Bartol's novel to gamers, leading them to learn more about Middle Eastern history and culture.

Literature Review: World Literature

   With the gradual emergence of world literature when German poet Johan Wolfgang Goethe coined the term "world literature" in the nineteenth century while reading Chinese works translated into German (Damrosch, 2003), and through the contributions of his assistant, Johann Peter Eckermann, in *Conversations with Eckermann* (1836) (as cited in Damrosch, 2003; Eckermann, 2022), different critical scholarships have been written by authors such as Damrosch and Sapiro. Damrosch (2003) views translation as important for shifting a work from locality to globality, considering its critical role in promoting a work to the level of world literature. Sapiro (2017) also emphasizes the prominence of translation in making a literary work transnationally visible, especially after English became the language of the literary market in the 1970s, overcoming most peripheral languages and leading most cultures to have their literary cultural works translated into English to reach globality. Thus, world literature has featured and solidified its importance throughout its multifaceted utilizations. For example, it has been viewed as a vehicle that can take the reader to exotic foreign worlds where different cultures are depicted, and their literary works novelized (Damrosch, 2003). When Goethe was interested in Chinese novels and Serbian poems, his mentality was influenced by what he read in these works, which not only triggered his imagination but also his prediction that having more translated works could canonize the term "world literature" (Damrosch, 2003). However, Sapiro (2016) explores the factors that impact whether a work crosses its original country's boundaries and classifies them as follows: political, economic, cultural, and social. These factors are the main tools that help escalate a work's circulation and determine the "social condition of circulation of literary works" (Sapiro, 2016, p. 82). Thus, considering these factors would provide a good framework for assessing and analyzing works from a world literature perspective.

   However, Casanova (1999) notes that some writers have geographized world literature in Paris and London, due to the historical importance of these two cities, which paved the way for the evolution of literary markets, where different multicultural and literary works could be shared and exchanged. Therefore, London and Paris are the main capitals of world literature that established "literary capital," where many dynamic readers could be exposed to world literature from international publishers (Casanova, 1999, pp. 165-166). According to Sapiro (2017), Gallimard, the prominent French publisher, could potentially lead the way for many international literary authors to have a wider readership in Paris. Gallimard's role as an internationally recognized influential publisher vitally established for foreign literary works what Sapiro (2017) calls "transnational visibility," thereby strengthening the international literary field. Thus, Gallimard has contributed to pushing the world literature canon, which it made Eurocentric to some degree.

Rise of Ludology and Gamer- and Reader-Response Theory

Ludology has become vital in many people's lives, particularly gamers. Although some video games are violent and have been criticized as stimulating violence, they can be a learning platform for many players. Gee (2003) posits that human learning cannot be accomplished through indoctrination, but should be extracted from "a material, social, and cultural world" (Gee, 2003, p. 8). With the emergence of new literacy studies, where technology use is encouraged and emphasized, reading and writing should be considered "social and cultural practices with economic, historical, and political implications" (Gee, 2003, p. 8). Considering players to be dynamic learners, Gee (2003) explores connectionism as a good solution that implements the significance of experience in learning, while learning through logic is not something he necessarily takes into account. Similarly, McGonigal (2011) explores how playing video games positively influences gamers, which, at its best, results in creating positive changes in their actual lives. She argues that playing video games can modify the way people perceive and act in their daily routines, support personal change and collaboration, and accomplish the world's most necessary aims, especially social ones (e.g., treating cancer, raising awareness about climate change), and encourage gamers to become more humanistic by sympathizing with world crises (e.g., poverty, famine). Therefore, McGonigal (2011) successfully constructed a framework to explore the process of how games in general can influence actual lives and actual communities, with a central focus on creating a better future through video games.

With the rise of new literacy studies, ludology has strengthened its position through literary scholarship. Playing video games, or at least knowing and questioning gamers' experiences on how, why, and what they play, indicates ludology's importance. Various discussions have emerged to explore game studies and establish more paradigms and structures for them. For example, Apperley (2006) calls for focusing on interactivity, which is defined as "the way in which the game is played, rather than watched" (p. 7). Apperley explores a paradigm to develop a new nonrepresentational approach to create more important, debatable, and significant ways to understand video games. Although different games have focused on visual representational features, as argued by Caldwell (2004), both Apperley (2006) and Caldwell (2004) emphasize the importance of consistency in games to provide a solid medium that goes beyond methods of visual representation and deepens solid vocabulary use.

Different theories can be applied to study video games, particularly the gamer-response theory, which was largely derived from Rosenblatt's reader-response theory (Gillern, 2016). Although Gillern (2016) initially proposed gamer-response theory, it has to a reasonable extent served its purpose on reflecting how video gamers react to video games during game-playing. These two theories can be applied to both gamers and readers in analyzing their responses and interactions toward a specific game or literary work; however, Gillern (2016) specifically explores how to not only theorize or vitalize the importance of gamer-response theory but also solidify the role of gamers' background, general and digital knowledge, gaming experiences, and online interactions with and reactions to other games. Gillern (2016) states,

> "Understanding video gameplay experiences is important as it represents a dynamic process in which gamers interpret a wide variety of multimodal symbols, experiment and learn in these digital environments, and solve complex problems in order to progress in the game" (p. 666).

Accordingly, he presents a framework by which readers and researchers can encourage the public to consider how crucial video gameplay experiences with multiple utilizations can have impact on gamers in terms of learning and education.

Methodology

Utilizing Gillern's (2016) gamer-response theory to analyze *Assassin's Creed*, I explore how the game employs world literature regarding Bartol's *Alamut* (1938). By using the game as a case study to support my argument on how ludology spreads world literature through video games, I conducted a close reading of the game to investigate how it not only teaches gamers implicit historical details but also exposes them through gameplay to various aspects that carry multicultural elements. Specifically, the first part of *Assassin's Creed*, which is adapted from Bartol's novel, encourages gamers to play without changing the game's main theme/focus in relation to the assassination of iconic historical characters. Similarly, this study emphasizes the role of translation embedded in onscreen subtitles or interpretations in the game to present it according to the gamers' languages. Since Ubisoft wants gamers to learn via playing *Assassin's Creed* (all parts), the game is more developed, simplified, and prone to be easy-to-understand and interesting in a way gamers can engage with while playing. This reflects the importance of gamer-response theory in video games studies that focus on analyzing the interactions between the game and gamers: "The decisions that gamers make during gameplay, which are affected by the gamer's experiences, knowledge, skills, agency, self-efficacy, and goals, influence how the game unfolds and the meaning the gamer makes from their experiences" (Gillern, 2016, p. 670).

This methodology is influenced by my personal experience of playing most parts of *Assassin's Creed*. When I played the first part of the game, I realized its potential in influencing other gamers including increasing and developing their knowledge of the history of the Levant. I focus my analysis of the game on dialogs, characters, places, and some historical details that help globalize most information about the Assassins in Bartol's *Alamut*, and on how the game is really a reflection of the novel.

Analysis

When starting *Assassin's Creed*, a statement appears before the gamer is taken to the main menu: "inspired by historical events and characters, this work of fiction was designed, developed, and produced by a multicultural team of various beliefs, sexual orientations and gender identities." A close inspection of this statement demonstrates how *Assassin's Creed* generally employs a fictional version of history, but without, to a large extent, changing the historical facts in the game. Regarding the game, Barba (2016) states, "Each tale is well told and well acted, with gameplay smoothly integrated into a story filled with compelling characters. Ubisoft has received much-well-deserved critical praise for taking interactive gaming to higher levels of narrative sophistication" (p. 6). Otherwise, many of the depicted historical events and figures are accurately represented. What follows is a close analysis of two themes in the game, characterizations and historical events, through which gamers can learn information. Hence, world literature will be explored in relation to how gamers acquire knowledge about characterizations and historical events through playing this game.

The first essential figure in *Assassin's Creed* (2007) is Rashid ad-Din Sinan (1133−1192), nicknamed al-Mualim, meaning the mentor or master. Sinan was trained in Alamut castle, where

he befriended schoolmasters and learned assassination skills that support his life as a mentor despite a debilitating injury in one foot (Willey, 2005). Although Sinan became the leader of the Syrian Ismailis, he did not stop communicating with other leaders of the same sect, especially in Alamut castle (Willey, 2005). Therefore, Masyaf castle became largely connected to Sinan, and his legacy echoes in European literature, where he was preeminently known as the "Old Man of the Mountain" (Willey, 2005, p. 44). This historical figure is depicted in the game as the leader of the Assassins' sect who lived in Masyaf castle to plan the assassinations of political leaders, especially the Knights Templar during the Third Crusade (Barba, 2016). Under their mentor's supervision, the Assassins work to both reach a higher level of secrecy to develop covert relationships with other members who belong to the same sect in different regions, particularly in Damascus and Jerusalem, and build a secret alliance where power is embedded in its concealed ways. Barba (2016) illustrates how the sect lived in Masyaf castle to enkindle their ideologies, stating "the Assassins – a secret society withing the Nizari Shiite sect of Islam – had been active in Masyaf and other mountain strongholds for many years. Their skill in the art of assassination was widely known and greatly feared" (p. 7).

Sinan is represented in *Assassin's Creed* as al-Mualim in Masyaf. At the beginning of the game's main story, he is the leader who refuses to be questioned by his trainees. Although Altaïr Ibn-La'Ahad is the game's main protagonist, he serves al-Mualim by assassinating different political leaders to increase his master's trust toward the Assassins' brotherhood in Masyaf, especially after Ibn-La'Ahad failed his first mission to bring al-Mualim the Apple of Eden from Solomon's Temple. Masyaf was attacked by Templars after Ibn-La'Ahad reported his failure to al-Mualim, and once the castle is defended, al-Mualim strips Ibn-La'Ahad of his rank of Assassin, leading him to go on new missions to regain his master's trust, restore his honor, and train more to be a Master Assassin (Barba, 2016). For example, al-Mualim assigns nine assassination targets in Acre (Akka), Damascus, and Jerusalem for Ibn-La'Ahad to become an influential Assassin who cannot go beyond the creed's plans. These targets include Tamir, who sells weapons to the Assassins and the Knights Templar; Garnier de Nablus, the 10th Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller from 1190 to 1192 who participated in the Third Crusade with King Richard the Lionheart in 1189 (Kane, 2021); Talal, a gangster who enslaved people for his own benefit; Abu'l Nuqoud (literally translated as "Father of Money"), an iconic and wealthy figure in Damascus with mercenaries surrounding him for protection and reflecting his social privilege; and William V of Montferrat, who is also known as William of Montferrat, William the Elder, or William the Old (Barba, 2016; Bolton, 2008). William, with his son Conrad, under the supervision and support of King Richard the Lionheart (1157−1199), very harshly and bloodily govern Acre to suppress its people and strengthen their grip on the city.

With his eavesdropping, interrogation, and pickpocketing skills, Ibn-La'Ahad successfully develops different methods of professional assassination, such as when he conceals himself among the crowd to listen to a conversation between the Lionheart and William of Montferrat. The sixth assigned target is Majd Addin, who is supposedly the ruler of Jerusalem, as he was a Knights Templar of Jerusalem who executed those who questioned or criticized his authority as the city's regent. The seventh target, Sibrand, the Grand Master of the Knights Teutonic, settles in Acre to consolidate his political vision for the city. The eighth target is Jubair al-Hakim, who lives in Damascus, and despite his wisdom as a learned scholar, al-Mualim orders his assassination to stop his being a threat. The final target is Robert de Sablé, who was the 11th Grand Master of the Knights

Templar. However, al-Mualim does not stop at giving Ibn-La'Ahad more assassination missions. Whenever Ibn-La'Ahad successfully assassinates a target, he gives him new weapons, such as throwing knives, a hidden blade, and a sword, to motivate him toward the brotherhood's ultimate goal—complete and blind submission and obedience to the order of their master.

Some of the nine targets are actual historical characters whose roles are accurately depicted to a reasonable extent, such as Garnier de Nablus (Napoulse) (1147−1192) (Barba, 2016), William V of Montferrat (1115−1191), Majd Addin, Sibrand (1157−1191), and Robert de Sablé (1150−1193). According to Nichols (2013), the roles of these five individuals are portrayed reasonably well by Ubisoft, and each is worthy of discussion. According to his in-game depiction, Garnier de Nablus was born in France and banished after he mistreated his patients by experimenting on them (Nichols, 2013). After his arrival in Acre, he did not stop his career as a doctor. He continued to conduct his experiments on Acre's poor prior to his assassination by Ibn-La'Ahad. In actual history, he was the Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller who supported King Richard (1157−1199) at the Battle of Arsuf in 1191, between Richard's troops and Salah ad-Din's troops, ending in King Richard's victory (Nichols, 2013). Further, although de Nablus disregarded some of King Richard's plans in the battle (Nichols, 2013), he successfully attacked Salah ad-Din's unequipped archers, resulting in their withdrawal from the battle (Nichols, 2013). Thus, de Nablus was the main reason for King Richard's victory over Salah ad-Din. However, Ubisoft slightly altered his historical role from the Master of the Knights Hospitaller to a sadistic doctor who experiments on the poor and who was assassinated by Ibn-La'Ahad, although in reality, he died shortly after the Battle of Arsuf.

The in-game portrayal of William V of Montferrat, also known as William III of Montferrat (Bolton, 2008), depicts him as a selfish, conceited, and opinionated man who enjoys scolding and belittling his followers and soldiers (Nichols, 2013). Despite his political position as the most reliable character and an ally for King Richard, he is depicted by Ubisoft as the most argumentative figure who questions King Richard's political and militaristic agenda (Nichols, 2013). This is demonstrated through his public discourse critical of King Richard that he presents in front of Acre's people as its regent. His appointment as Acre's recent is King Richard's solution to reduce the tensions between him and the regent's son, Conrad (1146−1192), who exacerbates the political relationship between his father and the King. However, the game depicts William of Montferrat and Conrad as the two characters who carry the most enmity toward King Richard, despite their allegiance to him during the Third Crusade and their wars against the Saracens. However, in actual history, William of Montferrat was a well-recognized warlord whose sense of humor made him popular among his followers (Nichols, 2013). His militaristic and political representation and participation were greatly heard across different regions. He supported and accompanied Frederick Barbarossa (1122−1190) in his wars against Lombards, and was considered the most trustworthy and devoted ally to both Barbarossa and Baldwin V (1177−1186) (Hamilton, 2005). Later he joined the crusaders and participated in the Battle of Hattin in 1187, where he was captured by Salah ad-Din (Nichols, 2013). However, he was released in 1188, and stayed with Conrad in Tyre, Lebanon, until his death in 1191.

According to Nichols (2013), Majd Addin's in-game depiction differs from any of the other figures because of the lack of historical evidence which might imply his actual name and role in the Third Crusade with the Saracens. Majd Addin refuses to be tolerant toward his people and successfully takes over Jerusalem. Therefore, his political radicalism leads him to oppose any

views that are critical of him or his decisions, driving his people to become very cautious in dealing with him until his assassination by Ibn-La'Ahad (Nichols, 2013). However, Nichols (2013) explores any historical person whose characteristics might be similar to Majd Addin, and through emphasizing the literal translation of his name in Arabic language as "kudos of the faith," he comes across as a figure whose role resembles Majd Addin, Baha Addin. Baha ad-Din Ibn Shaddad (1145−1234) was a writer, jurist, and scholar who befriended Salah ad-Din during the Third Crusade (Jotischky, 2017). He devoted most of his work to the service of Salah ad-Din as a good example for people to follow and obey. He was also present at the Battle of Arsuf, reflecting his close companionship with Salah ad-Din (Nichols, 2013).

In his in-game depiction, Sibrand is obsessed with power and domination, making him a complex figure whose megalomania is reflected in his connection with the people of Acre (Nichols, 2013). His skepticism of his guards, and the people of Acre makes him fearful of being assassinated by his guards or people (Nichols, 2013). However, since Ibn-La'Ahad has by then successfully assassinated six targets, Sibrand's caution is understood. To reduce his paranoia, Sibrand starts accusing and killing his own people (Nichols, 2013). However, little is known about his actual life (Nichols, 2013; Nicolle, 2007). He became the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights in 1190, and remained so until 1192 (Nichols, 2013). After his death, the Teutonic Knights remained active until 1561 (Nicolle, 2007). With the formation of the Teutonic Knights during the Third Crusade to reclaim the Latin Kingdom (Kingdom of Jerusalem), a hospital, taken as the center of the order, was built after the siege of Acre when the city was taken from Salah ad-Din's troops (Barba, 2016; Nicolle, 2007). The Teutonic Knights not only participated in the Third Crusade but also developed customs that helped them persist until 1561 (Nicolle, 2007).

Robert de Sablé was the 11th Grand Master of the Knights Templar from 1191 to 1192 and a lieutenant in King Richard's army. The in-game depiction of de Sablé portrays him as an unkind, ferocious companion of King Richard, who exploits his militaristic position to gain personal benefit regarding power and domination of the Latin Kingdom (the Holy Land), without trespassing against any of the King's orders or plans (Nichols, 2013). In the game, his efforts do not stop until he obtains the Apple of Eden, a bright ball which helps him to gain power to rule the Kingdom, easily defeat his enemies, and control both Muslims and Christians (Nichols, 2013). After Ibn-La'Ahad learns that de Sablé is accompanying King Richard at the Battle of Arsuf, he goes there, and when he reaches at the battlefield, he fights his way through until he comes face to face with King Richard. He tells him that de Sablé is planning to rebel against him. Finding it difficult to believe the Assassin, the King orders de Sablé to face Ibn-La'Ahad, and says that God will judge who is the one who is saying the truth, Ibn-La'Ahad or de Sablé. After Ibn-La'Ahad kills de Sablé, de Sablé taking his last breath informs him that al-Mualim, Master of the Assassins, is really a Knights Templar planning to use the Apple of Eden for himself. When Ibn-La'Ahad returns to Masyaf castle, he sees his master holding the Apple and controlling all the Assassins. After a fierce encounter with his master, Ibn-La'Ahad kills him, ending the main narrative of *Assassin's Creed*. In reality, de Sablé was quite faithful to King Richard and became the lord of Cyprus Island, where be conducted political operations before selling it to Guy de Lusignan (1150−1194), who was supposed to be the King of Jerusalem, but received few votes, thus paving the way for Conrad of Montferrat to be the King killed by the Assassin (Martin, 2004; Nichols, 2013). However, before de Sablé sold the island, he bought it from King Richard, after

overthrowing the Byzantine forces with the help of the island's natives (Martin, 2004). Then, de Sablé went to the Holy Land and stayed there until his death in 1193.

After exploring the actual historical characters who are assassinated by Ibn-La'Ahad in the game, some other well-known actual historical figures are also accurately portrayed in the game, such as King Richard the Lionheart and Salah ad-Din. King Richard inherited the English throne after his father's death, Henry II, in 1189 (Barba 2016; West & Gaff, 2005), as well as some parts of western and northern France (West & Gaff, 2005), where he was able to find an easy path to the Holy Land to reclaim it from the Saracens. Since his family established an empire, namely the Angevin, of which Richard's father was the main founder and contributor to solidate his family's name, especially in France, Richard's thriving kingdom was the first candidate to lead the Third Crusade. However, owing to feudalism in Europe during the Middle Ages, his family was required to "pay homage" to the French King, despite their pride and stubbornness (West & Gaff, 2005, p. 4). Regarding his adventures to claim Jerusalem after Salah ad-Din successfully occupied it in 1187, Richard, as a king and a knight, saw reclaiming the Holy Land as a duty for him and all Christians, to stand in front of his enemy, Salah ad-Din (West & Gaff, 2005).

The other figure introduced in *Assassin's Creed* (2007), Salah ad-Din, is in charge of defending the Holy Land from King Richard. Thus, the role given to him in the game is similar to his actual historical description as the leader of the Saracens against King Richard's troops, but while making it more specified and focused. Salah ad-Din spent most of his childhood in Baalbek, where he learned from his father, Ayyub ad-Din (Man, 2015). Since King Richard was popular among European nations as a hero who fought for his people, Salah ad-Din and his engagement as the leader of the Saracens who fronted King Richard were popularized among Westerners, marking him as a great leader who united allies from the Arabs, Kurds, Persians, and Turks under his war banner to fight King Richard's army (Man, 2015). Man (2015) writes,

"Ask anyone in the Eastern Mediterranean to name their greatest hero and the answer you will get is almost certainly 'Saladin'. All across Europe and America, if you ask for one *Arabic* hero, the answer, after a pause for thought, will probably be the same" (p. 13).

This is similar to how King Richard is viewed in the Middle Eastern world, as his rivalry during the Crusades with Salah ad-Din is well known. For example, as an intermediate school student, I received a lesson regarding the battle between these two leaders, thereby hearing for the first time about King Richard and his role in the Third Crusade. Thus, in *Assassin's Creed* (2007), their political and militaristic rivalries are portrayed in a video game, which is considered as a medium in which gamers from multicultural backgrounds can at least hear the names of these two historical characters and political rivals.

Another vital element is the game's focus on representation of the significant historical places, such as Masyaf castle, Jerusalem, and Damascus. As noted above, the castle is a crucial location where different Assassins are brought to practice their religious political ideologies implemented by their leader, Sinan, in terms of assassinating important figures (Barba, 2016). Jerusalem is one of the oldest cities described by historical documents. Barba (2016) describes Jerusalem as being labelled through history as one of the most sacred places on Earth, making it a special place for the three religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As a result, it has been assaulted 52 times, blockaded 23 times, and seized 44 times (Barba, 2016). Damascus is similar to Jerusalem in its historical importance. It is depicted in *Assassin's Creed* as a city full of Saracens during the Third Crusade, and has three major districts reflecting the city's social classes: Poor,

Middle, and Rich. From a realistic point of view, the city is ancient, as its history goes back to the Bronze Age where it was formed from three minor cities: Mari, Ugarit, and Ebla (Burns, 2007). Burns (2007) explores Damascus from a historical perspective and how the city's occupations by different empires shaped its cultural and political status, and how the Aramaeans, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Islamic dynasties, such as the Umayyads, influenced its history from different angles and dimensions, leading it to be inclusive of different multicultural elements. Ubisoft, through *Assassin's Creed* (2007), presents gamers with a small virtual picture that teaches them a little bit of Jerusalem's broad history, especially during the Third Crusade, as well as about Damascus.

Results and Discussion

Playing video games has multifaceted functions, in which gamers can generally engage, learn, and even share their critical opinions, implied from their backgrounds, on specific games with other gamers (Gillern, 2016). They can discuss their experiences playing games online to form a virtual community, where all gamers can express their views. Granic et al. (2014) show the positive side of playing video games and how games in general positively affect gamers, in response to psychological research that only explores the negative side of gaming: "the vast majority of research by psychologists on the effects of 'gaming' has been on its negative impact: the potential harm related to violence, addiction, and depression" (Granic et al., 2014, p. 66). Moreover, Granic et al. (2014) call for a "balance perspective," where both the positive and negative sides of gaming should be shown and analyzed (p. 66). Gaming has been increasing globally among children and adolescents, especially in the United States, where children play at least an hour daily on average (Granic et al., 2014), indicating how video games have become an integral part of daily life. Similarly, Gillern's (2016) approach, which is applied here to present the results of my study, shows how gamers learn, interact, analyze their gameplay experiences based on their accumulated knowledge, and share their opinions. By using Gillern's approach, I will present the expected outcomes *Assassin's Creed* (2007) may have for gamers and what it may lead gamers to learn.

One result of exposure to the narrative of *Assassin's Creed* is that it also leads gamers to have exposure to the novel it is based on, Bartol's (1938) *Alamut*. This exposure is helpful, because it may motivate gamers to be more attentive to understanding the game's historical narrative and setting, which are adapted from Barlot's novel. In their introduction of Burn's *Literature, Videogames and Learning* (2021), Aldridge and Green (2021) mention how the book connects literature and video games in terms of narrative and playing the role of game *authors*, where they can teach, criticize, and increase their experiences in them. Burn (2021) states,

> "For researchers, scholars, students, and teachers of literature at whatever level, my hope is that the juxtaposition of games and literature can tell us something new about each, whether as readers and players, or as game designers transforming literary texts into new narratives" (p. 1).

Ubisoft's transformation of Barlot's novel into a game, where different multimodality is applied, teaches gamers about the historical culture of Damascus, Jerusalem, and Acre. It also depicts an imaginary historical place in the Levant that once was very multicultural. Therefore, when playing *Assassin's Creed*, even if the gamers do not have background information on the Levant's history, especially the Third Crusade, they are exposed to the characters discussed in the Analysis section.

Thus, they can learn about al-Mualim, the Assassins' emergence in the castles of Alamut and Masyaf that are extensions of the castle of Alamut, the Assassins' old techniques of assassinating political figures, different European orders such as the Knights Templar, the Third Crusade, Ismailis' denomination, and the creed of the Assassins.

Burn's (2021) description of gamers as *authors* during gameplay demonstrates something important about them: they can use multimodality to analyze the game they are playing. Thus, multimodality has been regularly stimulated by game designers to convey meaning and lead gamers to focus on different modes within the game to understand and analyze further information related to its narrative. Games as a new form of literacy make gamers become engaged in a special form of creative multimodal media, where multimodal details are implemented and considered significant to gameplay (Gillern, 2016). Gillern (2016) also states: "Video games transmit a variety of multimodal information to the gamers, which is the source of how gamers understand the game and inform their gameplay decisions. Furthermore, conceiving of video games as a new literacy practice is a valuable perspective as it can help scholars investigate and understand a significant and meaningful cultural activity for people all around the world" (p. 699). Thus, gamers who play *Assassin's Creed* can focus on multimodal elements, such as characters, places, conversations among characters, and game graphics to increase their knowledge regarding the game and its historical social advantages that aim to indirectly educate gamers on the history of Jerusalem and Damascus. Thus, international gamers, such as those from Asia, Europe, and North and South America, can learn something about Middle East history during the Third Crusade, reflecting how *Assassin's Creed* as a game has been used as a medium to convey historical information to gamers in interesting and entertaining ways.

One multimodal element implemented in video games is translation, an iconic feature in which a game's narrative has different translations as subtitles or is dubbed into different languages (e.g., Spanish, French, Arabic, Portuguese, Russian). Ubisoft has offered this feature in many parts of *Assassin's Creed*, especially when the game's parts were released annually. Therefore, *Assassin's Creed* players can, for example, learn from its narrative different historical projections that occur in the game regarding major historical characters, the Third Crusade, the Assassins, and Masyaf castle, which was the main headquarters of the Assassins. Both Damrosch (2003) and Sapiro (2017) emphasize the importance of translating literary work for it to go beyond its local borders and be introduced to different cultures, resulting in more global readership. Damrosch (2003) defines world literature as "writing that gains in translation" because it serves as a helpful factor in circulating the translated work to reach different countries (p. 281). Similarly, translating a game's narrative into different languages has the same role, in that it helps circulate the narrative of an adapted literary work. Therefore, *Alamut's* narrative is adapted when, in *Assassin's Creed*, gamers select an available language from the main menu. Thus, gamers can choose their preferred language before they start playing, thereby globalizing the game's narrative for different players who are considered dynamic readers and may criticize the game.

Video game adaptations of literature are as important as those in cinema. This article suggests that video game adaptations of literature could be stronger than cinematic adaptations, in terms of the effects on receivers (i.e., gamers). Specifically, since adaptation studies were previously limited to cinema, a gradual expansion of such research has focused on the role and contributions of games studies (Burn, 2021). One contribution is importance of game studies for gamers in embedding the notion of engagement in them (i.e., leading gamers to become highly

engaged in the world of video games while playing by using DualShock). They can play the main story of a video game and be influenced by its visual aesthetics and other elements, such as music, dialog, and missions. Gillern (2016) states, "Gamers also have distinct forms of game world knowledge that overlaps and intersects with their real-world knowledge" (p. 673). Therefore, gamers' real-world knowledge and game-based knowledge converge to increase and develop their knowledge, especially when a game's narrative is an adaptation of a literary work, such as *Assassin's Creed*. Thus, gamers' knowledge is reinforced when they use such physical devices, thereby allowing them to understand game narratives quickly, especially since most gamers tend to play the same game several times, especially if they like it.

Limitations

This study has a limitation in that it focuses on analyzing only the first part of *Assassin's Creed* Series. Nonetheless, it presents a new approach in looking at the game, showing its importance in employing literary and historical details taken from the literature to ease the literary work's entrance into the canon of world literature. This approach might attract ludologists to further the importance of ludology in adapting a literary work into a video game, thus increasing its chances of being received by gamers globally. Future studies should focus on examining and exploring other parts of the game and how they are useful in globalizing an adapted work of literature. Thus, to expand the canon of world literature, I recommend increased scholarly attention to game studies as there are many gamers who are eager to play and engage with video games, and share their play experiences, thus (in)directly helping globalizing world literature.

Conclusion

This study aimed to develop a new approach to exploring how world literature can be represented via ludology. Utilizing *Assassin's Creed*, I examined how Barlot's *Alamut* was a point of interest to Ubisoft, thus leading the company to adapt the literary work for its game released in 2007. I analyzed how the game employed and depicted different historical characters and places that were adapted from the novel. The central concept of the novel, which is about the Assassins and their ideological and political agenda, assisted Ubisoft to further the idea by bringing different characters, places, and political conflicts, such as the Third Crusade, to create an open world for gamers to learn the history of these figures and places, as well as the Assassins, by playing the game, which may also increase their experience with and knowledge of history.
The theme of assassination of influential and political figures encouraged Ubisoft to project and employ the same theme in the game, incorporating different locations and events, such as Rome, Constantinople, the American Revolution, the epoch of Caribbean piracy, the French Revolution, Victorian England, ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, and the Viking age. Therefore, the idea of the Assassins that originated from Barlot's *Alamut* was broadened, globalized, and depicted in different epochs via ludology, thus supporting the main role of world literature, which is globalizing literature and bringing it beyond its political, social, and cultural borders. Thus, I recommend using video games as an additional medium for dynamic adaptations of different novels for the sake of globalizing them, thereby making them works of world literature. Further, globalizing novels via ludology could be used not only to expand the international reach of literary works but also for theorists to broaden the field by establishing more scholarship between ludology

and world literature. Hopefully, this article can further spark this idea to attract the attention of critics, theorists, and gamers.

About the author
Ali Alshhre is an Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia. He holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Binghamton University (USA). He teaches different literary courses on world and comparative literature. His research focuses on world literature in literary texts as well as in videos games in which its narratives are taken from literary writings (novels, short stories, and plays).
ORCiD ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4907-8979

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