

Alcibiades' Political Bisexuality in *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* (Ubisoft Quebec, 2018)

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EN Abstract. Bisexuality, within the field of Sexuality studies, has often been deemed invisible (Monro et al., 2017; Erickson-Schroth and Mitchel, 2009) and framed as a threat (Klein, 1993). For the bisexuals' ability to engage with both men and women, they have been regarded as untrustworthy in many spaces. Comparably, Ancient Greek homosexuality, or pederasty, though proven to never have been considered a crime or prejudiced by law (Cohen, 1987; Hindley, 1991; Dover, 1978), was chastised in ancient texts for its involvement in politics, when associated with male prostitution (Oyamada, 2024), and never truly accepted by society (Hubbard, 1998). *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* (Ubisoft Québec, 2018), when depicting Classical Athens and its wartime period, includes multiple historical spaces, figures, and events. Among the known Greek politicians, philosophers, and playwrights, Alcibiades (450-404 BCE) is included in main and side missions of the video game. Remembered as a controversial figure of the Peloponnesian War, a politician, a "strategos", and a student of Socrates, "Alkibiades" is loyal to historical, philosophical and even comical surviving references in various ways. And, in this modern depiction, his bisexuality is included in a variety of side missions all revolving, in their own way, around themes of sexuality and desire. This study, in its thorough analysis of the game's missions, keeps in mind historical references to Alcibiades' sexuality and Bisexuality's invisibility and fear of treason. It argues that the game erases and justifies Alcibiades' lying to not insist in bisexuality's prejudices and stereotypes, as well as how it includes Alcibiades' bisexuality not merely as a character trait, but as a political tool used during the times of the tensions and instabilities of Athenian politics.

Keywords. Alcibiades; Bisexuality; Politics; Games; Reception.

ES La Bisexualidad Política de Alcibiades en *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* (Ubisoft Quebec, 2018)

ES Resumen. La bisexualidad, dentro del campo de los estudios de sexualidad, ha sido con frecuencia considerada invisible (Monro *et al.*, 2017; Erickson-Schroth y Mitchel, 2009) y enmarcada como una amenaza (Klein, 1993). Debido a la capacidad de las personas bisexuales de relacionarse tanto con hombres como con mujeres, a menudo se las ha considerado poco fiables en muchos espacios. De manera similar, la homosexualidad en la Antigua Grecia, o pederastia, aunque está demostrado que nunca fue considerada un delito ni objeto de prejuicio legal (Cohen, 1987; Hindley, 1991; Dover, 1978), fue criticada en los textos antiguos por su implicación en la política cuando se asociaba con la prostitución masculina (Oyamada, 2024), y nunca fue plenamente aceptada por la sociedad (Hubbard, 1998). *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* (Ubisoft Québec, 2018), al representar la Atenas clásica y su periodo bélico, incluye múltiples espacios, figuras y acontecimientos históricos. Entre los conocidos políticos, filósofos y dramaturgos griegos, Alcibiades (450-404 a. C.) aparece en misiones principales y secundarias del videojuego. Recordado como una figura controvertida de la Guerra del Peloponeso, político, «strategos» y discípulo de Sócrates, «Alkibiades» se muestra fiel a referencias históricas, filosóficas e incluso cómicas que han sobrevivido de diversas formas. Y, en esta representación moderna, su bisexualidad se incluye en una variedad de misiones secundarias que giran, cada una a su manera, en torno a temas de sexualidad y deseo. Este estudio, a través de un análisis detallado de las misiones del juego, tiene en cuenta las referencias históricas a la sexualidad de Alcibiades y la invisibilidad y el temor a la traición asociados a la bisexualidad. Se argumenta que el juego borra y justifica las mentiras de Alcibiades para no insistir en los prejuicios y estereotipos sobre la bisexualidad, al mismo tiempo que incorpora la bisexualidad de Alcibiades no solo como un rasgo de carácter, sino como una herramienta política utilizada en los tiempos de tensiones e inestabilidades de la política ateniense.

Palabras clave. Alcibiades; Bisexualidad; Política; Videojuegos; Recepción.

Summary. 1. Introduction. 2. Queer Studies and Alcibiades. 2.1. Homosexuality now and then. 2.3. Alcibiades. 3. Alcibiades in *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*. 3.1. *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*. 3.2. "Alkibiades". 4. Conclusions. 5. References.

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1. Introduction

This paper has the objective to prove that *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*, when depicting the character of the historical figure of Alcibiades, included and used his bisexuality as a trait and political weapon for his character to wield. For the development of this analysis, this study includes a contextual and methodological introduction to both homosexuality, also known as pederasty, in Ancient Athens, and Sexuality studies, most importantly, Bisexuality studies.

Once considering bisexuality's typical invisibility and evil connotations and pederasty's relation to politics and power, this paper introduces the historical figure of Alcibiades. Throughout this study, it is recognized how Alcibiades' surviving reputation regarding his many lovers, real or exaggerated, reflects onto his modern representation in the video game. Especially during such a difficult time in, Ubisoft's, Ancient Athens.

Through Alcibiades' double-meaning words and constant association to his own or, in some cases, manipulation of other's relationships, he is constantly connected to the topic of sexuality in the game's missions. Additionally, it is through these themes that political schemes take place, even if hidden from the player at first. This study raises and answers the supplementary question of whether Ubisoft's Alcibiades is influenced, not only from historical records of homosexuality, but from today's perception of bisexuality as the untrustworthy "spy" in both camps (Klein, 1993, p. 7).

2. Queer Studies and Alcibiades

2.1. Homosexuality now and then

Homosexuality in Athens, during and following the fifth century BC, was portrayed through many surviving texts, such as those of Plato and the legal texts of Aeschines. They included both homosexual characters and relationships, but, as explained by David M. Halperin (1990), when studying classical Athenian homosexuality, it is important to separate our beliefs and cultural assumptions from the texts of that time. By means of this, labels such as "homosexual", "heterosexual" or even "bisexual" will be used in this study and are terms of today, but it is important to understand that Athenian authors had no such separation of sexual orientation – and their ideas are to be understood as cultural or historically specific, and never universal.¹

In addition, though Athenian authors did not distinguish various sexualities whenever depicting them, it is important to realize that this study will still focus on a modern representation of the life of a historical figure. Therefore, there is a need to keep in mind Queer theory or, more specifically, Bisexual Theory to acknowledge all cultural and historical specific factors of today that could be included in Alcibiades' character in the video game.

With this, the definition of bisexuality has faced some challenges, as it may vary given the concepts of romantic and sexual attractions. It has been historically understood as "a combination of male/female, masculine/feminine, or heterosexual/homosexual" (Monro et al., 2017, p. 3), though similarly to Monro et al.'s study (2017), we will focus on the definition of bisexual "as an adjective to refer to sex acts and attractions to same-sex and other sex persons". As explained in Kaity Prieto's article, "some may prefer terms such as pansexual, omnisexual, or queer, which better capture attraction beyond the gender binary" (2022, p. 59) but, as we may interpret Alcibiades' sexuality, specifically in-game, bisexuality is a better fit for Alcibiades given the non-depiction of non-binary individuals in the game and the expected non-mention of such in the surviving texts.

Moreover, bisexuality in sexuality studies is often accompanied by invisibility. Throughout Monro et al.'s study of the existing sexuality scholarship, as well as Erickson-Schroth and Mitchel's chapter in the *Journal of Bisexuality* (2009), this invisibility is seen as a form of epistemic violence, as it considers bisexuality as "inferior, unworthy of discussion, or non-existent" (pp. 2-3). Monro et al.'s study mentions how "more than a quarter of the analysed texts include lesbian, gay and/or homosexual in their indexes, but bisexuality is not named in either their indexes or the body of their books" (2017, pp. 5-6). This invisibility is considered to have begun with the erasure of non-heterosexuality and has only worsened with the appearance and development of lesbian feminist and queer studies. Lesbian feminist ideas condemned heterosexism and heteropatriarchy, and, with it, there was the subsequent effect of erasing bisexuality. This invisibility was too noticeable beyond Sexuality studies or any other academic field, as Fitz Klein (1993) studies society's fear of the threat of bisexuality.

Given Klein's definition, the threat of bisexuality begins with homophobia, given the contemporaneous heteronormative society still failing, at the time, to accept differences among all possible attractions. By means of this, bisexuality fails to be included in the separation of sexualities in society, where Klein explains that "The homosexual belongs. The lesbian belongs. He or she has a culture. He or She can be loyal to a team" (1993, p.

¹ The greatest example of that is Plato's change in opinion regarding homosexual relationships from texts such as *Symposium* until his last, *Laws*.

10). The bisexual is separated from both homosexuals and lesbians and has its own team in society, and with that comes a hostility between teams. Klein introduces this hostility with the idea of the bisexual resembling a traitor and a spy, as the bisexual's association with both men and women was considered dangerous and untrustworthy.² Additionally, Klein, later in the chapter, adds more to the threat of bisexuality with its existence being synonymous with the enabling of both homosexuals' and heterosexuals' sexual ambiguity.³ This study will focus mainly on the threat being imposed by the bisexual being able to associate with both said camps/teams and being dangerous and untrustworthy, as Ubisoft's Alcibiades may include these views of bisexuality in his own character.⁴

Given this introduction to Bisexual theory, there is vocabulary that must be understood when studying Greek homosexuality, known as pederasty. Kenneth Dover (1978) highlights in his work many terms that should be explained when studying homosexual characters of Greek texts. Mainly, for this study, the most valuable terms are associated with who, in relationships or sexual relation, adopts the active (also described as assertive and dominant) or passive (also defined as receptive or subordinate) role. Given that Greek homosexual couples tended to have their age as the defining characteristic to their assignment of dominance or subordination in their relationships, separate terms are assigned accordingly. The youngest member gained the name of "eromenos" ("eromenoi" plural), which means "being in love with" or "having passionate desire for" and separates from the term of "boy" ("pais" in Ancient Greek). And the oldest member gained the name of "erastes" ("erastai" plural), which means "lover"⁵.

Given these terms and definitions, there is a common misunderstanding of the ancient Greek terms and texts. In the work of David Cohen (1987), it is believed that there was a shame, or, as stated by Cohen, hubris⁶ to the younger partner, "eromenos", in homoerotic relationships. Cohen believes that they were defined as the "women" in relationships or even the "women-substitutes" (Hindley, 1991, p. 165), as well as the entire relationship being understood by the Greeks as "against nature, a threat to the family unit and the well-being of the state" (p. 165). However, in reality, homosexual relationships never disrespected the law of hubris, for there was never a law against love between born-free men. This misunderstanding comes from texts such as that of Aeschines (389-314 BC), *Against Timarchus* (345 BC), where the accusation made to Timarchus was that he "committed hubris against his own body" (Hindley, 1991, p. 171). The real hubris in this accusation is not being in a relationship with another man years before the trial, but by prostituting himself to that same man and later being involved in politics.⁷ Another misunderstanding of attributing shame is well represented in vase painting, as the act of bending over by a passive partner during sexual relations may be equivalent to the actions and penetration of a woman, which was in itself a shameful act. However, the shame behind the act of "treating a man as a woman" (Hindley, 1991, p. 179) applies only to fully grown men.

Additionally, Cohen also interprets the terms "boys" and "eromenoi" as pubertal or pre-pubertal boys and associates them with a certain femininity, which is an exaggerated statement of reality. T. K. Hubbard (1998), in his article, does mention the criticized effeminacy of the pederast, given that it could be associated with their luxurious garments, which would be compared by those of women by the lower-class citizens – adjectivizing the pederast with unmanliness and sexual passivity. However, regarding the "eromenoi"'s age, we know of many historical "eromenoi", including this study's focus, Alcibiades, and know that they were much older during their relationships with their "erastai". Hindley (1991), in his critical article of Cohen, mentions only Harmodius as a possible younger "eromenos", but he is represented in a statue as a "well-built, athletic young man" that "though he is beardless, his pubic hair is as developed as that of his (bearded) lover, and they are of virtually the same height" (1991, p. 178). Though this does not rule out the possibility of even younger "eromenoi", we do know of a law that protected young boys, which Hindley considers similar to an "age of consent", as they needed to conclude their studies before being involved with an "erastes".

However, according to Hubbard, though homosexuality in Ancient Athens wasn't known to be a crime, it does not mean it wasn't problematic. In fact, it is believed that, beyond the written laws and biographies, pederasty was more times engaged by a minority of the upper class – often described as the intellectual and artistic; had a more fluid perception of activity/passivity, and the social conservatism or, better, prejudice to homosexuality was believed to be represented by the lower classes of society. In a way, we can conclude that homosexuality was "neither persecuted nor completely accepted" (1998, p. 72) in Ancient Athens, and, though much time has passed and our thoughts on sexuality have vastly developed, its acceptance, in our days, hasn't yet been concluded either everywhere or by everyone.

² As stated, "The bisexual resembles the spy in that he or she moves psycho- sexually freely among men and among women. The bisexual also resembles the traitor in that he or she is in a position to know the secrets of both camps, and to play one against the other. The bisexual, in short, is seen as a dangerous person, not to be trusted, because his or her party loyalty, so to speak, is nonexistent. And if one lacks this sort of loyalty, one is so far outside the human sexual pale that one is virtually nonexistent" (p. 7).

³ As stated, "The reason (the heterosexual male) is relieved to hear that the bisexual does not exist is that he thereby avoids his own inner conflict. If a homosexual male finds other males attractive, that fact has nothing to do with the heterosexual. But if a bisexual male finds both men and women attractive, that does have something to do with him in a way too close for comfort. The possibility of identification then is considerably broader. When the head in the sand comes up for air, what it sees may be unbearable" (p. 11).

⁴ For a comprehensive overview of the scholarship on the topic of Queer Studies in Game Studies, see Evans, 2018.

⁵ Used for both homosexual and heterosexual relationships.

⁶ Definition can be accessed through Fisher's (2015) extract.

⁷ Better explained and developed with Oyamada's (2024) study on the topic.

2.2. Alcibiades

With this, we reference the historical character Alcibiades (450-404 BC), who, similarly to the accused Timarchus, was a famous “eromenos” known for his beauty⁸. Alcibiades’ life and relationships were heavily documented by contemporaneous authors and others in the following centuries. Littman (1970), in his work regarding Alcibiades’s many relationships, concludes, through the vast number of texts – varied in genres such as oratory, comedy, biographic anecdotes, and Socratic – that many of the rumored relations were indeed false. And, following Littman’s words, we will name these same relationships to illustrate how Alcibiades’ character was continuously depicted, which shall work to study its influence on its modern portrayal in *Assassin’s Creed Odyssey (ACO)*.

Plutarch (46-120 AD), in *Alcibiades 3*, mentions a lover of Alcibiades by the name of Democrates, though there is no way to confirm his existence as he is not mentioned in any other text. Athenaeus (170 AD), in *Thalheim Lysias*, preserves the story of Alcibiades’ involvement with Medontis of Abydos and Axiochus, one of his “beauty’s lovers” (Littman, 1970, p. 264). A daughter is born from the incident, and Medontis cannot tell who the father is. Athenaeus then states that when the daughter was of age to marry, both of the possible fathers slept with her – claiming that the girl is the daughter of Alcibiades, when Axiochus is with her, and vice versa. Littman refers to these encounters as very improbable to have happened, mainly for the chronological difficulty regarding the daughter’s age and the historical record made of Alcibiades’ activities of that same time. Additionally, given that the probable source was comedic texts, the tale is probably false. In *Andocides 4* and Plutarch’s *Alcibiades*, an affair with Melian women and Hippacrete’s near divorce with Alcibiades is mentioned, and Littman assumes this story to be true, though some details from both sources tend to be contradicted by other authors.

As for comedy⁹, in Aristophanes’ (c. 450 BC) *Triphales* (425 BC), the comedic writer pokes fun at Alcibiades’ many relationships. Eupolis (c. 446-411 BC), in *Flatterers* (421 BC), mentions, in one of its possible interpretations¹⁰, Alcibiades’ profligate relationship with women. Diogenes Laertius (200 CE) accuses Alcibiades, during his youth, “of drawing husbands away from their wives, and as a young man wives from their households” (Littman, 1970, p. 267).

In biographic anecdotes, Plutarch and Athenaeus mention Alcibiades’ lover, Anytus, yet details vary when mentioned by Plato, for example. Plutarch, in *Alcibiades 5*, mentions Alcibiades to have a metic as his lover, who Littman assumes to have been Poulytion. In *Alcibiades* and Athenaeus, Alcibiades is mentioned to have travelled many times with two courtesans, such as Damasandra/Timandra and Theodote. Athenaeus also mentions how Alcibiades would leave married women in Sparta and Attica to then be at the door of brothels. It is also rumored that Alcibiades had an affair with the queen of Sparta, Timaea, which Littman does consider possible, except for their rumored child together.

And, lastly, in the Socratic sources, Antisthenes (445-365 BC) and Plato (428-348 BC), Alcibiades’ relationships continue. Antisthenes accuses Alcibiades of adopting a Persian custom of incest, which Littman, in his study, does not agree with due to the lack of evidence. And as for the Platonic dialogues, Alcibiades has a relationship with Socrates, where Socrates’ preference for love is a theme of discussion, whether it is spiritual love or physical love. In Plato’s works, their relationship is depicted in *Protagoras*, *Symposium*, *Alcibiades I* and *II*, and *Gorgias*, which Littman separates by which ones depict it with physical love (all but the *Symposium*) and those that mention the preference in spiritual love (*Symposium*).

With this, Alcibiades is confirmed to have had at least an affair with a Melian girl and had a child with her, been married to Hippacrete, had a multitude of male lovers (Socrates, Democrates, Anytus, and Poulytion), and been involved with many other women, even the queen of Sparta, Timaea. And, as Littman states, many other relationships could be true, given the continuous depiction of his infamous reputation. “While the specifics of most of Alcibiades’ alleged incests, adulteries, and promiscuities should probably be rejected, comedy’s and oratory’s portrait of him seems to be an accurate reflection of the man” (p. 276).

Alcibiades’ infamous reputation in his romantic life will, therefore, be the focus of this study. As even though Alcibiades was an Athenian general with heavy influence over many events of the Peloponnesian War¹¹, Ubisoft’s depiction of his character in their video game¹², *Assassin’s Creed Odyssey*, focuses a lot more on his romantic and flirtatious personality. His flirtatious involvement in politics is, as this paper will argue, Alcibiades’ best weapon during such matters.¹³

⁸ In *Memorabilia* (I.2.24), Xenophon mentions how Alcibiades’ beauty gained the attention of many great ladies (Littman, 1970, p. 270).

⁹ Though it has been mentioned that a comedic text may be an untrustworthy source, it is important to understand that fifth century comedy includes many of its contemporaneous events and individuals, and for a text to be humorous, there needs to be some truth behind it. Alcibiades, in comedy, is known for his sexual behavior and adultery, which, due to its repetition throughout authors, we accept as true, but details must not be trusted (Littman, 1970, p. 268).

¹⁰ Littman prefers the other possible interpretation: “The second, which I prefer in the context of Pherecrates (Kock I.194), is that Alcibiades is speaking with his male lover, who says Alcibiades should cease to take the woman’s role, at which Alcibiades asks him why does he not return to his own wife” (p. 267).

¹¹ As it is heavily depicted in Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

¹² For a further study on the intricacies of gender and sexuality among the *Assassin’s Creed Odyssey*’s protagonists, see Eklund et al. (2024).

¹³ Though this paper focuses on a portrayal of bisexuality in a videogame, the representation of diverse sexualities within the context of the ancient world is not original to video games and has a long history of representation on screen, cf. e.g. Cyrino, 2013.

3. Alcibiades in *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*

3.1. *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*

Belonging to the *Assassin's Creed* franchise, *Odyssey* is Ubisoft's eleventh game of the series, along with its additional content, such as its two DLCs (downloadable content), and a book. The game series is primarily developed by the Canadian studio Ubisoft Montreal and published by the game company Ubisoft. As for *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* specifically, the game is mainly developed by Ubisoft Québec and was officially released on October 5th, 2018, through its main platforms (PlayStation, Xbox, and Microsoft Windows). Its success doesn't cease to increase as, most recently evaluated, the game has been ranked the franchise's third best-selling game, with a total of 10 million copies sold (Mazanko, 2025), and is recognized among many as a fan favorite (Breslin, 2023).

Outside the scope of leisurely playing *Odyssey*, the game has, since its release, been a recurrent topic of research in many fields, such as Classics, Classical reception, Gender and Queer studies, and Game and Historical Game studies, given its portrayal of Classical Greece during the time of the Peloponnesian War. This is because *Assassin's Creed* developers included not only very articulate historical locations, but also historical events, important figures to both the Spartan and Athenian politics during the War, their known conflicts, and, for a connection to Homer's *Odyssey*, optional missions with mythological creatures.

Given this reference to optionality in the player's interaction with the Ancient World, *ACO* is a video game that splits its gameplay between both main and side stories. The player has to complete main missions, which consequently affect the main story¹⁴ and progress it, and may choose to complete side missions, which won't have nearly any consequences in the main story and simply exist for the sake of immersion and relationship development among NPCs (non-playable characters). This immersivity of side missions is relevant because it includes the player in the role of their chosen protagonist, *Kassandra* or *Alexios*, a mercenary ("misthios") who completes many requests in exchange for pay, no matter how elaborate they may be. And that is the style of side mission which this study will focus on with the character of *Alcibiades* (*Alkibiades*, in-game).

3.2. "Alcibiades"

Odyssey's player first meets *Alcibiades* in Athens, specifically in *Pericles' Symposium*, where they may interact with and be in the presence of various historical figures¹⁵ while they search for answers regarding their protagonist's missing mother – one of the game's main objectives. The interactions made in the Symposium vary from simple conversation, where the player may have contact with historical figures and what they're known for – for example, they may be a part of a Socratic discussion on what makes a good leader – to interactions that may bring them to possible leads on their search for their mother. *Alcibiades*, in his introduction, shows to be presented with both.

When first entering the Symposium, the "misthios" is introduced to every single interactive character by *Herodotus*, from a distance. *Herodotus* introduces them with a short description, as the game screen shows the character he is mentioning in a close-up. The player may then choose between two options whether they have heard or not of said character, or even like them, given previous interactions. During the introductions, *Alcibiades* interrupts the conversation by appearing behind *Herodotus* and the "misthios", only wearing his undergarments. He waves his arms around and staggers as he makes his way down the steps, most definitely drunk. Similarly to the Platonic texts, *Alcibiades* exclaims his displeasure with "vile *Socrates*", holding onto the "misthios" as he pleads for them to protect him. Before the "misthios" gets to answer him, he struggles to walk away drunkenly and gets a hold of a man, just as undressed, who he grabs by the hand. He then signals to a woman to follow them, too, and all of them go down a hallway, out of view. His character is introduced by *Herodotus* too, after this, but simply as a warning of "Let's not use (*Alcibiades*) as an example. Be good, and don't drink too much".

Still in the Symposium, *Alcibiades* becomes useful to the player in regard to information through a small side mission – which I will describe in detail for an easier understanding of how *ACO* decided to introduce him further. The "misthios" comes across *Alcibiades* once the player walks to the hallway the trio had previously gone to and finds the door to the room they disappeared into. Once the door opens, *Alcibiades* flirtatiously makes conversation with the "misthios", which the player may choose to be direct with their intentions by either saying "I'm looking for someone" or "Sounds like quite a party". Both of these options, in their own ways, will lead to *Alcibiades* asking the player for a favor: to fetch olive oil from the kitchen – making this side mission get its name, "Oil and Love". When returning with the oil, the player may choose to get to know *Alcibiades* by asking him "Why are you so different than *Perikles*?", which accurately matches his historical figure as having lived most of his life in the house of the Athenian leader, or "Why do you seem so taken by *Socrates*?", which accurately makes *Alcibiades* display his displeasure for not ever being able to convince *Socrates* to spend the night with him – just as in *Plato's Symposium*, 219b-c. Following this, the player is offered the possibility to enter the room with *Alcibiades* and be a part of his festivities. Nonetheless, *Alcibiades*, given that the favor has been completed, will still help the player with what he knows: "(A woman who) Fled Sparta? No one flees Sparta! But, let's pretend she did. If she were stupid, she'd be dead. If she were smart, she'd do what *Aspasia*

¹⁴ That is because the interactivity in *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* is present even in dialogue. By including a variety of possible sentences, the player may choose what to say, which may change the outcome of some missions, scenes, or conversations.

¹⁵ *Herodotus*, *Socrates*, *Euripides*, *Aristophanes*, *Sophocles*, *Hermippos*, *Thrasymachus*, *Alcibiades*, *Metiochus*, *Protagoras*, *Aspasia*, *Pericles*, and more.

did – she'd earn her independence. The smartest and most... resourceful women I've ever met have been in Korinthia".

These women are the *hetaerae* of Korinth, who Alcibiades distinguishes from any other *hetaerae* in other places in the Greek world. Alcibiades describes them as never wanting to be described as prostitutes¹⁶ as they "offer much more than their bodies" and, most importantly, "These women are companions. Counselors. Confidantes. Powerful men come to the *hetaerae* asking for advice, and value their words more than those of their closest friends and advisors". I mention the *hetaerae* because, similarly to these powerful women of Korinth, Alcibiades too is introduced heavily with the topics of love and sex, making his sexuality apparent to the player since his first appearance. In a space of politics, where everyone else is beginning to choose sides in the War and new leaders, Alcibiades is drunk and uses the Symposium for fun and sex, and, with that, Ubisoft creates their own Alcibiades.

In Ubisoft's introduction to Alcibiades, his bisexuality is undeniable from his first moments on screen, but it is through the first side mission outside of the Symposium that Alcibiades' true character is built. This side mission is named "Handle with Care", where Alcibiades requests the help of the "misthios" to deliver a package from a man named Diodoros to another named Bardas, stationed at a Korinthian military fort. Throughout the entirety of the interaction, the player may wish to gather more information, but Alcibiades makes continuous sexual innuendos, which foreshadow what is inside the package¹⁷, and refuses to give out any more information on: what it is, why Diodoros may not deliver it himself, and continuously emphasizes how important it is that the package is delivered by a request of Diodoros, and not himself.

Upon entering the Korinthian military fort, the player must interact with Bardas, who finds a "misthios" presence in his fort strange. After handing over the package, Bardas responds angrily with, "Is this some kind of joke? This is a cast of someone's dick! What's this engraving? «This is for your wife Thelia, for when she starts to miss me»". Bardas angrily turns to the "misthios" and demands to know from whom this package comes from. The player may do as Alcibiades said, getting the response of "Diodoros? He'll pay for this with his life! I'll destroy his men. I'll destroy his ship. He'll regret ever touching Thelia!"; they may also say that it was from Alcibiades, which makes Bardas say in response "(Alcibiades)? Just because Perikles took him in and he's friends with important people, he thinks he can do whatever he wants. I won't let him get away with this!"; and they also can say it is their own and initiate a fight between the two. Once returning to Alcibiades, the player must tell him that they have done what they were told. He then confesses that the cast was his and, if the player did as he told them to, that he only did it to get Diodoros "out of the way". And, with it, Alcibiades makes the player/"misthios" a pawn in his first political scheme without ever revealing to them the mission's true purpose.

Moreover, Alcibiades' historical influences can be further understood and the theme of sexuality continues to be recurring in this first mission. Bardas is introduced as a military leader for the Korinthian army – ally to Sparta during the Peloponnesian War and a part of the Peloponnesian League – and Diodoros as another leader, given Bardas' words which stated that he had his men and his ship. Alcibiades is historically remembered to not have been entirely loyal to Athens during the Peloponnesian War, and that, many times, he would work on Sparta's side to bring down Athens – as well as come back to the latter and offend the former. *AC: Odyssey*, in their portrayal of Alcibiades, seems to be¹⁸ loyal to his reputation during the war, but does not focus on his schemes as a "strategos" or even an orator, but in schemes to do with one's spouse or one's marriage to bringing them down. Having made Alcibiades distance himself from political discussions during the Symposium in exchange of wine and sex, to show him now acting by himself against his enemies through his own style: with the help of a "misthios" and with a lie of how a man's wife has had an affair with his enemy; Alcibiades introduces his political side, which is just as sexual as his character.

Similarly to the previous mission, Alcibiades' political scheming resumes with yet more indirect statements of his sexuality's involvement. Back in Athens, more specifically in the Port of Piraeus, the player may help Alcibiades with another side mission titled "Designated Rider". Once approaching Alcibiades, his interactions with the "misthios" clearly show that he is drunk, but, though he has already finished his drinking for the day, he needs help. Beside Alcibiades is a man lying on the ground, whom he introduces with: "There's an important politician here who really needs to get back home, but gods know I can't make the trip". If the player questions why the politician may not stay the night where he lies, Alcibiades makes yet another innuendo: "I would, but it's never good to let a politician stay the night. It's a rule of mine". If the player questions Alcibiades why this politician is so important, Alcibiades will pretend not to know him with "Well, he... Uh... It was something to do with people, I think? Gods, I don't know. You may as well ask what I ate ten days ago". And, finally, if the player asks how Alcibiades parties so much, he reveals his strategy with "Practice, practice, practice. The more I do, the better chance of having a clearer head than those around me". Alcibiades is, with

¹⁶ There are some studies that argue the difference between the many types of prostitution. For the purpose of this study, two terms are to be explained: "porne" and "hetaera". "Porne" is the woman who takes money in return for the sexual use of her body, commonly known as the prostitute; whereas the "hetaera" is closer to today's "mistress", as she is loyal to a single man for sexual favours without a promise of marriage, intention of having a family, or even to have a relationship (Dover, pp. 20-21; Oyamada, p. 121-122).

¹⁷ When they first meet, he says "Someone like me is always on the move. I've docked my ship in every "port"!". When the "misthios" comments on the small size of the package, Alcibiades replies "One should never judge something by its size, you know. A small thing may very well make a huge impact".

¹⁸ With the information still to come, in later missions, this statement will be proven false; but given that this is a part of Alcibiades' character development, I acknowledge it as a way *ACO* found to include Alcibiades' historical behavior during the war, even if for while still building his character.

this, consequently accused of gaining advantage over his guests, so he states, “Over my allies? Never. Actually, let’s not talk about such things”.

Following this, the player must pick up the politician and bring him home. Throughout the walk through the city, the drunken politician begins to not recognize where he is with “Wait, why are we going this way?”, “Are you sure this is the right way? It doesn’t look familiar”, and “Why did you bring me here?”. As soon as the player puts down the politician in front of a house at the end of an alley, three men appear, and one of them shouts, “Ha, it’s exactly like we were told! Get him!”, initiating a fight, where the player may defend the politician.

Alcibiades makes it quite obvious, given his previous answers, that he had his hand on the ambush of the politician and is, yet again, manipulating and omitting most of the information to the player when employing their hand. He indirectly states that he parties with both his allies and his enemies, yet he only tries to gain an advantage through alcohol with his enemies – and Alcibiades is clearly soberer. And, though he never states if this politician in particular was an enemy or an ally and pretends to not know much about him, he still leads the player to leave the politician in an alley that isn’t his home and is perfect for an ambush. The ambush, of course, is not the focus of this analysis, but the conversation prior to it is. Though it is not shown in other missions, Alcibiades’ parties, as he states, tend to have some political scheming behind them, even if that may mean an advantage through alcohol. Still, with the statement of “I would, but it’s never good to let a politician stay the night. It’s a rule of mine” when offered to let the man sleep off his alcohol, Alcibiades indirectly admits that, though it is never good to do so, politicians have spent the night at his place. And, with his justification of “You know how they can be. Never want to stop talking. There’s only so much I can take”, shows that it has indeed happened before.

Moreover, at the beginning of the following mission, the “mishthios” is clear with what had happened when taking the politician home, which Alcibiades answers with “That’s terrible! I’m glad to see you’re okay”. If the player did not save the politician, their “mishthios” will lie and state that they were attacked by animals, which Alcibiades responds with “I see. Well, plans change sometimes”; and when accused of being very accepting, “What else can I do? We should both forget this ever happened. Pretend you never even saw the man”. But if the player does save the politician, Alcibiades is disappointed, “Oh. I see. Thank you for telling me (...) I’m just... impressed you were able to save the both of you”. Nevertheless, they change topics, but Alcibiades’ hand on the ambush continues to be obvious. This, of course, marks the mission as another quest where Alcibiades isn’t truthful regarding the true objective at hand. Alcibiades masks his true intentions to have the politician killed with just a party, just as he did with Diodoros’ killing with just a delivery.

More of Alcibiades’ constant connections to sexuality are found in this next mission’s quest, titled with yet another sexual innuendo, “Rock Hard”. Here, Alcibiades requests the help of the “mishthios” with: “There’s an item that holds great sentimental value I’d like you to retrieve”. The item is revealed to be an “olisbos”¹⁹, described as “It brings... pleasure. When my body grows too tired after a long night, having one of these can let the fun continue”. The reason why Alcibiades may not fetch the “olisbos” himself is that the woman who has it may not want to see him again, but he makes it clear that he has never slept with her. Once accepting to get the “olisbos”, Alcibiades states, “There’s a small chance the woman may wish to keep it for herself... to spite me. It may be best to go unseen and hurry back” before the “mishthios” leaves. Upon collecting the rock “olisbos” and returning to Alcibiades, he acts as if he had never seen it before, making the “mishthios” conclude that it was never his in the first place and that it had been stolen. Alcibiades then reveals the real reason behind this mission: “We didn’t just steal an “olisbos” – we stole a family heirloom and a husband’s confidence. Without it, he’ll be focused on his wife instead of his business. I think she’ll enjoy the change of pace”. In this mission, Alcibiades yet again lies to the “mishthios” to achieve a victory over a possible enemy of his, and makes sex a theme and motivation behind his request.

This constant omission of the real objective behind each quest is brought up in the following side mission named “Across the Border”. The side quest is a moment of further development of the “mishthios” and Alcibiades’ relationship, as the player may choose to doubt Alcibiades’ words, given all the times that he hasn’t been truthful. This time, Alcibiades needs a friend to be escorted to the Sanctuary of Eleusis, but they must avoid being seen. If the player questions the real meaning behind this mission, Alcibiades will be confused and hurt, stating, “I’m hurt that you’d jump straight to accusations. A good relationship must be built on trust, after all”. This choice of dialogue develops another section of discussion that the other two choices don’t have. If the player continues to press that Alcibiades does have a record of continuous lies in these missions, Alcibiades brushes it off by saying that the omission had been done for the “mishthios” protection, promising to be truthful in the future. Yet, if the player chooses to do it angrily, they will tell Alcibiades that he needs to earn the trust of the other and all he has done is lie, which Alcibiades responds with “You and I have different views of trust, nothing more. I’ve kept things to myself, but never to hurt you”.

The mission continues regardless of the choices made by the player, and the truth behind this mission happens right after the “mishthios” and their escortee reach the Sanctuary. There, the escorted man is, in fact, a woman who has been trying to escape her husband, whose violence she escapes, or she “wouldn’t have lasted much longer”. Given this revelation after the discussion regarding Alcibiades’ constant lying, the “mishthios” will say “So, let me guess. (Alcibiades) owed you a favor... or now has some scheme where you owe him”, to which the woman will respond with “I’m not sure what you mean. He didn’t ask anything of me, and I’ve never known him to do so. I know many people he’s helped at the expense of nobody but himself”.

¹⁹ From the greek ὄλιβος, which means “dildo”.

Before taking any conclusions or arguments on Alcibiades' new characteristic, I must mention a discussion made in the last side mission with Alcibiades. With the mission "Happily Ever After", the "misthios" may offer their help yet again, although this time, to help Alcibiades get married to a woman, Iris. The player will have to simply grab flowers, a ring, and food, and finally meet Iris at the Altar of Love. When meeting her, she rightly recognizes the "misthios" as one of Alcibiades' messengers, and, with it, reveals a plan of her own: "He has a skill for making others do things he doesn't want to. On top of that, he prefers if those people are attractive. He's so predictable. It's what made this whole thing so easy". The player may choose to defend Alcibiades, as Iris is clearly using him. Iris explains that Alcibiades is not a man one marries for love, but he does have a chance of ruling one day, and she wishes to be "the Aspasia to his Perikles" – "he'll be the face, but I'll be the one truly leading". The "misthios" might want to still defend Alcibiades, but Iris answers with "Oh, please. If anyone deserves it, it's (Alcibiades). Surely you've noticed. The obsession with sex. The lies. The drinking". Iris, too, does not appear to be threatened when the "misthios" considers telling her plans to Alcibiades, as he is happy and she is just simply "getting something in return". Shortly after, when meeting with Alcibiades, the player may be honest with him about their thoughts on Iris, but Alcibiades responds with "I knew she was special. To think I wasn't able to catch on... I can't wait to marry her" and nothing else, much to the "misthios" confusion.

The large list of side missions of Alcibiades has ended, and, with it, Alcibiades may answer questions on what their true objective was. The "Handle with Care" mission was to get rid of Diodoros as a way to pay a debt, as well as have a way to infiltrate spies under Bardas' command – therefore, not going against Athens by killing Diodoros, but by using it as a way to infiltrate Peloponnesian forces. In the "Designated Rider" mission, Alcibiades describes the politician as brilliant, but he had opposed him – therefore, a "fatal combination". Alcibiades intended to substitute him with a "much dumber man", but he had survived both the party and the walk home. In the mission "Rock Hard", the stealing of the "olisbos" made the governor of trades between Attika and Megaris lose his job due to complications with his wife, making Alcibiades the new man in charge. And interestingly, the friend to be escorted to the border was just an act of kindness. The player will not have a choice to ask about Iris' purpose to Alcibiades, but he will still say it: "(...) I marry for love. If those other things happen (rich house, respected family, wealth)... Well, I wouldn't complain".

4. Conclusions

Assassin's Creed Odyssey focuses on Alcibiades' sexuality without excluding politics. "Alcibiades" is a bisexual man, made clear with both his many relationships with men and women seen throughout the many missions, and he uses his bisexuality, at times, to his advantage: as analysed in "Designated Rider", where there is an omission to his involvement with other politicians during parties, and in "Happily Ever After", where Iris mentions how all Alcibiades' favors are done by those he considers attractive – and given his relationship with the game's main "misthios", a sexual relationship must be common among many of those he hires for his many favors. As similarly referenced by Klein, Mary Renault, when studying Alexander, the Great and his own bisexuality, deems it a "normal Greek bisexuality" (1993, p. 138), though it is continuously misinterpreted by many as either heterosexuality or homosexuality. Alcibiades' bisexuality in *Odyssey* is "normal" in the way it is represented. Though it is prioritized in his character development, it is not made to shock or to forcefully include, but to follow history. To both be loyal to Alcibiades' surviving historical reputation, and to the Classical Greeks' somewhat acceptance of the freedom of sexual and romantic (typically free male) attraction to any person.

Additionally, Alcibiades' depiction in the game also plays with Bisexual Theory with the ideas of trust and loyalty. Klein mentioned in his work how the bisexual is seen as the spy or the traitor by both the homosexual and the heterosexual. Alcibiades, in this representation, lies, omits, and changes reality to fit his narrative to get the "misthios" help. In "Handle with Care", he lies about the package's donor for a political scheme of his own. In "Designated Rider", he omits his true relationship with the politician and lies about not knowing much about him. In "Rock Hard", he lies about the true ownership of the "olisbos" and his relationship with its true owner. And in "Across the Border", he lies about the escortee's true identity. Alcibiades defends his omissions and lies as a protection to the "misthios", and Iris herself deems his constant lying as a trait worthy of consequences – in her case, for him to be used. *Odyssey*, with this, does make Alcibiades deceitful and untrustworthy, and lets the player be the judge of it in the end by letting him know (or not) about Iris' true intentions with the marriage. However, we cannot argue that the game had done it in a way of prejudice to Alcibiades for his bisexuality, given that he, historically, is known for not being loyal – in War, to either Athens or Sparta – or in his personal life – to his wife Hippacrete and so many other lovers. And neither was he trustworthy – given his involvement and influence in the Sicilian Expedition. And yet, in the mission "Happily Ever After", *Odyssey* includes Alcibiades' honesty about all of his objectives, including his future plans for the city of Athens, as a follow-up to his promise to the "misthios" about being sincere in the future. And in "Across the Border", the task was a simple act of kindness to a woman in need. The video game, with these means, is clear with its intentions with the character of Alcibiades, as all his dishonesty is applied to politics and never to him as a person or friend.

With this, it is important to add that, with the new given information, it has been proven that the mission of "Handle with Care" had not been done to go against Athens and favor Sparta, which would've been an accurate representation of Alcibiades. *AC: Odyssey* made sure to erase that side of history from Alcibiades' character, though it can be considered that they kept it from being said until the last mission to create the

illusion of Alcibiades being deceitful, untrustworthy, and a bad person. By erasing this side of him, *Odyssey* is simply making Alcibiades an enemy to those who cross him, but loyal to his circle and city.

To conclude this study, it is clear that Alcibiades, though introduced as a drunk and an unserious character at a Symposium, works as a politician in every single one of these missions, as most of his favors have a political scheme behind them. And, as already stated, his bisexuality is a big part of his character, even in politics. This closeness to his own sexuality is wielded by Alcibiades against other people, using sex and love, homo or heterosexual, as his weapon. In “Handle with Care”, he makes a cast of his own genitals to initiate a conflict between two men in regards to one’s wife. In “Designated Rider”, he implies sleeping with other politicians. In “Rock Hard”, he uses a rock “olisbos” as a reason to pull away a man from his position in power. And in “Across the Border”, he helps a woman escape her abusive husband. Alcibiades’ schemes, political or not, are most times associated with the topic of love or sex, and his flirtatious behaviour with the “mishios”, with Socrates, or with any other character, male or female, follows him for his every action or scheme. Alcibiades’ character is mainly defined by his sexuality, and *Assassin’s Creed Odyssey* gave it to him as a political weapon which he may use as he pleases.

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