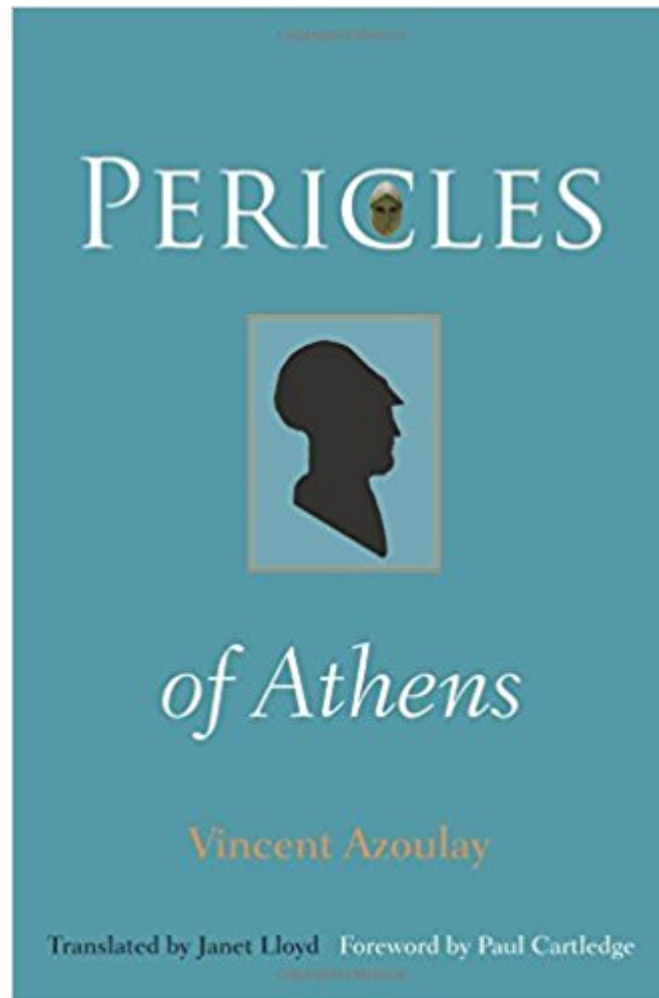


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Pericles Of Athens



Synopsis

Pericles has had the rare distinction of giving his name to an entire period of history, embodying what has often been taken as the golden age of the ancient Greek world. "Periclean" Athens witnessed tumultuous political and military events, and achievements of the highest order in philosophy, drama, poetry, oratory, and architecture. *Pericles of Athens* is the first book in more than two decades to reassess the life and legacy of one of the greatest generals, orators, and statesmen of the classical world. In this compelling critical biography, Vincent Azoulay provides an unforgettable portrait of Pericles and his turbulent era, shedding light on his powerful family, his patronage of the arts, and his unrivaled influence on Athenian politics and culture. He takes a fresh look at both the classical and modern reception of Pericles, recognizing his achievements as well as his failings while deftly avoiding the adulatory or hypercritical positions staked out by some scholars today. From Thucydides and Plutarch to Voltaire and Hegel, ancient and modern authors have questioned the great statesman's relationship with democracy and Athenian society. Did Pericles hold supreme power over willing masses or was he just a gifted representative of popular aspirations? Was Periclean Athens a democracy in name only, as Thucydides suggests? This is the enigma that Azoulay investigates in this groundbreaking book. *Pericles of Athens* offers a balanced look at the complex life and afterlife of the legendary "first citizen of Athens" who presided over the birth of democracy.

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Customer Reviews

But in some ways they're similar. Brash new champion of democracy, or same old/same old

aristocrat? Clever strategist or bumbler? The thing about Kennedy is that we have a lot of real detail on his life and times. Pericles, though we can sometimes imagine we do, the fact is we just have to fill in a lot of ancient history with speculation or informed guesses. And though the Kennedy controversies are the stuff of ongoing debate based on facts still available and eventualities still unfolding, the Pericles controversies are really historiographical. That's perhaps the main point of the book. As our author points out, Pericles' reputation has had numerous ups and downs in the last millennia. Grote and others put him forth as a champion of democracy in the late 1800's, but anti-imperialism and the dissing of Athenian democracy (as compared to the wonderful example of our own great land(s)!), are perhaps taking a toll currently. I've been reading Greek history at the rate of a book a season since college, 50+ years. I'm not bragging, but there's a little experience. Sometimes it seems hard to find something fresh. Lots these (since the 80's) days is just military history, a genre which is really getting stale. Well, what're we about if not that? I'm finding this book not to be that, thank God. All of the ancient sources are well laid out and parsed. There's more detail on the actual man himself and critically presented than I know where to find elsewhere. The theme of the book is to examine the historical facts in the context of the historians and the original writings on whom we depend. Plutarch is a primary source here, and this in itself shows upon what uncertain ground we tread. But all the sources are well used, including the playwrights and others contemporary with Pericles himself.

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