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Jacqueline de Romilly, *The Life of Alcibiades: Dangerous Ambition and the Betrayal of Athens*, translated by Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019. Pp. 228. Cloth (ISBN 978-1-5017-1975-2). \$29.95.

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carefully or partially, or tune it out completely. Similarly, images and iconic programs could be placed high above the viewer's head and out of sight, as on the Parthenon frieze or Trajan's Column, or make little or no attempt to inform the viewer on the decorated objects of normal life (like the notoriously unhelpful inscriptions on Athenian vases, or the complex, small-scale imagery of Roman coins). Decoration, like all imagery, had a crucial role to play simply by being present: to stamp the *Lebenswelt* with meaning.

As with all his writing, Hölscher wears his immense learning lightly, distilling the most complex ideas, his own and others', into crystalline prose, and his arguments here are elegantly supported by nearly 200 maps, plans, diagrams, and photographs. To experience the full thrust of his arguments, one ideally should read this book from start to finish, though one of its most exciting aspects—how it injects new vigor into subjects one thinks one knows well, like Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* (Ch. 2) or the rise of the portrait (Ch. 3)—is equally available at the level of each individual chapter. But it is the sheer scope of this book, together with the richness of its material, that makes it difficult to think of a parallel, at least from the field of ancient art history. Indeed, its reach feels all the more refreshing given the current emphasis on individual specialization, although this will inevitably invite criticism from some—as much as for what has been left out, as for the actual content. Here, I would note that, overall, the evidence is weighted somewhat more heavily toward Greece than Rome, presumably explained by the fact that Hölscher's system privileges a homogeneity of image-makers and viewers (“the community”), which is easier to accept for some periods (like 6th century Athens) than for others (e.g., Imperial Rome). Nevertheless, with this book, he has given us a compelling and coherent theoretical model, applied across a staggeringly wide range of genres and historical periods, which must play a crucial role in the study of visual culture for years to come.

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Jacqueline de Romilly, *The Life of Alcibiades: Dangerous Ambition and the Betrayal of Athens*, translated by Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019. Pp. 228. Cloth (ISBN 978-1-5017-1975-2). \$29.95.

To students of Greek history, Alcibiades needs no introduction. Ward of Pericles, wanton playboy, and brazen politician, Alcibiades spent fifteen years at the forefront of politics in the Greek world, inextricably linked to the changing tides of the Peloponnesian War. However, this volume is not primarily for those students. Originally published in 1995 as *Alcibiade, ou, les dangers de l'ambition* (*Alcibiades: The Dangers of Ambition*) and now

released in a translation by Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings, Jacqueline de Romilly's *The Life of Alcibiades* is pitched foremost at "those who don't know anything about him" (xiv). As a result, *The Life of Alcibiades* is a straightforward biography, with most of the critical analysis reserved for two brief interludes (philosophy and scandal: 31–4; Thucydides and Xenophon: 137–40).

De Romilly's thesis is simple: Athens had "an Alcibiades problem" (xii). She presents Alcibiades as a tragic hero—supremely talented and deeply flawed—whose dangerous combination of charisma and narcissism broke Athenian democracy in a way that ought to serve as an evergreen warning.

On the one hand, it is hard to disagree with this portrait. Alcibiades lived his life at the center of a maelstrom of scandal, often, if not always, of his own creation, while his pedigree, wealth, and charisma inspired tremendous love and bitter enmity. This portrayal is not unique. De Romilly generally follows Plutarch's biography of Alcibiades supplemented by other literary evidence such as his memorable entrance in Plato's *Symposium*, and the rare revision, like explaining the accusation of profaning the Eleusinian mysteries as rumor of Alcibiades' participation in foreign cults spun into an attack by his enemies (74–5).

On the other hand, de Romilly readily admits how much contemporary events shaped her interpretation. At times she invokes Napoleon (Chapter 10: "Slightly More than One Hundred Days") and de Gaulle (e.g. "two triumphal returns," 150) with regard to Alcibiades, but, more frequently, she interprets the death of Pericles and end of an Athenian golden age as parallel to the loss of the French colonial empire and the scandals of the Fifth French Republic after the death of de Gaulle (xiii). This is not to say that de Romilly is wrong, particularly in a book geared at a popular audience where such analogies are an expected convention. Rather, this lens contributes to her idealization of fifth-century Athens. She refers to "that enlightened century" (43), for instance, and lauds "the universal beauty of Greece" (199), which Ruth Webb characterizes as a repeated feature of de Romilly's work in the recent volume *Women Classical Scholars* (Oxford, 2016: 388–91).

If the Athenian defeat marked an end to this enlightened period, then de Romilly sees the hidden hand of her hero at every turn. Yet, Alcibiades proves an awkward fit for de Romilly's thesis of the decline of Athens. For de Romilly, Alcibiades' personality warped Athenian democracy through the combination of overweening ambition, scandals, and personal rivalries. He is the catalyst such that he becomes responsible for developments like the Oligarchy of 411 BCE for which he was not present and the final defeat of Athens after his death. To her credit, de Romilly frames these issues as inherent flaws to democracy, but she also substantiates her case that Alcibiades was at the forefront of these changes through a narrow biographical focus. To be sure, Alcibiades flagrantly abused the post-Periclean democracy, but so did others who de Romilly rarely mentions. Cleon, the demagogue who dominated most of the 420s BCE in Athens, for instance, makes just three brief appearances (8, 36 and 65).

Careful and informed readers will note both contributions and points of contention left unaddressed throughout this book, which came toward the end of de Romilly's long and distinguished career. To give just one example, she confidently declares that conspirators knocked the genitalia off the herms in 415 BCE, which is a traditional and possible interpretation, even though Thucydides only indicates mutilation of the faces (περικόπησαν τὰ πρόσωπα, 6.27).

One might also challenge some of de Romilly's underlying assumptions. She acknowledges, for instance, that the advisor is a trope in ancient historiography, but nevertheless declares that Alcibiades "had full authority over Tissaphernes, and thus in Persia" (115; reader, he did not). Similarly, she characterizes Alcibiades' flight to Sparta as an unprecedented betrayal (91–6), even though he fled there after being sentenced to death *in absentia* and our ancient sources likely exaggerate Alcibiades' contribution to Sparta. But, equally incorrectly, de Romilly accepts the year 404 BCE as the end of a golden era when in fact the Thirty lasted only about a year, after which the democracy was restored. War resumed only a few years later.

In other ways, *The Life of Alcibiades* shows its age. The spare bibliography is dated, as one would expect, but de Romilly also describes the banter between Alcibiades and Socrates in Plato's *Symposium* as containing "a hint of homosexual tenderness openly expressed" (25).

Ultimately, de Romilly's Alcibiades is a paradoxical character: a self-serving politician with the celebrity of movie and television stars (4) who used public office for personal gain and thus ruined his country *and* a phenomenally talented individual "destroyed by a flower of indiscretion" (198). Every generation sees itself on the road to hell and de Romilly's clear admiration for the man who is both hero and villain of her story sits uncomfortably at another moment of democracy imperiled. Nevertheless, *The Life of Alcibiades* serves as a reminder that the personal relationships of aristocrats and the blurred lines between public service and private ambition have always existed uneasily in democratic societies.

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Vassiliki Panoussi, *Brides, Mourners, Bacchae: Women's Rituals in Roman Literature*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019. Pp. 288. Cloth (ISBN 978-1-4214-2891-8) \$54.95.

In this engaging collection of published and unpublished work, Vassiliki Panoussi skillfully unpacks the interweaving of Bacchic, nuptial, and funerary imagery in Roman