

BOOK REVIEW

Pindar's Songs for Young Athletes of Aigina. By ANNE PIPPIN BURNETT. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. x + 276. Cloth, \$90.00. ISBN 0-19-927794-X.

Over the last two decades, Pindaric criticism has swung full-circle from the formalism of Elroy Bundy and his followers, who viewed attempts to interpret the odes in light of contemporary politics as speculative and misguided, to an unapologetic embrace of the historical, the local and the particular as essential determinants of each poem's conception and significance. Recent years have produced a wealth of historically and religiously embedded studies of epinician poetry, including important books by Christian Mann, Simon Hornblower, Jan Stenger, Bruno Currie and Nigel Nicholson.¹ But Anne Burnett (B.) is the first to focus a study on Pindar's relationship to patrons from a single locality, in this case the island for which he wrote more epinician commissions than for any other state.

B.'s greatest contribution is to suggest that the Aeacid mythology of Pindar's Aeginetan odes must be read against the contemporaneous backdrop of the sculptural program in the Temple of Aphaia, which was changed during the 480s to emphasize the Aeacid heroes of the first and second Trojan Wars in the two pediments (cf. *I.* 5.35-8 for Pindar's foregrounding of the parallel). After careful analysis of the mythographic sources, she concludes that the Aeacidae were a relatively late innovation in Aeginetan mythology, designed to give Aegina a prominent place in the pan-Hellenic saga of the Trojan War. In her view, the Thessalian Aeacidae suggested themselves to the Aeginetans because of the overlap between the Myrmidons and the ant-men who populated Aegina after its founder-king saved Greece from famine. On the other hand, the Nereid-born Phocus was a holdover from an earlier stratum of Aeginetan legend, who becomes syncretized and displaced within the Aeacid myth as the bastard son of Aeacus, killed by Peleus and Telamon to make way for a greater hero uniting the family with the favors of a powerful sea-goddess.

The other major strand in B.'s argument is the prominence of adolescent initiation in both the cult of Aphaia and Aeginetan athletics. She believes that all of Pindar's Aeginetan odes are for adolescent victors, even if not specified as such by their titles, since they either refer to trainers (e.g. *N.* 4) or invoke youth as a theme (e.g. *N.* 8). She thus subscribes to Leslie Kurke's notion that the odes serve to "rein-

¹ C. Mann, *Athlet und Polis im archaischen und frühklassischen Griechenland* (Göttingen, 2001); S. Hornblower, *Thucydides and Pindar* (Oxford, 2004); J. Stenger, *Poetische Argumentation: Die Funktion der Gnomik in den Epinikien des Bakchylides* (Berlin, 2004), esp. 264-317; B. Currie, *Pindar and the Cult of Heroes* (Oxford, 2005); N.J. Nicholson, *Aristocracy and Athletics in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Cambridge, 2005).

BOOK REVIEW

tegrate" the victorious athlete with his community, which he re-enters on a new footing, now the equal of adult citizens. However, I am not sure that we are safe in the assumption that all these odes were written for adolescent victors: *P.* 8 bears no traces justifying such a conclusion, and even poems that refer to "youth" or trainers are not necessarily composed for boys under 18, since in most sports competitive athletes even in the adult category were young men in their 20s, and trainers could continue to take pride in their achievements even if they were no longer directly supervising them. (Nor do we know, in any event, at what age supervised "training" ceased, if it ever did.) Recent scholarship on initiation has complained about the loose way over-enthusiastic literary scholars invoke the concept;² the present study offers a case in point.

After the first three chapters on Aeacid myth, the Temple of Aphaia and "Coming of Age," the bulk of the book consists of chapters analyzing each of the eleven epinicia for Aeginetan victors. Most readers will find themselves disappointed here. In the style of the author's earlier book on Bacchylides, we are treated to a complete Greek text and translation of each ode, followed by 10–20 pages of comment. These sections usually amount to little more than tedious paraphrase with copious footnotes surveying points of contention in the scholarly history. The themes of the first three chapters disappear except for the occasional animadversion, as in the fanciful claim that the artistic self-reflections of *N.* 4 are meant to serve as an instructional guide to the boys' chorus that sings it. Perhaps the best chapter is on *N.* 5: B. argues that the narration of Phocus' murder by his half-brothers is neither condemnatory nor embarrassed, but is cut short out of cultic reverence. She also usefully notes that Lampon's own family was without previous athletic distinction, but that his sons derived their talent from his wife's side. It is within this context that we are to understand the poem's juxtaposition of Hippolyta and Thetis as competing paradigms: choosing the right woman is of utmost importance.

One would expect a book with this focus to yield insight on Aegina's place within the convoluted inter-state politics of the period, but B.'s study is particularly weak in this respect. For example, she introduces *I.* 8 by positing that Aegina as well as Thebes enjoyed a tarnished reputation in the immediate aftermath of Plataea. But the fact that Aegina did not contribute more than a small army to that battle surprised no one, as the island was primarily a sea-power (and had been instrumental at Salamis). Similarly, the book downplays any significance of the Aphaia temple relative to Aegina's hostilities

² See especially D.B. Dodd and C.A. Faraone, eds., *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives* (London, 2003).

BOOK REVIEW

with Athens, arguing that the temple's isolated location made it unlikely that foreigners ever visited it. But even greater isolation hardly kept foreign visitors away from Dodona and Delphi. The point of the Aeacid mythology and sculptural program was to inscribe Aegina firmly into the pan-Hellenic sphere, and contestation with Athenian claims is also indicated by the temple's location on the tip of the island facing Athens and by its incorporation of Athena as the central figure of the pediments, as well as by the appropriation of the Salaminian heroes Telamon and Ajax into the Aeacid line (with which they originally had no connection).

Still more troubling are the questions one would expect the book to answer, yet are never even posed: why was Pindar so much in demand by Aeginetans? What personal or political links brought a Theban poet to that island to celebrate the special relationships of Thebe and Aegina, and Heracles and Telamon? Does the presence of prominent Athenian trainers in Aegina at a time of intense rivalry between the two states suggest a pro-Athenian policy on the part of some of the island's elite, or a pro-Aeginetan policy on the part of some Athenian aristocrats like Melesias? Were the athletic elite of Aegina men whose wealth was based on commerce and trade? If so, how does this affect their reception by the older, land-based elites from other states, who had long dominated the pan-Hellenic games? We must wait for another book to tackle such issues.

THOMAS K. HUBBARD

University of Texas, Austin