

BOOK REVIEW

Pindar and the Construction of Syracusan Monarchy in the Fifth Century B.C. By KATHRYN A. MORGAN. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xx + 460. Hardcover, \$85.00. ISBN 978-0-19-936685-9.

In this indispensable contribution to Oxford's Greeks Overseas series, Kathryn Morgan reads Pindar's odes for Hieron of Syracuse within their fifth century Syracusan, Sicilian, and panhellenic contexts. She argues that Pindar deploys familiar epinician tropes to construct a particular discourse of kingship around Hieron which simultaneously (i) normalizes his potentially problematic status as tyrant and (ii) establishes him as an idealized and divinely favored ruler. Through sensitive readings of individual odes and the construction of their accumulated resonances within the complex frameworks of fifth century power politics, Morgan convincingly demonstrates the role of Pindar's epinicians in theorizing and legitimating Hieron's monarchical status in the early fifth century.

Morgan charts a carefully historicizing approach, arguing that an ode's occasion encompasses not only its immediate performance setting but also its historical and political contexts. She reads the odes as products of and for their time, vehicles through which a celebration of athletic victory comes to authorize political and military preeminence as well. As she emphasizes, this reading—far from devaluing the odes as literature—depends on an appreciation of Pindar's claim to an authoritative poetic voice and the construction of his poetry as speech destined for the tyrant but controlled by a poet who views himself as an expert in his own sphere and not as a subordinate.

The monograph is divided into two major sections. After a rich methodological introduction exemplary for its clarity, chapters 2–4 reconstruct the political and cultural landscapes within which Hieron ruled and Pindar composed. Chapters 5–9 are dedicated to a close reading of one or (in the case of the final chapter) several odes celebrating Hieron (*Pyths.* 1, 2, and 3; *Ol.* 1) or his subordinates (*Ol.* 6; *Nems.* 1 and 9). This division allows readers to orient themselves within Hieron's world and its political currents before approaching the odes themselves. The downside to this structure, however, is that one does not sink one's teeth into the analysis of the first ode until page 163.

The contextualizing chapters offer a tour through the complex layering of frameworks which shaped the creation and reception of the odes. “The Deinomenids and Syracuse” (ch. 2) takes up a sequence of lenses (architecture and coinage among others) through which to view the self-presentation of the Deinomenid tyrants; “Poets and Patrons in Hieron’s Syracuse” (ch. 3) looks to the intellectual ferment of Hieron’s court and the international literary and intellectual headliners who were drawn to it; “Placing Hieron” (ch. 4) reconstructs a competition for a newly-defined panhellenic preeminence among figures like Themistokles, Pausanias, and Hieron himself in the aftermath of the Persian wars.

Like many guided tours, this one is not without an agenda: Morgan is interested in emphasizing how Hieron both constructs an ideological profile for himself and Syracuse and manages problematic models of kingship that emerged after the Persian Wars. She makes a clear case that Hieron is engaged in a project of self-definition, but some readers may find the claim that he was motivated by the problematization of tyranny at this period overstated. Does Hieron need to feel threatened in order to want to insert himself into panhellenic models of idealized kings and the defense of freedom? Enough of the evidence for the problematization of tyranny comes from later sources with their own agendas (e.g. Plutarch’s *Lives*) that one wonders whether certain of this material can be more productively applied to the later reception of Hieron than to contemporary responses. Morgan is, in any case, aware of these issues and points out potential circularity as necessary, allowing each reader to evaluate the evidence on its merits.

In the chapters devoted to the odes, Morgan gives ample attention to the individual goals, themes, and contexts of each composition while also deploying each reading in the service of an overarching argument that these odes are doing a particular kind of work for their very particular victor: using the celebration of athletic victory to frame Hieron’s royal status as another mode of earned and enduring triumph. Key strands of this argument include Pindar’s deployment of multiple discourses which are either endorsed and applied to Hieron (e.g. Hesiodic depictions of idealized kingship; civic acclamation of Hieron or a proxy) or rejected and distanced from Hieron’s identity and Pindar’s own authoritative “safe praise” (e.g. Archilochean invective; the speeches of the envious). Warnings to Hieron to be aware of the limits of human privilege are communicated by a “tyrannical mythology” of figures who enjoyed extraordinary divine favour but were unable to manage their good fortune and met disaster (Tantalos, Ixion, Asklepios and his mother Koronis). Morgan demonstrates that Pindar articu-

lates—and circumscribes—the relevance of these figures for Hieron through resonances and contrasts with other potential models in the odes, including the assimilation of Hieron's military achievements into the recently-mythologized panhellenic efforts against Persia. Throughout these chapters Morgan deftly illustrates the complex contemporary frameworks that Pindar balances and counterbalances in the service of stabilizing Hieron's place at the top of his world.

Morgan's groundbreaking approach delivers a compelling argument for reading the odes as literary discourses shaped by and for their historical moment. Her book will be of interest not only to scholars of archaic and classical Greek literature and history, but also to anyone concerned with the intersection of poetry and power.

HANNE EISENFELD

Boston College, eisenfel@bc.edu