

## BOOK REVIEW

*Pindar's Eyes. Visual and Material Culture in Epinician Poetry.* By DAVID FEARN. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. x + 150. Hardback, \$99.99. ISBN 978-0-19-874637-9.

David Fearn presents a novel, interdisciplinary approach to Pindar's epinicians that focuses on how poetry interacts with and reflects material culture and the visual. The interdisciplinarity arises from his application of literary and art historical theory in readings that explore issues of context and aesthetics. Ultimately, Fearn moves away from purely historicizing readings of Pindar's poetry which often seek access to some pure context. He does not deny the value of such studies, but observes that they are partial and unsatisfying in sufficiently addressing "the formal features of the texts we possess as the surest means available for constituting these texts' meaning and value" (5). For Fearn, supplementing such approaches with readings concerned with literary qualities provides a "truer understanding of the cultural and intellectual value of Pindar" (3). This volume is meant to provide such a supplement. To this end, Fearn does not offer a straight-forward description of how Pindar views his material world or how he employs the diction of viewing. Instead, his concern is "the poetic expression of choral lyric poetry as itself a construct about vision and aesthetics, about the possibility of cross-overs, and points of contact, across aesthetic and expressive divides of genre/art form/aesthetic mode, in terms of how to present, represent, or model the world for consumption by a wide range of audiences" (3). Expressed more succinctly, Fearn's argument throughout is that "the attitudes to material culture expressed in Pindar's epinician poetry provide fascinating insights into the nature of his poetry" (16). This approach is displayed in four independent studies of an eclectic selection of Pindar's epinicians. These studies are dense and rich; any descriptive overview will fall short in conveying their breadth. Common to all is the insistence that "interpretative difficulties and communicational challenges are intrinsic" to the poetics and meaning in Pindar (272). Each study embraces these difficulties and highlights how they are part of Pindar's poetics.

The first chapter demonstrates how *Nemean 5*, by engaging with and viewing material culture, is a consideration of the efficacy of poetry and sculpture in terms of commemoration. This interest in efficacy is confirmed for Fearn in Herodotus' accounts of the Aiginetans. Chapter 2 reads *Nemean 8* as a display of lyric referentiality. Pindar's idiosyncratic use of referentiality opens up interpretive potentials in ways that are paralleled by the engagement with statuary and cultic sites in the rest of the poem. The opening of these potentials allows Fearn to highlight a concern with memorialization expressed through haptic metaphors and gestures toward the material world; it also lays bare a poetic voice that is multiple and shifting. The chapter closes with a *coda* on Alcmaeon in *Pythian 8*. The third chapter reads *Pythian 1* as a display of literary devices that create space for scrutinizing its encomiastic subject. Fearn suggests that Pindar, with the use of ecphrasis, explores the relationship between mortality and immortality while also engaging with a broader history of Greek poetry. Chapter 4 widens the volume's scope and synthesizes previously raised issues. It reads Simonides' Danae fragment with an eye toward his biographical tradition and suggests that Bacchylides and Pindar develop Simonidean views of the relation between material and poetry in different ways.

Readers will certainly disagree over interpretations and translations of individual odes. It seems more productive, however, to provide an overview of the book's strengths than to list my differences of opinion. Overall, Fearn's methodology and aims are clearly set out in the introduction and rehearsed in the conclusion with suggestions for how to advance his approach. In many ways, readers may find these sections most valuable for their relative clarity. The novelty of Fearn's approach and the application of his methodology alone make this volume important for the study of Greek poetry. But there is also much more here. The engagement with Pindaric scholarship is thorough, often explained in lengthy footnotes. The readings derive from sound translations, arguments and interpretations, whatever will be thought of particular points. More importantly, these readings are exciting because they push our approach to Pindar beyond the rehash of scholarly quagmires and current trends. In many ways, these studies offer great value, individually and as a whole, that strives toward a new, art-historically informed approach to Pindar in which meaning derives from the poetics.

This fruitful volume will, however, challenge its readers. As the descriptive summary here suggests, Fearn's project and his argument are complex. This density, as the quotes provided above should indicate, is matched by Fearn's com-

plexity of expression. Readers of literary-theoretical analyses may be comfortable with the lengthy, meandering sentences, paragraphs and arguments. Others may not be so at ease, especially since this density of presentation is reflected in the length and structure of each study. Two examples should suffice. First, the final section of Chapter 1 notes an imminent conclusion (62); however, the chapter continues for another 27 pages. Second, the structure of Chapter 2, the longest in the volume, may make it difficult to recall how the opening section on lyric referentiality relates to the closing section on memorialization. There is a convincing connection, but the path through the forest meanders and Fearn's directions are complex. To be sure, these observations have more to do with style rather than substance. Yet, given the complexity of the subject and the density of the argument, the reader will have to work to access this volume's great value.

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