

SIMONIDES AND HORACE ON THE DEATH OF ACHILLES

ALESSANDRO BARCHIESI

- παῖ[σέ] σ· [. . . σὺ δ' ἥριπες, ὥς ὅτε πεύκην POxy 2327, fr. 5
 ἢ πίτυν ἐν βήσ[σαις οὔρεος οἰοπόλου
 ὑλοτόμοι τάμ[νωσι
 πολλὸν δ' † ἥρῳσ[end of column
 5 ἢ μέγα πένθ]ος λαὸν [ἐπέλλαβε· πολλὰ δ' ἐτίμων, beginning of
 καὶ μετὰ Πατρ]όκλου σ' ἄ[γγεῖ κρύψαν ἐνί. column POxy
 οὐ δὴ τίς σ' ἐδ]άμασσεν ἐφ[ημέριος βροτὸς αὐτός, 2327, fr. 6 +
 ἀλλ' ὑπ' Ἀπόλλ]ωνος χειρὶ [τυπεῖς ἐδάμης. 3965, fr. 1
 Παλλὰς δ' ἐγγὺς ἐοῦσα πε[ρικλεῆς ἄ]στ[υ καθεῖλεν,
 10 σὺν δ' Ἡρῇ, Πρ]ιάμου παῖσιν χ[αλεπ]τόμ[εναι
 εἶνεκ' Ἀλεξά]νδρῳ κακὸφρ[ονο]ς, ὥς τῶν [ἀλιτρών
 ἀλλὰ χρόνῳ]ιθεῖς ἄρμα καθεῖλε δίκ[ης.

I reproduce the text of Simonides fr. 11.1–12 as given by West 1993a.6, which corresponds to W² with the restorations proposed *exempli gratia* in his apparatus. In his initial publication, Parsons 1992a.28 recorded West's proposal to locate POxy 2327, fr. 5 immediately before 2327, fr. 6, which in turn overlaps with POxy 3965, fr. 1; these three fragments laid out with two others form Simon. fr. 11 W². Parsons 1992a observes (i) that 2327, fr. 5 clearly speaks of the death of a hero, fr. 6 of the death of someone who dies at the hand of Apollo; (ii) that the physical evidence of the papyrus is

Barchiesi 1995; translated by David Sider, who gratefully acknowledges the assistance of John Van Sickle and the author. With kind permission of *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*.

compatible with, but does not provide absolute proof of, the relationship mentioned above between the two pieces; and (iii) that nonetheless other contexts can be imagined for fr. 5, even within the *Elegy on Plataea*, to which certainly belongs fr. 11.6–45 W². The “heroic death” which is compared to a tree cut down by woodcutters could be that of one of the combatants in Plataea¹ rather than that of Achilles, as it would have to be if West’s collocation for fr. 5 is accepted.

West’s proposal, which provides my starting point, seems to me undeniably the best so far advanced, for two reasons: (i) fr. 5 ends one column and fr. 6 begins another;² (ii) the use of a simile which so clearly alludes to Homer (as I shall show below) presupposes strong epic coloring. If the simile appeared in the “hymn,” or proem, to Achilles (and not in a battle narrative), the Homeric effect is very much in accord with some other allusions already observed in the same context; for example, the ways in which ὀκύμορος and ὀοίδιμος are used, as shown by Lloyd-Jones 1994.1–3. The hymn to Achilles would appear even more enriched if we could see it as a sort of hymn to Homer as well. On the other hand, I find no sign that Simonides in any fragment of the Plataea battle elegy, even when displaying epic coloring,³ went so far as to employ that most Homeric of epic features, i.e., the extended simile. (See Stehle in this volume for other divergences from Homeric style.)

I would like, therefore, to point out a consequence of the consecutive collocation of POxy 2327, frs. 5 + 6, one which remains valid even if we do not accept West’s excellent restorations for vv. 1–3. That is, even if all these restorations prove to miss the mark, the following sequence can still be safely reconstructed: (i) *Someone strikes a blow*: Apollo against Achilles, to judge from 11.7–8 W²; (ii) *the warrior falls like . . .* (an unspecified kind of tree?) *or like a pine cut by woodsmen in the glades. . .*

1 Parsons, followed by Lloyd-Jones 1994.1, suggests Masistios or Mardonios. According to Herodotus (for what the comparison is worth), Mardonios was struck down while fighting on a white horse (9.63) and Masistios, thrown from his wounded horse, was dispatched with great difficulty by a blow to his eye, the only part of his body left uncovered by his armor (9.22).

2 Parsons 1992a. Barigazzi 1963.70 had already tentatively raised the possibility of placing the simile among the fragments on the battle, but, knowing only POxy 2327, he desisted.

3 Cf. West 1993a.9 (with an emphasis different from mine and in a different context): “The initial hymn to Achilles struck an epic note . . . there is even an epic simile. . . . There is no change of register as we move into the main narrative.”

This is sufficient to make us think that this fragment, in the position assigned it by West, was the model for Horace C. 4.6.9–12:

*ille, mordaci velut icta ferro
pinus aut impulsus cupressus Euro
procidit late posuitque collum in
pulvere Teucro.*

As in Simonides, the comparison describes the blow and the unforeseen fall of Achilles. And, as in Simonides, the comparison is twofold, one part being a pine tree cut down by axes. The sonorous combination *mordaci . . . icta* recalls the *figura etymologica* ὕλοτόμοι . . . τάμνωσι. I see no reason to think that we are dealing with a *locus communis* here. On the one hand, the two poets apply the same image to the same moment in the Trojan cycle, and the various accounts of the death of Achilles do not seem to offer many alternative sources. And, on the other hand, the similes of the type “fall like a tree” can be divided into two categories: (i) typical deaths in Homeric battle scenes;⁴ (ii) in later poetry, the downfalls of various strange types. Thus, Apollonius speaks in this way of the Giants, the Spartoi, and Talos; Catullus of the Minotaur; and Vergil of a boxer and, metaphorically, of the fall of an entire city.⁵

It is clear that both Simonides and Horace, taking their Homeric originals for granted, can quite similarly refer to the image of a hero’s death in battle. This time, however, the hero is the greatest of all, not least because of his height. Note, with Kiessling-Heinze, how *procidit late . . . in pulvere* alludes to *Od.* 24.39–40, where, among the shades, Achilles hears the story

4 *Il.* 13.389–91 = 16.482–84 is the closest parallel to Simonides, and seems to be West’s principal guide in his reconstruction:

ἤριπε δ’ ὥς ὅτε τις δρῶς ἤριπεν ἢ ἀχερωΐς
ἠὲ πίτυς βλωθρή, τήν τ’ οὔρεσι τέκτονες ἄνδρες
ἐξέταμον πελέκεσσι νεήκεσι νήϊον εἶναι·

Note that the second simile describes the death of a major warrior (Sarpedon), an episode which more than superficially seems to anticipate Achilles’ fate. Among other Homeric models, note *Il.* 17.53ff. for the role of the wind as a destructive agent, which anticipates Eurus in Horace.

5 Cf., e.g., Ap. Rhod. 1.1003ff., 3.1374ff., 4.1682ff. (where in one simile are combined the actions of the wind and of woodcutters); Catull. 64.105ff. (see below, n. 7); Verg. *A.* 2.626ff., 5.448ff. The *locus classicus* for the comparisons along these lines is now Nisbet 1987.

of his death from Agamemnon. If Horace, as I believe, is here making use of both Simonides and *Odyssey* 24, it is interesting to note that the Homeric model was already present in Simonides himself. For if it is true that Simon. fr. 11.6 W² speaks of the urn in which were united the ashes of Achilles and Patroclus (so West), it is clear that Simonides too was looking to *Odyssey* 24, which is the most detailed Homeric text on the death of Achilles. And the very fact that Simonides made a Homeric allusion reinforces Simonides' following programmatic declaration that it was Homer who had made memorable the short-lived heroes.⁶ Horace continues and extends this intertextual linkage.

R. G. M. Nisbet (*per litt.*) adds that the use of *late* in Catullus 64.109 is also pertinent in that it seems to be echoed by Horace. Compare his *ille . . . velut . . . pinus . . . procidit late* with *nam velut . . . pinum . . . illa prona cadit late* (Catull. 64.105–09). It is worth noting that Horace employs the fall of the Catullan Minotaur to recall the Homeric model ἐν στροφάλιγγι κονίης | κείσο μέγας μεγαλωστί (*Od.* 24.39–40), as though the echo of the Minotaur served to introduce a divergent, less sympathetic, point of view,⁷ whereas the Roman poet chooses to look at Achilles' death with a sense of liberation from a threat which is altogether alien to the Greek models here summarized: Homer, Simonides, and (see below) Pindar.

In both Simonides and Horace, the Homeric simile receives a new

6 The allusion works on so many levels that its density calls to mind the intertextuality we are accustomed to attribute to Alexandrian poetry. (i) In *Od.* 24, Agamemnon tells Achilles of his future fame (83–84, 93–94), after having recounted his death in a manner designed to complete the fame ordained by the *Iliad*. Simonides first implicitly recalls this passage in his narration, then he declares explicitly that Homer has immortalized the names of the heroes, and he continues, in his own fashion, Agamemnon's discourse on untimely death and the perpetuation of Achilles' name. (ii) If, then, as seems probable given the hymnic structure, Achilles was regularly cited in the second person, Simonides found a surprising way to recreate the grammatical situation of *Od.* 24, not otherwise reproducible, i.e., Simonides picks up from Agamemnon his second-person address to Achilles about his death and funeral (with its effects of the type "the flames consumed you . . . we gathered your white bones . . ."). (iii) On the other hand, this adherence to the model could also produce (in the best tradition of intertextuality) effects of deviation and innovation. For example, it seems probable that Simonides attributed the death of Achilles to Apollo alone, with a resulting modification of the Homeric tradition in which Paris is normally seen as Achilles' murderer. (See, however, Gantz 1993.625–28.)

7 Catull. 64 is pertinent also because the human victims sacrificed to the Minotaur (64.80) are later recalled at the sacrifice of Polyxena (362–70), while the image of Achilles becomes ever more disquieting. The mortal blow by Apollo is foreshadowed by his absence from the marriage which will lead to Achilles' birth (209–302).

justification. At the risk of sounding too rationalistic, I would note that tradition has it that Achilles was not struck at the throat or the breast—as is usually the case with Homeric warriors who fall to the ground “like a tree”—but at the heel⁸ or ankle. Achilles’ fall is modeled on that of a tall pine, not only because of its height,⁹ but also because his body was felled by a blow to the base, just like a tall trunk assailed almost at its root by the woodcutters.¹⁰

The context in Horace *C.* 4.6.1–20, as has been noted by the commentators, takes its direction, by and large, from Pindar *Paean* 6,¹¹ where Apollo kills Achilles, although Pindar’s sober description of the fatal blow, θρασεῖ φόνῳ πεδάσας (v. 86), cannot have been the inspiration for Horace’s simile. His description of Achilles as *filius . . . Thetidis marinae* (v. 6) is usually compared to Pindar *Paean* 6.83f., κυανοπλόκοιο παῖδα ποντίας Θέτιος, but the *Elegy on Plataea* now offers us two other parallel periphrases: fr. 10.5 W², κούρης εἰναλῆς ἀγλαόφημε πάϊ, and 11.19–20, θεᾶς ἐρικυδέος νιέ | κούρης εἰναλίου Νηρέος.¹² It may be that these and other similarities¹³ directed Horace’s memory from Pindar to Simonides—both poets being important models for the Fourth Book of the *Odes*. To

8 Stesichorus had earlier (if one accepts the reconstruction of Garner 1993.159), made mention of a blow to the ankle (σφυρός, *POxy* 3876, fr. 43.ii.8). In another direction, R. G. M. Nisbet has pointed out to me that *mordaci . . . icta* is comparable to the bite of a serpent (Ov. *Trist.* 5.4.12: *ictus ab angue*; note also the use of *mordax* for arrows poisoned with snake venom, Ov. *Pont.* 3.3.106), and that the blow to the ankle is comparable to the typical bite of a serpent (Ov. *Met.* 10.10: *occidit in talum serpentis dente recepto*).

9 Which need not exclude other motivations: Herodotus 6.37 is evidence for the idiomatic phrase “destroy like a πῖτυς”= “destroy utterly,” since this tree, once cut down, is incapable of regrowth. Horace employs the reverse image of the resilience of the Romans (*C.* 4.4.57): *duris ut ilex tonsa* [v.l. *tunsa*] *bipennibus*, which is based on Pi. *P.* 4.263–69; cf. Lefkowitz 1991.159. We do not know what other tree Simonides mentioned, but for Horace’s choice of the cypress we may imagine that the tree is appropriate for reasons either realistic (height, lack of solidity), symbolic (funerary associations), or mythological (the cypress was “invented” by the divine protagonist of the Horatian ode; cf. Ov. *Met.* 10.107: *nunc arbor, puer ante deo dilectus ab illo*).

10 In a less rationalistic vein, the duplicity of the agents mentioned in the model, the woodcutters and the wind, with their distinct traditions in epic similes, seems to suggest a hesitation on the part of the poet concerning the mysterious and inexplicable nature of the divine intervention which brought about the end of Achilles’ life. I owe this observation to Richard Hunter.

11 Cf. Fraenkel 1957.400–07.

12 Cf. Rutherford in this volume on fr. 11.19 W².

13 One may imagine that the specialists on this period are already at work on the connections between Pindar and the new Simonidean fragments: e.g., see Rutherford and esp. Mace

Simonides' function as a model in some of the lyrics of the Fourth Book—cf. 4.9.5–7, *non . . . Pindaricae latent Caeaeque . . . Camenae*—I shall return elsewhere;¹⁴ for now let me merely point out how Simonides' *Plataea* and Horace's *C.* 4.6. have in common (more so than Pindar) the use of myth in a patriotic context.

Horace orients his poetry towards the *Carmen Saeculare*. He thus finds himself in a situation which is not usual for him (a poet who has unexpectedly been called a *vates* in a public inscription);¹⁵ nor does it have strong support from Greek precedents. The elegiac production of Simonides is important because it offers a rare precedent (apart from epic, epinician, or threnody, but in rapport with all three), of a poet who sings themes of collective importance which are based on public patronage.¹⁶ Simonides exalts, in a sort of hymnic proem, the heroism of Achilles, who contributed to the Greek victory over the Trojans; he then sings, as an updated Homer, of the battle against the Persians for the survival of Greece. The panhellenic tone¹⁷ anticipates Herodotus' linkage of the siege of Troy and the Persian

forthcoming. One may hope for results which also involve Horace, given that the "dialogue" between Pindar and Simonides brings up poetic themes and programs which will be important for Horatian lyric; cf. *C.* 4.9.5–7 (quoted below).

- 14 For now one may simply note that *C.* 4.7 has been at the center of speculation about Horace as imitator of Simonides (or Semonides!). Cf. Cataudella 1927–28.229–32, Oates 1932.76–90. Further links are necessitated by the new Simonides fragments 19–29 W²; cf. Parsons 1992a.43, West 1993a.10–11 ("Lives, leaves"), and Sider in this volume. And Theocritus 16, an important model for *C.* 4.8 and 4.9, can now be re-evaluated (thanks to Parsons 1992b.10–12) in terms of its allusions to Simonides (keeping in mind the methodological lesson of Merkelbach 1952). I shall discuss Hor. *C.* 4.8 and 4.9 at greater length in Barchiesi forthcoming.
- 15 See below, n. 20. *Vatis Horati* (*C.* 4.6.44) comes as a complete surprise because Horace had already defined himself as *vates* in the last verse of *Epod.* 16, with a vastly different significance and context. The (anachronistic) role of *chorodidaskalos* which Horace assumes in *C.* 4.6 is compatible with the Pindaric influence, but also of course with the Simonidean.
- 16 On the commission and genre of Simonides' *Plataea*, see the useful article of Aloni 1994.
- 17 "Panhellenic" need not imply a reference to a particular commission. Aloni 1994 well illustrates the conflicts implicit in the development of the panhellenic ideology, offering interesting arguments for a Spartan commission. See also Boedeker 1995 and her essay in this volume. Naturally, however, the "civil" Horace of this period is interested in the development of a language which celebrates anti-Persian unity. His use of *Medus* at *Carm. Saec.* 54 to indicate the Parthian danger is a good example of what I mean, as are the "Sea Battle at Salamis" staged by Augustus in 2 BC and the other Augustan revivals of Athenian figural propaganda; cf., e.g., Hardie 1986, index *s.v.* Persians. These kinds of Augustan cultural propaganda do much to explain the function that Simonidean celebratory elegy plays in the lyrics of Horace's Fourth Book of Odes.

invasion: Greece vs. Asia, and Achilles as forerunner of the fighters at Plataea.¹⁸ The intervention of Apollo, the only one capable of stopping him, is recorded *ad maiorem gloriam* of the hero. Horace is about to sing of the rebirth of Troy, which Apollo had made possible¹⁹ by killing Achilles, the man who would have put to the sword the entire race (Hor. C. 6.4.16–20); a victorious Achilles would have meant no Aeneas, no Rome, no Augustus (21–24). The agreement and opposition between the two contexts show how neatly Horace has extracted an image from a hymn to Achilles killed by Apollo and transferred it to a song for Apollo the killer of Achilles.²⁰

University of Verona

18 Simonides is therefore a pioneer in the process of painting the Trojans as barbarians, which emerges in the course of fifth-century Athenian cultural history. As Boedeker also notes in this volume, the new fragments, in fact, permit us to assign an earlier date to this evolution. Cf. the observations of Cole 1993.53–54 and n. 6, writing on Bacchylides without knowledge of the new Simonides papyri.

19 The link between Horace and the text of Simonides is stronger if in 11.10 W² we read Πριάμου παῖσι χαριζόμεναι, as is argued by Parsons 1992a.28 and Luppe 1993.3f., rather than χαλεπτόμεναι (West 1993a.6); cf. Luppe's rendering: "Apollo tötete Achilleus den Troern zu Gefallen."

20 C. 4.6 ends with a reference to the role of public singer assumed by Horace for the *Carmen Saeculare*: *vatis Horati* (44). It would be interesting to understand better the poetic persona assumed by Simonides in his *Plataea*. West's reconstruction (1993a.7–9) speaks at length of the prophetic activities of Teisamenos, the divine *mantis* who foresaw the course of the battle and who affirmed the gods' agreement to a Spartan victory. Perhaps Simonides was somehow suggesting a link between the seer Teisamenos, guarantor of the future, and the singer Simonides, guarantor of the memory of this action. ("As a *vates*, Horace is the mouthpiece of the god both of poetry and of prophecy, pronouncing incantatory verses, fabricating the *carmina* that themselves fabricate the Roman secular present and guarantee its future," Putnam 1986.123.) In West's reconstruction, Teisamenos not only predicts the victorious strategy, but also prophesies long lasting future memory of the Greek victory (fr. 14.5–6 W²). There is a notable similarity to the language used by Simonides for his own function as singer who guarantees the memory of this action (fr. 11.20–28 W²). On the persona of the performer of the elegy, see further Stehle in this volume.

For their comments on this article I am grateful to Tom Hubbard, Richard Hunter, and R. G. M. Nisbet; and to Peter Parsons for first stirring my interest in the new Simonides. I also thank Antonio Aloni for letting me see his article (1994) in advance of publication.