Introduction

Diachronic Reading: The Approach and Plan of This Book

And they, having sacked the song-famed city, made their way home, pre-eminent among heroes, the close-fighting Danaans, (15) upon whom immortal fame has been poured on account of that man who received all truthful renown from the violet-haired Pierian Muses, and made the short-lived race of demigods famous to men who came after. But hail to you now, son of the glorious goddess, (20) of the daughter of Nereus of the sea! Now I call upon you, Muse of many names, as my ally, if you do care for the prayers of men. Put in order this well-tempered ornament of my song, so that somebody will remember … (25) of the men, who from Sparta … the day of slavery … nor did they forget their excellence … high as heaven … and the glory of these men will be undying.

Simonides 11.13–28 West[2]

The first time I came to your wandering attention
my name was Simonides. Poets,
whose air of ingratitude forms in the womb,
have reason at least to thank me:
I invented the thing you now call the commission.
Oh – and one other frivolity
refined by Aquinas, tuned up by Bruno
and perfected by Hannibal Lecter.

All in good time. But first to the theme
of this evening's address: the reading.
It was not a good poem, if I say so myself.
As good as the fee, though, and better
than him who that day bought my praises: a man
with so little virtue to sing of
I ended up fleshing it out, as you do,
with something I'd found in the drawer –

a hymn that I'd made a while back, for the twin sons
of Leda, the Dioscuri.

Don Paterson 'The Reading' (1–18)

These two texts, in different ways, illustrate some preoccupations of this book.[1] The first is from Simonides' elegy on the battle of Plataea, and shows us something we can rarely see in our fragments of that poet: the juncture between treatment of the 'mythical' past and the *hic et nunc* of the inscribed present performance and contemporary concerns, signalled with a burst of deictic markers.[2] If we had complete books of Simonides, we would be able to speak of his regular techniques for negotiating transitions between past and present, myth and occasion (just as scholars study Pindaric 'break-offs'); as it is, this papyrus text stands out in part because, fortuitously, this hinge in the movement of the poem has been (imperfectly) preserved.[3] In this case, we are concerned not only with past (Troy) and present (Plataea), but with the future as well: the narrator prays that the Muse will assist his composition 'so that somebody will remember' and then prophesies 'and the glory of these men will be undying'. In a way which, at least in a general sense, is common in Greek occasional poetry, Simonides' poem both marks its occasional specificity ('now') and reaches into the past (through narration of 'myth') and the future (through prayer or – in this case, and – prophecy).

In this case, however, such temporal complexity is accompanied by something less usual, because the attention to a story from the past ('myth') is explicitly associated with attention to a poet from the past. Material concerning the Trojan war is not simply 'there' for the poet or his audience to know, but the fame of the Danaans has been preserved 'on account of that man who received all truthful renown from the violet-haired Pierian Muses, and made the short-lived race of demigods famous to men who came after' – which is to say, through the commemorative activity of Homer. Mythical material may frequently involve the potential for this kind of intertextual reading, for example, where Sappho sings of Helen and this 'now' brings Anactoria to mind (Sappho 16 V), or where Bacchylides narrates the battle at the ships known from the *Iliad* in an ode for an Aeginetan pancratiast (Bacchylides 13.100–181): it may be that we not only

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[1] Throughout this book, W(est)[2] is used to identifying the numbering of the second (1989–92) edition of M. L. West's *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, and the same edition is referred to by the abbreviation *IEG*[2]. Other abbreviations are as used in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. For a full text and translation of fr. 11 W[2], see below, pp. 78–80. Paterson's poem may be found in full at Paterson 2003, 23–5.

[2] νῦν … ἐγώ … ἐμοί … τόνδε … (19, 20, 21, 23).

[3] Compare, notoriously, the beginning of the Danae fragment (543 *PMG* = 371 Poltera): is the first word ὅτι or ὅτε, or does it in any case belong with the words of the quoting author rather than Simonides? It feels as if even a glimpse of how Simonides negotiated a transition from some other concern to the delicately painted story of Danae is just out of our reach. Cf. below, p. 37, on the first word of 564 *PMG* (273 Poltera).

relate Helen to Anactoria, or Aeacid heroes to contemporary Aegina, but also relate Sappho or Bacchylides to Homer. The explicitness of Simonides' elegy, however, foregrounds this potential so that the juxtaposition of times corresponds with juxtaposition of poets and poetic traditions: intertextual reading is more clearly cued.[4]

The elegiac fragment from which I have quoted, although some words are preserved on a papyrus known since the 1950s, became legible thanks to the publication of *P. Oxy.* 3965 in 1992.[5] The new publication was naturally accompanied by excitement and a flurry of scholarly attention: 'Simonides Redivivus' was the title of one important contribution.[6] A similar metaphor concerning the relationship between the poet, his poetry and the passage of time is visible in Don Paterson's poem, whose narrator is a reincarnation of the poet himself. This poem narrates a story which we know from Cicero and Quintilian, in which Simonides is found at the court of a Thessalian nobleman, for whom he has composed a song of which a large part concerns the Dioskouroi.[7] The nobleman is displeased at this, and pays only half the fee. At a subsequent dinner, Simonides is called to the door to meet two youths. When he arrives, no young men are to be seen, but the building behind him collapses upon the diners. Their bodies are unrecognisable, but Simonides is able to identify them for burial because, being known as the inventor of spatial memory systems, he has memorised their relative positions in the room.

Time is gently thematised throughout Paterson's poem: the narrator was called Simonides 'the first time'; we will turn to his invention of mnemotechnics 'all in good time'; the narrator's temporal distance from Simonides is clarified early in the poem through his knowledge of the same technique's subsequent development through the middle ages up to Hannibal Lecter (almost a reader: we want 'Lector'). The temporal gap between Simonides and the modern narrator is allowed to close for a moment at the climax of the poem (51–2):

> After the dust and the sirens had died
> the wives all came wailing and weeping

Here the narrator describes the events of the story as if they were happening at the time of the present performance, when danger may be associated

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[4] For intertextual reading of Bacchylides 13, see Fearn 2007, 120–43.
[5] Parsons 1992a; the 2nd edn of West's *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* made it into print slightly before the formal *P.Oxy.* publication (cf. Parsons 2001, 60 n. 41).
[6] West 1993a.
[7] Simonides 510 *PMG* = T80 Poltera. See below, pp. 187–91.

with sirens, as of ambulances, rather than Sirens (awareness of the latter
possibility helps to point the metaphor in 'died'). Otherwise, the sharp dis-
tinction between the events of the house-falling-down story and the pre-
sent is emphasised, as in Simonides' elegy, by clear deictic marking of the
utterance constituting the poem itself as a single, present act of perform-
ance: 'But first to the theme | of this evening's address'. Paterson's poem
is mostly concerned with the interaction of present and past, without the
attention to the future shown in Simonides' elegy: the only future refer-
ence is an 'internal future', a prediction to be accomplished within the
timeframe of the (fictive) performance itself, during which the narrator,
as his Simonidean incarnation before him, will memorise the faces of his
audience: '(that trick of mine; your coupons, O my rapt listeners, | I'll have
nailed by the end of this poem)' (35–6: the 'address' of line 10 has become
a 'poem').

As Simonides reaches to Homer to define and to make claims for his
own commemorative role as a poet, so (*mutatis mutandis*) Paterson's use
of Simonides fits into a part of his book in which poetological themes are
prominent and are handled in ways which involve conspicuous appeals –
including conspicuously problematic appeals – to classical traditions. Thus
the previous poem, 'A Fraud', concerns themes of poetic initiation and
inspiration figured as a spring encountered while the narrator was 'crossing
| a field near Bridgefoot': the spring speaks, saying that, for 'the next fellow',
he might become a 'Castalian spring'. His instruction to the narrator is
simple: 'keep walking'. The narrator overpowers the spring anyway – hence
his (stolen? fraudulent?) poems. After the Simonidean 'The Reading' comes
the rich and baffling variety of 'A Talking Book', whose exuberant wealth
of allusion contains a great deal of classical and Greek material, such as
'Boeotians | who like to shove their poems into tins', 'that board in 30–75
AD | who sit in judgement over what, today, | will be preserved or cast to the
abyss', a reference to readers who 'stand before Apollo's ancient torso | and
all it says is *you must lose some weight*', and to 'the gates of ivory and horn'.[8]

In the case of Simonides in 'The Reading', we may note (especially in
connection with the previous poem in the book) a sceptical turning away

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[8] For the first, cf. Pindar *Ol.* 2.2 with Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberly* 62–5 ('O bright
Apollo, | τίν' ἄνδρα, τίν' ἥρωα, τίνα θεὸν, | What god, man, or hero | shall I place a tin
wreath upon!'); perhaps we should relate concern for the transmission of ancient literature
to the title of Paterson's continuation in the same book of his longer poem 'The Alexandrian
Library' (Paterson 2003, 47–56); Paterson translates Rilke's *Archaic Torso of Apollo* later in the
same book (Paterson 2003, 61, with the last words '*Now change your life.*'); gates of ivory and
horn: Homer *Od.* 19.560–7, Vergil *Aen.* 6.893–6.

from a poetics of inspiration towards a notion of the poet as a professional craftsman, a man with a job to do, and a man who demands compensation for his poetic effort: Paterson's Simonides, at the end of the poem, retrieves the missing portion of the fee from his dead patron's purse.[9]

Can such receptions help us to approach the historical Simonides? In the case of Paterson's poem, despite its interest in its own right, this is not obviously the case. As far as *Quellenforschung* is concerned, the anecdote in question is known to us chiefly from Cicero and Quintilian, but must be older, not least since it is referred to by Callimachus, and since Quintilian gives an account of earlier sources.[10] I think that it is possible that Paterson encountered it through a book on which I have more to say below: Anne Carson's *Economy of the Unlost*.[11] What, specifically, this story can tell us about Simonides' poems is extremely hard to tell; it is unclear to what extent it was originally based on actual songs, and, if it was, those are songs we do not now have.[12] What is clear, and what I explore especially in the second and third chapters of this book, is that Paterson's poem fits into a much longer tradition, going back to the lifetime of Simonides himself, by which Simonides is associated with tensions connected with the relationship between poetry and remuneration; I explain further below how I use that tradition to try to approach Simonides' own poetry.

Here I return to the features of these two texts which relate to my way of working in this book more broadly. In a way which is analogous to the moves made by these poems, my main tactic throughout the book is diachronic, bringing in texts from periods both earlier and later than Simonides in order to try to develop an approach to his poems. I look at Simonidean fragments both with regard to their interaction with tradition from the past, just as Simonides' elegy invites a reading against Trojan war tradition and especially against Homer, and with regard to their interaction with traditions of the future, which is to say Simonides' reception – just as we see Simonides looking forward to the future fame of the warriors at Plataea

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[9] One approach to Paterson's poem might involve appealing to the book's ways of constructing Scottishness in poetry (the book includes poems in both English and Scots; the poet's quasi-initiation in 'A Fraud' occurs while he is 'crossing | a field near Bridgefoot': a village in Paterson's own region of Angus). Simonides' determination to be paid what he is owed (cf. his *dictum* at Plato *Resp.* 331e: that 'justice is to render to each what he is owed'), seen in Paterson's poem as operative even after the death of the debtor, may fit into perceptions of such meanness/stinginess/concern for precise justice as a feature of Scottish identity, as the Thessalian setting might be read against a possible conception of Scotland as northern and peripheral.

[10] Simonides 510 *PMG* (T80 Poltera); Callimachus fr. 64 Pf.

[11] Carson 1999. Paterson's phrase 'lyric economies' makes me think of Carson: cf. Carson 1999, 3–9 on poetic 'economy'.

[12] See below, pp. 188–9.

through the endurance of his poetry, and as we see Simonides constructed in a way which pays attention to his pastness in Paterson's poem. In both cases, a kind of loop is involved: as I move away from the fragments to texts from the past with which they engage, it is in order to return to Simonides' own words with a richer sense of how the presence of past traditions enhances their meaning; where I move forwards to later ancient reception, I do so in part in order to return to Simonidean fragments and to read them against concerns of the reception tradition. It is particularly in the last chapter, on Theocritus 16, that I begin to leave this procedure behind. Although I am still concerned there with Simonides and his reception in antiquity and what this can tell us about his poetry, my focus also broadens to an approach to the interpretation of Theocritus' fascinating poem for its own sake: Theocritus' poem takes centre stage to a greater degree than, e.g. the *Iliad* does in Chapters 1 and 2, or the numerous post-Simonidean texts treated in Chapter 4.

Neither aspect of this procedure needs a particular defence *a priori*. Attention to intertextuality and to how a given poet handles traditions from the past is not a new thing in classical scholarship. Approaches to ancient poets through their ancient reception have perhaps been less mainstream, but are becoming a more common form of study.[13] In the case of Simonides, my procedure is specifically motivated by particular features of our ancient material. In the first place, as has been illustrated from the Plataea elegy, Simonides' fragments show a striking tendency to mark their interaction with poetry from the past in explicit ways. While the interpretation of intertextuality remains open, some form of intertextual reading seems to be demanded. Secondly, Simonides is remarkable for the richness and variety of his ancient testimonia. Wilamowitz noted the richness of this tradition, commenting that antiquity knew Pindar for his poetry, but Simonides for his personality.[14] This is a problematic argument, since we might see more of antiquity's awareness of Simonidean poems, if we had more of them ourselves (this is illustrated, for instance, by the effect of the publication of fragments of Simonides' elegies for the interpretation of Theocritus 16, as discussed in Chapter 6), but the point that Simonidean anecdotes show a persistent fascination with the poet as a character is undeniable. So, while the method which I use in this book, of interpreting Simonides through attention to the interaction of his poems with traditions both prior and

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[13] See, e.g. Graziosi 2002 for Homer, and Hunter 2014 for Hesiod.
[14] Wilamowitz 1913, 137. Cf. Lefkowitz 1981, 56 ~ 2012, 60.

subsequent to his own lifetime, could be used with other poets, there are specific motivations to adopt it in this case.

The book is structured in two parts, interlocking in various ways. In the first part, the diachronic move is an analeptic one. The first two chapters consist of close readings of Simonidean fragments which overtly draw attention to their relationship with poetry of the past, as we have seen in the example from Simonides' Plataea elegy quoted above. In Chapter 1, we are concerned with two melic fragments, and in Chapter 2 with elegies, including the Plataea elegy.

Part II is concerned with approaching Simonides' poetry through his ancient reception: from the point of view of the reader of Simonides, a proleptic move. In particular, I look at the rich tradition of anecdotes concerning Simonides' interaction with his patrons and associating Simonides with the exchange of money or wealth for poetry, and I analyse these texts as forms of reception of Simonides' poetry. In Chapter 3, however, we are concerned not with later reception through anecdote, but with Simonides' contemporary Pindar. Here I look at the song in which Pindar most directly addresses the question of remuneration for poetry, *Isthmian* 2 (a place where ancient scholars interpreted Pindar's interest in the issue as a covert way of speaking about Simonides). I argue that this is a place where we can see Pindar interacting with characteristically Simonidean rhetorical strategies at the same time as addressing what appears in later reception as a characteristically Simonidean theme. *Isthmian* 2, I argue, shows us that the association of Simonides with the problematisation of the economics of poetry is already visible in the work of his most distinguished poetic contemporary.

Chapters 4 and 5 cohere especially closely. The former is a selective survey of the aspects of Simonidean reception concerned with the theme of remuneration, money and wealth. The latter is the return leg of the journey, so to speak: in the light of the previous chapter's explorations of reception, I return to some fragments, sensitised to read them with attention to the preoccupations of the reception tradition, and try to show that we can see enough of these themes in the poems themselves to suggest that the reception tradition's concerns are not based on arbitrary or anachronistic responses to the poems, but reflect thematisation of the same issues in (some of) Simonides' work.

Chapter 6, the last chapter of the book, consists of a reading of Theocritus 16, a strange but fascinating encomium of Hieron II of Syracuse. This poem has long been recognised as including elements from the biographical tradition concerning Simonides at the same time as reworking elements from

poetry of the early classical period; in particular, since 1992 and the publication of new Simonidean elegies, it has been seen that these include Simonides' elegy on the battle of Plataea. Here, therefore, we have an opportunity to see interaction with both the Simonides of anecdote and the Simonides of the fragments in the same place. In my interpretation of the poem I argue that Theocritus uses Simonides and Simonidean tradition together to explore both ethically problematic features of encomium in relation to economic exchange and the positive capacity of praise poetry and commemorative poetry to preserve the memory of great deeds by great men, especially in the context of fighting between Greeks and barbarians. In combining the study of Simonidean fragments with Simonidean receptions, and in picking up on aspects of the ethnic interpretation of the Trojan war in Simonidean elegy already discussed in Chapter 2, this final chapter also forms a kind of synthesis of many of the themes discussed throughout the book.

In the remainder of this introduction, I look in slightly more detail at techniques and themes of the book, describing and contextualising my own critical practice.

Intertextuality

The first part of this book consists of a series of close readings of fragments of Simonides, paying particular attention to their engagement with earlier poetry and the ways in which Simonides places his own poetry in relation to the poetry of the past. It may be a universal phenomenon, or at least a universal possibility, for readers to interpret literary texts with regard to ways in which they can be aligned, likened, contrasted or in other ways brought together with other literary texts. With regard to classical literature, this has in any case been a regular interpretative activity.[15] This must have to do in part with the strong tendency of classical scholars to interest themselves in 'parallels'. In the case of early and classical Greek poetry in particular, we are concerned in part with modern readers' attempts to come to terms with the 'traditional' quality of a great deal of the material, where traditional forms with their roots in non-literate culture are used to convey material which is itself largely traditional (a large proportion of Greek poetry is concerned with the handling of myth). To the extent that a modern reader wishes to

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[15]   On allusion and intertext in classical studies, see especially Hinds 1998, Conte 1986, and in Greek poetry, Garner 1990.

generate a historicised interpretation (which is the case in this book), such attempts may be problematic, for a variety of reasons.[16]

In the first place, as usual, we have problems of evidence, because the range of texts at our disposal is very limited. This reduces the extent to which we can recover intertextual readings which might have been possible for ancient audiences. Thus, for instance, I have discussed the possibility that our view of the relationship between Simonides' Plataea Elegy and Trojan War epic might be different, if it were available to us to see whether and in what ways Simonides' elegy might relate to parts of the *Cypria*.[17] Similarly in Simonides 564 *PMG* (273 Poltera) the possibilities for intertextual reading are restricted by the problem that we do not have and cannot securely even identify which part of the epic tradition is referred to by the appeal to 'Homer'.[18] This becomes conspicuous when the evidence changes. Thus, since the publication of *P.Oxy.* 3965, we can see connections between Theocritus 16 and Simonides' elegies which were not visible previously: I discuss this in Chapter 6 below. I have tried to pay attention to this problem in the readings which follow; the extent to which it inhibits our understanding seems to me to be variable. Even if an intertextual reading had to be altered in the event of a large increase of our knowledge of other relevant epics, in the case of Simonides' Plataea elegy this would probably be a matter only of augmentation and tweaking, because intertextual reading of this elegy with a view to the *Iliad* is so successful that there is little risk of its being invalidated. With 564 *PMG* (273 Poltera), on the other hand, where Simonides' words invite an intertextual reading involving a song of Stesichorus which we can see only in fragments and a part of the epic tradition, named as 'Homer', which we cannot securely identify, the possibility of successful and rich intertextual understanding is much more limited.

Secondly, and especially with regard to earlier periods, there is a danger that our way of reading interactions between texts may be anachronistically conditioned by the expectations of literate culture, in such a way as to make it unsuited for describing a world in which poetry was experienced

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[16] The following discussion is selective, and focused on the aspects of the problem most relevant to my own discussion below, i.e. intertextual readings in the lyric tradition (including elegy). The intention is to make explicit the premises which later parts of the book assume. Thus, for instance, I have not treated the question of how to describe the relationship between different texts, putative texts and traditions in hexameter poetry (neoanalysis, 'traditional referentiality' etc.), even though this would clearly have a part in a fuller discussion of how to describe relationships between texts in early Greek poetry. For recent treatments with bibliography, see Burgess 2012 and Currie 2016, 1–38. For a recent treatment of problems in identifying allusion to Homer in lyric, see Kelly 2015.

[17] See below, pp. 87–8.

[18] See below, p. 29.

in performance and both poets and audiences may have had correspond-
ingly different ways of thinking of texts from ours. For example, where a
study of allusion to Homer by Sappho emphasises analogy between allusion
in Sappho and features of poetry from Hellenistic Alexandria, this should
make us pause: we are not accusing Sappho of archaic 'naivety', if we wish
to pay more attention to the substantial differences between the world of
archaic Lesbos and the world of the scholars and poets of the library.[19] Nor,
on the other hand, should we necessarily conclude from such an appar-
ently anachronistic presentation of Sappho's use of allusion that we ought
to throw out the baby with the bathwater. It might be that we should still
choose to read Sappho in a way which involves attention to connections
between her work and particular passages of Homeric epic (Sappho 1 read
as a response to parts of *Iliad* 5 is the obvious example), while trying to his-
toricise readings better than a treatment which draws such an analogy with
Hellenistic poetry; but this still entails the supposition that the conditions
of performance and reception of poetry in Sappho's world allowed such spe-
cific connections to be made as part of the spectrum of possible responses
to performance.[20] In cases such as these, where interaction with Homeric
texts is the point (and this is often the case), the picture is also clouded by
questions to do with the transmission, dissemination and fixity of the target
text: was Sappho's Homer ours, and was it stable enough to be the 'target' of
fairly close allusion? Again this is a problem which diminishes as we move
forward in time. Despite the danger, my view is that even for texts from
the beginning of the sixth century we should not assume that intertextual
readings positing specific connections between particular texts should be
completely ruled out: to take a (rare) extreme case, it is difficult for me to
resist a reading of Alcaeus' summer drinking song (347 V) as alluding to
Hesiod's account of summer (*Works and Days* 582–96).[21]

Thirdly, a combination of the two factors already discussed may give par-
ticular force to a question which also presents itself with texts from other
times and places: how and how much our description of the relationships
between texts should distinguish between allusions to specific passages
and interaction with topoi or generic features of texts.[22] It may be hard
for us to decide whether we would do better to speak of allusions to

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[19] Rissman 1983, 18–19.
[20] As well as Rissman 1983, ch. 1, see, e.g. Winkler 1996, 92–6 with further bibliography
indicated at 92 n. 17.
[21] On this example as a case at one end of a spectrum of plausibility (but still questioned by
some), see recently Hunter 2014, 123–4 with bibliography cited there.
[22] For the general issue, cf. Hinds 1998, 34–47.