

Simonides of Ceos

Fragments of the *Plataea Elegy* (?) as restored (and translated) by M L West

Fragment 11

(POxy 2327 fr. 5 + 6 + 27 col. i + 3695 fr. 1 + 2)

NB less than half the total column width survives!

str[uck you... and you fell, as when a larch]
or pine-tree in the [lonely mountain] glades
is felled by woodcutters...
and much...

[A great grief seized] the war-host; [much they honoured you,]
[and with Patr]oclus' [ashes mingled yours.]
[It was no ordinary mortal] laid you low,
[‘twas by Apoll]o's [hand that you were struck.]
[Athena] was at [hand, and smote the famous t]low[n]
[with Hera; they were wro]th with Priam's sons
[because of P]aris' wickedness. The car of God's
Justice o'ertakes [the sinner in the end.]
[And so] the valiant Danaans, [best of warr]riors,
sacked the much-sung-of city, and came [home;]
[and they] are bathed in fame that cannot die, by grace
[of one who from the dark-]tressed Muses had
the tru[th entire,] and made the heroes' short-lived race
a theme familiar to younger men.

[But] now farewell, [thou son] of goddess glorious,
[daughter] of Nereus of the sea, while I
[now summon] thee, i[llustriou]s Muse, to support,
[if thou has any thought] for men who pray:
[fit ou]t, as is thy wont, this [grat]eful song-a[r]ray
[of mi]ne, so that rem[embrance is preserved]
of those who held the line for Spart[a and for Greece,]
[that none should see] the da[y of slavery.]
They kept their co[urage, and their fame rose] heaven-high;
[their glory in] the world [will] never die.
[From the Eu]rotas and from [Sparta's] town they [marched,]
accompanied by Zeus' horsemaster sons,
[the Tyndarid] Heroes, and by Menelaus' strength,
[those doughty] captains of [their fath]ers' folk,
led forth by [great Cleo]mbrotus' most noble [son,]

... Pausanias.

[They quickly reached the Isthmus] and the famous land
of Corinth, [furthest bounds] of Pelops' [isle,]
[and Megara, N]isus' [ancient] city, where the r[est]
[then joined the army from] the country round.
[Again they marched, the ome]ns giving confidence,
[and soon they reached Eleusis'] lovely plain,
driving [the Persians from Pan]dion's [land, by help]
of that most godlike se[er, the Iamid.]
...overcame...

Fragment 14

14. [...c]lash of blows on [shields... I de]clare that, should the army [pr]ess [across] the river first... a great disaster will [be theirs; but if they wait, a victory that] ne'er shall be for[got. And...] will drive them [out of A]si[a too with Zeus'] approval, favouring a n[ew] alliance; for [... will la]y a firm base...

Fragments 15-16

(Plutarch *De Herod. malign.* 42, 872d; id. perg. + POxy 3965)

15. *From Simonides we can learn about the Corinthians, their battle formation against the barbarians, and the consequences for them after the battle of Plataea. He writes:*
and in the center both the inhabitants of Ephyra with its many springs, well acquainted with all sorts of virtue in battle, and those who rule Glaucus' town, the Corinthian citadel...
16. [who] served as the finest witnesses of their toils, the precious gold in the sky; this to their benefit will increase their own and their fathers' broad fame.
Simonides has recorded this, neither for a choral production in Corinth nor for a song in honour of the city, but simply writing up those events in elegiacs.

Various other fragments (eg. Fragment 18, 'hope... battle... no-... gloried...')

Published in M L West, *Iambici et Elegi Graeci*, Volume II (1992)

Further reading on Simonides

Texts & translations

- ✦ D Campbell *Greek Lyric Volume III* (1991), Loeb Classical Library
R Crawford, N McBeath, *Simonides* (2011), into Scots

Fiction

M Renault (1978), *The Praise Singer*

Further study

- M R Lefkowitz (1981), *Lives of the Greek Poets*
J H Molyneux (1992), *Simonides: A historical study* (missing these fragments by less than a year!)
D Boedeker, D Sider (eds) (2001), *The New Simonides: Contexts of praise and desire*