

An Allusion to Simonides Fr. 11W² in Theocritus *Idyll* 22.214-23

This paper examines an allusion at Theocritus *Idyll* 22.214-23, the epilogue of the hymn for the Dioscuri, to the prooimial verses in Simonides fr. 11 W², the so-called Plataea elegy of the new Simonides. I argue that these two poems are best understood only when they are read together. My paper will proceed in two parts. First, I demonstrate the extent of Theocritus' allusion to Simonides. The recognition of this allusion allows me to show that Theocritus' programmatic statements at the conclusion of *Idyll* 22 are to be situated in a literary tradition that now appears to go back at least to Simonides. Second, using this allusion, I reevaluate Simonides' own programmatic claims in fr. 11 W².

Theocritus *Idyll* 22 is a hymn to the Dioscuri which concludes in a traditional manner. The poet bids the Dioscuri to rejoice in the praise he has given them and asks them to bestow everlasting glory on his song. Scholars have long observed that this epilogue contains a programmatic statement concerning the relation between the poet and his *laudandi* (Dover 1971). In this programmatic statement, Theocritus compares his own praise of the Dioscuri to the praise given Greek heroes in the *Iliad*. In fact, Theocritus seems to say that Homer's praise of the Dioscuri is equaled by his own praise of them. The reference to Homeric poetry is explicit, but it causes interpretative difficulties because Dioscuri are conspicuous in the *Iliad* for their absence from Troy (*Il.* 3.236-44). This incongruity has troubled all commentators on *Idyll* 22 (Gow 1952; Dover 1971; Sens 1997). The publication of the new Simonides in 1992, however, has allowed A. Sens to observe that Homer was not Theocritus' only point of reference. Sens shows that in fr. 11 W², which belongs to a composition on the Persian Wars, Simonides appears to make similar programmatic claims. That is, Simonides seems to say that he will make heroes of the men who fought the Persians just as Homer gave fame to men at Troy. As Sens rightly observed, Simonides fr. 11 W² provides a parallel to Theocritus' claims about his relation to Homer and to his own subjects (1997: 217).

While Sens is right to observe this parallel, a closer comparison of these texts shows that Theocritus' reference to Simonides is much more extensive. Theocritus' words directly and extensively draw on the verses by Simonides. Both texts briefly retell the narrative on the Trojan War with details that are strikingly similar; both texts emphasize the destruction of Troy (Theoc. *Id.* 22.215-16; Simon. fr. 11.13-14 W²); both texts give prominence to Achilles in this destruction (Theoc. *Id.* 22.220; Simon. fr. 11.19-20 W²); both texts directly mention Homer and their own differences from Homeric poetry (Theoc. *Id.* 22.218-23; Simon. fr. 11.15-16, 22-25W²). Furthermore, if Theocritus can be used as a guide for reconstructing Simonides' text, both mention Menelaus and the Dioscuri in grammatically and metrically equivalent positions (Theoc. *Id.* 22.216-17; Simon. fr. 11.31W²). Finally, both texts use similar diction in marking their distinction from the Homeric tradition (Theoc. *Id.* 22.221; Simon. fr. 11.20 W²). Such similarities taken together suggest that Theocritus is not only explicitly referring to Homer in these verses, but that he is also implicitly drawing Simonides into his programmatic comparison.

I argue that the recognition of the extensive nature of this allusion is vital to our understanding of both Theocritus and Simonides. In terms of Theocritus, this allusion to Simonides establishes *Idyll* 22 in a literary tradition in which poetic innovation is the important aspect. By placing *Idyll* 22 in this tradition, it becomes possible to observe that Theocritus is emphasizing his own innovations in this poem. Thus, we can begin to solve the interpretative difficulties in this epilogue. In terms of Simonides, the Theocritean parallel helps us to fill in and to confirm many of the details lost in the cracks of fr. 11 W². More importantly, I suggest that this allusion confirms that Simonides' poem was in fact very much concerned with poetic innovation in a way that is often not associated with archaic poetry.