

‘Divine Corinna’: Pre-Twentieth Century Receptions of an Artistic Authority¹

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Introduction

At the heart of the reception history of Corinna of Tanagra lies an astonishing idea. This is the idea that she was not only a poet, but also honoured as an authority in the artistic and intellectual domain of literature and a champion in poetic contest against Pindar², her alleged Boeotian compatriot, poet-colleague and fellow student³. Indeed, as such, the idea

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2 — The coinage ‘artistic authority’ is meant to evoke all these aspects; Corinna’s occupation as poet, her standing as honoured and her alleged superiority over Pindar.

3 — Pindar’s name occurs twice in Corinna’s extant fragments. One instance is preserved in the grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus: Βοιωτοὶ <ίων>, ὡς μὲν Τρύφων... ὡς δὲ ἔνιοι, ὧν ἔστιν ὁ Ἄβρων, θέμα ἔστιν, ὃ συζύγως οἱ αὐτοὶ φασί, τῇ μὲν ἐγών τὴν ἰών, <τῇ δὲ ἐγώνῃ τὴν ἰώνει>, εἶγε τὸ παρὰ Δωριεῦσιν ἡ εἰς εἰ μεταβάλλεται, τῇ δ’ ἐγώνγα τὴν ἰώνγα. Κόριννα· μέμφοιμὲν δὲ κῆ ληγουρὰν / Μουρτίδ’ ἰώνγ’ ὅτι βανὰ φοῦ- / σ’ ἔβα Πινδάρου πὸτ ἔριν, [Wilamowitz: Πινδαριοιο cod. | Π. post ὅτι transp. West] καὶ ἔτι· ἰώνει δ’ εἰρώων ἀρετὰς χεῖρωάδων [cf. Hdn. π. μον. λέξ. α 18 (ii 924 Lentz)] τὸ γὰρ

of Corinna as an artistic authority appears unparalleled in the context of antiquity. While the idea of a woman who is a poet is not uncommon in itself, the idea that such a woman could be regarded as an artistic authority is less well established⁴, and no other woman poet, not even Sappho, the most famous of the female authors of antiquity, is thought to have vanquished a male author in poetic contest, even if she is reported to have chastised Alcaeus⁵, her compatriot and poet-colleague, in verse⁶. Add to this picture the towering standing of Pindar, as the *princeps lyricorum*⁷, a ‘master-mind’⁸ and the best transmitted of all the lyric poets – with as much as four entire books preserved of what may have been as many as seventeen volumes⁹ – and the idea that Corinna, a woman – of whose work we today possess some thirty fragments¹⁰ of originally only five books¹¹ – could lecture *him* on how to compose poetry and beat *him* at his own game seems utterly out of place. Nevertheless, this paper argues that precisely such an idea of Corinna not only existed in antiquity, but also manifested itself in texts and the figurative arts, and that this idea

παρὰ Κορίννη βανά... ἴδιον θέμα Βοιωτῶν τασσόμενον ἀντὶ τοῦ γυνή [Hsch. B 184, 187] (Corinna Fr. 664 Campbell = Ap. Dysc. *Pron.* 64b–65a (i 51 Schneider)), ‘The Boeotians use ἰών, according to Tryphon...; but according to some, Habron among them, ἰών is a primary form, used by the same writers conjointly, ἰών with ἐγών, ἰώνει with ἐγώνη, if the Dorian η is altered to ει, and ἰώνγα with ἐγώνγα. So Corinna: “and I find fault also with clear-voiced / Myrtis because, being a woman, / she entered into competition with Pindar...”’; and again: “but I for my part (sing of) the excellences of heroes and heroines...”’. The poet Myrtis is Pindar and Corinna’s common teacher according to the ancient tradition. Κορίννα..., μαθήτρια Μύρτιδος (2 *Sud.* K 2087 (iii 157 Adler)): ‘Corinna was Myrtis’ student’; and: Πίνδαρος...· μαθήτης δὲ Μυρτίδος γυναικός, γεγονώς κατὰ τὴν ξε’ Ὀλυμπιάδα . . . (3 *Sud.* Π 1617 (iv 132 Adler)): ‘Pindar was Myrtis’, a woman’s student and was born in the 65th Olympiad (520 / 516 BCE)’. Another instance where Pindar’s name occurs in the context of a fragment of Corinna is in a paraphrase by a scholiast on Aristophanes’ *Acharnenses*, which relates Corinna’s criticism of Pindar’s Atticizing language: ἀγοράζειν· ἐν ἀγορᾷ διατρίβειν, Ἀττικῶς. ὅθεν καὶ ἡ Κόριννα ἐπιτιμᾷ [Geel: ἐπὶ Γ, ἐστὶ Ε] τῷ Πινδάρῳ ἀττικίζοντι [Geel: τοῦ Πινδάρου Ἀττικιστὴ ΕΓ], ἐπεὶ ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν Παρθενίων ἐχρήσατο τῇ λέξει [Fr. 94d Snell] (Corinna fr. 688 Campbell = Schol. Ar. *Ach.* 720 (p. 95 Wilson)), ‘ἀγοράζειν: to spend one’s time in the agora, an Attic use of the word. That is why Corinna censures Pindar for atticizing: he used the expression in Book 1 of his *Partheneia*’. The translations are here taken from Campbell (1992).

4 — So e.g. Zanker (1995) hardly mentions women; see however Schefold (1943) *passim*.

5 — Sappho Fr. 137 Campbell = Arist. *Rhet.* 1367a.

6 — In addition to Corinna and Sappho, the most famous woman poets were (in alphabetical order) Anyte, Erinna, Moero, Myrtis, Nossis, Praxilla, the earlier Sulpicia and the later Sulpicia, and Telesilla; for their extant fragments, see Snyder (1989), Rayor (1991), Balmer (1996) and Plant (2004); cf. Thorsen (2019) 16.

7 — *Principem lyricorum Pindarum* (Quint. *Inst. Or.* 8.6.71, ‘Pindar, the leader of the lyric poets’); cf. *longe Pindarus princeps* (Quint. *Inst. Or.* 10.1.61, ‘Pindar, by far, the leader’ [of the nine lyric poets]).

8 — Lloyd-Jones (1982).

9 — According to the *Vita ambrosiana*, Drachmann (1903) 3.

10 — The link between Corinna’s own fragments and conceptions of artistic authority merits an investigation in its own right, but since the exploration of this link involves the re-examination of Corinna’s post-twentieth-century reception, and therefore goes beyond the scope of the present paper, I will not pursue this now, though I hope to do so in a future publication.

11 — Plus ‘epigrams and lyrical nomes’; see n. 35 below.

was sustained even beyond the ancient world. This suggests, ultimately, that our conceptions of the past should be adjusted to accommodate the idea, and not vice versa.

Receptions in texts

Corinna of Tanagra occurs in a number of texts in antiquity. Lost ancient commentaries, perhaps of Hellenistic date, are mentioned in connection with Corinna¹², and there are several extant sources, which are all relevant to the aspects of the poet’s reception history that are under scrutiny in this paper.

In extant texts, Corinna is described as an ancient model of comparison for Cynthia in Propertius’ second book (c. 25 BCE)¹³ (*antiquae Corinnae*)¹⁴, as the singer of raging Athena’s shield (Θοῦριν Ἀθηναίης ἀσπίδα) in an epigram by the Rome-based Antipater of Thessalonica (fl. 11 BCE–12 CE)¹⁵, and as a subtle (*tenuis*) poet, evoking secrets (*arcana*), in the company of sophisticated authors like Callimachus, Lycophron and Sophron in the *Silvae* of Statius (b. c. 45 CE)¹⁶. In these Roman poems¹⁷, we thus see the contours of an ancient, mythically themed and

12 — Linked to Dionysius Thrax (2nd cent. BCE) and Alexander Polyhistor (1st cent. BCE, cf. de Breucker (2012)): γεγόνασι δὲ λυρικοὶ οἱ καὶ παρττόμενοι ἐννέα, ὧν τὰ ὀνόματά ἐστι ταῦτα· Ἀνακρέων, Ἀλκμάν, Ἀλκαῖος, Βακχυλίδης, Ἴβυκος, Πίνδαρος, Σησίχορος, Σιμωνίδης, Σαπφώ, καὶ δεκάτῃ Κόριννα (Comment. Melamp. seu Diomed. in Dion. Thrac. (p. 21 Hilgard), ‘The lyric poets on whom commentaries are written are nine in number: Anacreon, Alcman, Alcaeus, Bacchylides, Ibycus, Pindar, Stesichorus, Simonides, Sappho, and a tenth, Corinna’). To this Campbell adds the following note: ‘Cf. anon. in Schol. Pind. (I 11 Drachmann), “some say Corinna also”; Tzetzes, prol. Lycophr. (p. 2 Scheer), diff. poet. (C.G.F. p. 34 Kaibel) includes her among the lyrici...’, Campbell (1992) 24–5. See also Croenert (1908) and Vergados (2012) 103.

13 — For the date of the various books of Propertius, see Lyne (2007) 251–82.

14 — *Et sua cum antiquae committit scripta Corinnae* (Prop. 2.3.21, ‘and when she pits her writings against those of ancient Corinna’). See also Thorsen (2012) 710 comparing Propertius’ description emphasising Corinna’s *scripta* (writings) with the miniature copy of Silanion’s Corinna, cf. fig. 1 and below.

15 — καὶ σέ, Κόριννα, Θοῦριν Ἀθηναίης ἀσπίδα μελψαμένην (Antipater of Thessalonica, Gow-Page 19, ‘and you, Corinna, who sang of Athena’s warlike shield’). Translation by Gow-Page (1968). The epigram is remarkable, in the words of Gow and Page (1968), I, 36: ‘[W]e know of no other lists of poetesses’, except, of course, Tatian’s; see n. 42. See also Fuchs (1982), Kuttner (1999) 361–2, Thorsen (2012) 701–2 and Thorsen (2014) 162–3.

16 — *Tu pandere doctus / carmina Battiadae latebrasque Lycophronis atri / Sophronaque implicitum tenuisque arcana Corinnae* (Stat. *Silv.* 5.155–8, ‘You [i.e. Statius’ father] were skilled to expound the songs of Battus’ son, the lurking places of dark Lycophron, Sophron’s mazes, and the mysteries of subtle Corinna’). See also McNelis (2002), who also points out, with support from Page (1953) 71, that Corinna apparently was taught by Greek grammarians such as the father of Statius, Tryphon and Habron, see n. 3 above.

17 — I will not enter into the subject of Ovid’s Corinna in this context; but see Heath (2013) and Thorsen (2018). I intend to explore the connection between Boeotian and Ovidian Corinna further in a future publication.

elegant poet, all features which are suggestive of Corinna as an authority in the artistic domain of poetry.

More affirmative in this regard are the relevant passages of *De gloria Atheniensium* by Plutarch (c. 50-120 CE) and the anonymous *Vita Pindari Metrica* (also known as Πινδάρου γένος δι' ἐπῶν, *Pindar's Origin in Epic Verse*), which is of uncertain date¹⁸. Of these two sources, *De gloria Atheniensium* contains the most extensive passage of relevance. In this essay on aspects of rhetoric, Plutarch contemplates the difference between deeply structured plots and stylistic decoration, and illustrates his point by telling the following story about Corinna and Pindar¹⁹:

ἡ δὲ Κόριννα τὸν Πίνδαρον, ὄντα νέον ἔτι καὶ τῇ λογιότητι σοβαρῶς χρώμενον, ἐνουθέτησεν ὥς ἄμουσον ὄντα μὴ ποιοῦντα μύθους, ὃ τῆς ποιητικῆς ἔργον εἶναι συμβέβηκε, γλώσσας δὲ καὶ καταχρήσεις καὶ μεταφορὰς καὶ μέλη καὶ ρυθμοὺς ἡδύσματα τοῖς πράγμασιν ὑποτιθέντα. σφόδρ' οὖν ὁ Πίνδαρος ἐπιστήσας τοῖς λεγομένοις ἐποίησεν ἐκείνο τὸ μέλος:

Ἴσμηνὸν ἢ χρυσαλάκατον Μελίαν
ἢ Κάδμον ἢ Σπαρτῶν ἱερὸν γένος ἀνδρῶν
<ἢ τὰν κυανάμπυκα Θήβαν>
ἢ τὸ πάντολμον σθένος Ἡρακλέος
ἢ τὰν <Διωνύσου πολυγαθέα τιμὰν>²⁰...

δειξαμένου δὲ τῇ Κορίννῃ γελάσασα ἐκείνη τῇ χειρὶ δεῖν ἔφη σπείρειν ἀλλὰ μὴ ὄλῳ τῷ θυλάκῳ. τῷ γὰρ ὄντι συγκεράσας καὶ συμφορήσας πανσπερμίαν τινὰ μύθων ὁ Πίνδαρος εἰς τὸ μέλος ἐξέχεεν.

Plut. *De glor. Ath.* 4.347f–348a (ii 128 Nachstädt-Siebeking-Titchener = Corinna T2 Campbell).

When Pindar was still young and flaunting his eloquence, Corinna warned him that he was without the Muses: instead of composing tales, the true business of poetry, he based his works on rare words, extensions of meaning, paraphrases, melodies and rhythms, all mere embellishment. Pindar took her advice to heart with a vengeance and composed that song: 'Shall we sing of Ismenus or gold-distaffed Melia / or Cadmus or the holy race of Sown Men / or dark-snooded Thebe / or the all-daring might of Heracles / or the glorious honour of Dionysus...?'. When he showed it to

18 — Suggested dates span from Alexandrian times until that of Nonnus (approximately 400-460 / 70 CE); see Magnelli (2006), who suggests that the text should be dated between the fourth and sixth century CE. The text is that of Drachmann (1903) 8-9 and occurs in manuscripts containing the poems of Pindar, as well as in the extant prologue of the lost commentary on Pindar by Eustathius archiepiscopus Thessalonicensis; see Kambylis (1991).

19 — Larson (2002) links the anecdote, which is introduced by Corinna and Pindar's fellow Boeotian Plutarch in order to illustrate a rhetorical point, to Pind. *Ol.* 1.28-32, where μῦθοι ('myths') are contrasted with τὸν ἀλαθῆ λόγον ('wording that is true'); cf. Nagy (1990).

20 — Pindar's poem in Plutarch's passage is Snell Fr. 16; for a different context for the same poem, see Pseudo-Lucian's *Demosthenis encomium* 19.

Corinna, she laughed and said that one should sow with the hand, not the whole sack. For Pindar had in fact mixed together a jumbled hotchpotch of stories and emptied it into his song.

(Transl. Nachstädt-Sieveking-Titchener, slightly modified).

Several details in this passage are worth pausing over where Corinna’s reception history is concerned. First, there is the claim that Corinna warned Pindar when he was young (ὄντα νέον), which means that Plutarch implies that Corinna must have been born before or at least not very much later than him (c. 518 BCE, as is usually assumed)²¹, as she could hardly have given him advice on how to compose poetry as a child. Next, there is no denial of Pindar’s eloquence, merely an emphasis on his taking pride in it. Plutarch implies that this is the pretext for Corinna’s warning to Pindar that he is ‘without the Muses’ / ‘not of the Muses’ / ‘a-Musical’ (ἄμουσον ὄντα)²², namely that he shows off his talent through technical bravado, and not by making μύθους. The word here refers to ‘tales’, ‘stories’, and ‘narratives’²³, thus evoking Corinna’s own work known as the *Ἰεποῖα* (*Tales*)²⁴, which arguably lends further weight to her claim at this point²⁵. Finally, Pindar’s counter-move when confronted with Corinna’s criticism, which is to compose a preamble overloaded with tales (συγκεράσας καὶ συμφορήσας πανσπερμίαν τινὰ μύθων), evidently fails to impress. And so, Corinna still reproaches Pindar, only this time not for failing to employ μύθους, but for lack of elegance – in the etymological sense of ‘selection’ (cf. Lat. *eligere*) – in doing so. Notably, Plutarch claims that Corinna offered Pindar her sustained criticism laughingly (γελάσασα), which, alongside her strikingly pointed and witty advice, portrays her as an accomplished poet of considerable self-confidence.

As already touched upon, Plutarch’s anecdote resonates particularly strongly with the anonymous *Vita Pindari Metrica*, where we find the following description of Corinna:

τῷ δὲ λιγυφθόγγων ἐπέων μελέων θ’ ὑποθήμων
ἐπλετο δῖα Κόριννα· θεμείλια δ’ ὥπασε μύθων
τὸ πρῶτον·

VPM, 9-11 (Drachmann).

Divine Corinna was an advisor for him [Pindar] regarding clear-voiced words and melodies, and it was she who first gave him a basis for tales.

(Transl. Robert Emil Berge and Thea S. Thorsen).

21 — See n. 3.

22 — *LSJ* s.v. ἄμουσος, A.

23 — *LSJ* s.v. μῦθος, II 1.

24 — See Hansen (1989).

25 — West (1970) 283. Cf. also the νόμους λυρικούς in the *Sud.* K 2087 (iii 157s. Adler), ‘her narrative poems’; cf. Campbell (1992) 19.

The elevated status of Corinna is here stressed through her epithet ‘divine’ (δῖα), and her authority is further bolstered through her designation as ‘advisor’ (ὕποθήμων) in her and Pindar’s common craft: poetics²⁶. Again, the importance of tales (μύθων), which made it to the title of one of Corinna’s works and thus may be considered her hallmark, is stressed.

Some decades after Plutarch, Pausanias (fl. c. 150 CE) further corroborates the idea of Corinna as an intellectual authority, by portraying her as a poetic champion in his description of Tanagra, her home city:

εὖ δέ μοι Ταναγραῖοι νομίσαι τὰ ἐς τοὺς θεοὺς μάλιστα δοκοῦσιν Ἑλλήνων· χωρὶς μὲν γὰρ αἱ οἰκίαι σφίσι, χωρὶς δὲ τὰ ἱερὰ ὑπὲρ αὐτὰς ἐν καθαρῷ τέ ἐστι καὶ ἐκτὸς ἀνθρώπων. Κορίννης δέ, ἡ μόνη δὴ ἐν Τανάγρα ἄσματα ἐποίησε, ταύτης ἔστι μὲν μνήμα ἐν περιφανεί τῆς πόλεως, ἔστι δὲ ἐν τῷ γυμνασίῳ γραφή, ταινία τὴν κεφαλὴν ἢ Κόριννα ἀναδουμένη τῆς νίκης ἔνεκα ἣν Πίνδαρον ἄσματι ἐνίκησεν ἐν Θήβαις. φαίνεται δέ μοι νικῆσαι τῆς διαλέκτου τε ἔνεκα, ὅτι ἦδεν οὐ τῇ φωνῇ τῇ Δωρίδι ὥσπερ ὁ Πίνδαρος ἀλλὰ ὅποιά συνήσειν ἔμελλον Αἰολεῖς, καὶ ὅτι ἦν γυναικῶν τότε δὴ καλλίστη τὸ εἶδος, εἴ τι τῇ εἰκόνι δεῖ τεκμαίρεσθαι.

Paus. 22.2-4 (Jones and Ormerod).

I consider that the people of Tanagra have better arrangements for the worship of the gods than any other Greeks. For their houses are in one place, while the sanctuaries are apart beyond the houses in a clear space where no men live. Corinna, the only one who made poems in Tanagra, has her tomb in a conspicuous part of the city, and in the gymnasium there is a painting of Corinna crowning her head with a band for the victory she won over Pindar at Thebes with a lyric poem. I believe that her victory was partly due to the dialect she used, for she composed not in Doric speech like Pindar, but in one Aeolians would understand, and partly to her being, if one may judge from the likeness, the most beautiful woman of her time.

(Transl. Jones and Ormerod, slightly modified).

This passage, too, is worth pausing at, for here Pausanias not only confirms, but also very subtly questions Corinna’s intellectual authority and championship over Pindar. Among the first features to make note of in the passage quoted above is the fact that Pausanias regards the people of Tanagra as more developed than other Greek people in the matter of the space allotted for the worship of the gods in their city. Moreover, he points out that Corinna was the only one (ἡ μόνη) from Tanagra who made poetry. Since we do not know of any other Tanagran poets,

26 — ἐπέων μελέων refer to the two components required for lyric poetry, words and melodies, as in the present translations; see, however, *LSJ*, which renders the plural as ‘epic poetry’: s.v. ἔπος, IV, ‘in pl., *epic poetry*, opp. μέλη (*lyric poetry*)’.

it seems reasonable to assume that the word designating 'only', which is necessarily in the grammatically feminine gender, as it refers to the woman Corinna, is to be understood as gender inclusive, so as to mean 'the only composer of poetry (male or female)'. So, in this city, which according to Pausanias is so superiorly organized in its honouring of the gods, there are two monuments that attest to the pride they take in their 'only' poet, Corinna. First, there is the monument, taken by Pausanias' translators Jones and Ormerod in the Loeb Classical Library to be her grave²⁷. This memorial to Corinna, Pausanias points out, is on display for the whole city to see (ἐν περιφανεί τῆς πόλεως). Additionally, there is Corinna's picture (γραφὴ) in commemoration of her victory over Pindar, put on display in the gymnastic school (ἐν τῷ γυμνασίῳ) – appropriately so, as both athletic and poetic contests were held simultaneously at festivals in honour of the gods²⁸. Notably, Pausanias reports that this picture shows Corinna crowning²⁹ her head with a band as a gesture to mark her poetic championship over Pindar – again, appropriately so, as the term ταῦνία means 'esp. headband, worn in sign of victory'³⁰. So far, Pausanias has outlined the celebration of Corinna at Tanagra as consistent with the idea of her being an authority and a champion in the artistic and intellectual domain of poetry.

No particular remark until this point has been made about Corinna's sex. It is therefore striking that Pausanias closes this passage with two statements on his own account (φαίνεται δέ μοι), which both serve to undercut Corinna's authority. The first remark implies that the Theban audience did not appreciate (or understand?) the language of Pindar, which is the literary Dorian dialect³¹, as opposed to the local Boeotian dialect of Corinna; the other remark is sexist inasmuch as it implies that her victory was not due to her poetic mastery, but to her pretty face. Both remarks offer *ad hominem* explanations that draw attention away from Corinna's achievements as a poet and redirect it towards an alleged weakness in her audience and her supposed beauty³².

27 — *LSJ*, s.v. μνημα, A: 'memorial, remembrance, record of a person or thing'.

28 — Cf. e.g. Boorstin (1992) 165-6. Cf. Paus. 2.20.8 for Pausanias' record of Telesilla as another woman poet / city-heroine; cf. also Plut. *Mul. Virt.* 545c-f.

29 — *LSJ*, s.v. ἀναδέω, A 2.

30 — *LSJ*, s.v. ταῦνία, A.

31 — Cassio (2005).

32 — The first of these points, which is about the alleged provincality of the audience who deemed Corinna superior to Pindar, has been a major issue in scholarship ever since the 1907 publication of the Berlin Papyrus; see below. Thus e.g. Nachmanson elaborates: 'Korinna hat wirklich ihre Mutter-Sprache geredet. Das entspricht ihrer Stellung und Aspirationen: Er [Pindar] dichtet für Hellas, sie für Böotien' (1909) 132. This is referred to as Corinna's 'parochialism' in subsequent scholarship, both among those who corroborate the idea of this 'parochialism' as an emblem of Corinna's unimportance and those who criticise this implication or argue that it may be regarded positively. Among the former are Lobel (1930), Page (1953), West (1970, though with a modifying approach)

A generation later than Pausanias again, Aelian (161 / 77-230 / 8 CE) goes even further in undercutting Corinna's authority, as he elaborates thus on the dialectal preferences of the audience in Thebes in commenting upon the victory of Corinna over Pindar:

Πίνδαρος ὁ ποιητὴς ἀγωνιζόμενος ἐν Θήβαις ἀμαθέσι περιπεσὼν ἀκροαταῖς ἡττήθη Κορίννης πεντάκις. ἐλέγχων δὲ τὴν ἀμουσίαν αὐτῶν ὁ Πίνδαρος σὺν ἐκάλει τὴν Κόρινναν.

Ael. *VH.* 13.25 (Wilson).

The poet Pindar, competing in Thebes, was exposed to an ignorant public and defeated five times by Corinna. Criticising the public's lack of taste, Pindar called Corinna a sow.

(Transl. Wilson).

Aelian's brief passage may allude to previous literature of relevance. Denys Page suggests that it 'is nothing but an embroidery upon an easy misinterpretation of a well-known passage in Pindar's *Sixth Olympian*'³³. Here, at *Olympian* 6.90,34 Pindar convolutedly, through the figure of Aeneas, probably a trainer of choruses, hopes to avoid the 'old reproach' (ἀρχαῖον ὄνειδος) 'Boeotian pig' (Βοιωτίαν ὕν). It may very well be possible that Aelian alludes to Pindar's poem in this case. However, if 'pig / sow' is a standard expression of reprimand for authors in the context of Boeotia it is also possible that Aelian – through the mouthpiece of Pindar – uses it precisely as such; it may even be conceivable that some version of the anecdote prior to Aelian also included this element.

Notably, Aelian applies another term, τὴν ἀμουσίαν ('a-Musicality', in the sense 'without the Muses') to the Theban audience's taste, which may also be regarded as an allusion (with a vengeance) to the passage from Plutarch quoted above, in which Corinna is presented as accusing Pindar of being ἄμουσον ('a-Musical'). While Aelian's passage thus serves to question the legitimacy of Corinna's victories over Pindar by claiming that the judging audience was incompetent, Aelian nevertheless, *ad viam negativam*, as it were, promotes the idea of her as a poetic champion,

and (1990); among the latter are Bowra (1931), Skinner (1983), Hansen (1989), Davies (1988), Raylor (1993), Larson (2002), Collins (2006), Berman (2010) and Vergados (2012).

33 — Page (1953) 73, and concerning the attestation in Aelian that Corinna lived contemporaneously with Pindar, which is the major target of Page's analysis, he concludes: 'The one piece of evidence [i.e. Aelian; *sic* despite the fact that Plutarch and Pausanias, who both lived before Aelian, provide two other pieces of evidence] about the early date of Corinna is almost certainly nothing but a fairy-tale spun about a simple blunder'. The same point is made without reference to Page in Lefkowitz (1981) 65.

34 — Cf. Schol. ad Pind. *Ol.* 6.132 and Fr. 83.

especially as we are now told that Pindar was defeated by Corinna not only once, but as many as five times³⁵.

Receptions in the figurative arts

Despite some ambiguities, ancient texts paint a fairly sustained image of Corinna as a model poet of authoritative qualities, which appear to be reflected in several visual representations of her in antiquity. In fact, Corinna of Tanagra has been associated with at least six works of art in the ancient world. The original works of art are now (probably) all lost, but an ancient copy of one of them is still extant, and modern drawings exist of three others, of which one is also attested in an early photograph.

The two visual representations associated with Corinna mentioned by Pausanias are those that are now completely lost. We cannot know the exact date of these monuments, but they must have been in place at the time of Pausanias’ travels and they probably were so well before then. Yet, although they are of uncertain date and no longer extant, these visual representations nonetheless merit some reflection when considering the receptions of the poet Corinna. Clearly, these public monuments celebrated Corinna as a figure of authority. Poets’ funerary monuments may even readily be associated with hero cults in antiquity, which seems a plausible context for the memorial to Corinna³⁶, consistent also with her epithet as *δία*, ‘divine’³⁷. And her picture, showing her as victor in the gymnasium, offers a model of imitation for the athletes (probably more males than females) training there.

Moreover, we possess copies of another four visual representations associated with Corinna, the originals of which can be dated with approximate certainty. I will in the following present them in an approximately chronological order, departing from the presumed tentative date of the original works.

The first of these is the portrait statue of Corinna by the Athenian sculptor Silanion (fl. between 360 and 320 BCE)³⁸ attested in the *Speech*

35 — The same number of victories is found in the *Suda*: Κόριννα, Ἀχελφοδώρου καὶ Προκατίας, Θηβαία ἢ Ταναγραία, μαθήτρια Μύρτιδος· ἐπωνόμαστο δὲ Μυῖα· λυρική. ἐνίκησε δὲ πεντάκις ὡς λόγος Πίνδαρον. ἔγραψε βιβλία ε’ καὶ ἐπηγράμματα καὶ νόμους λυρικούς (*Sud.* K 2087 (iii) 157s. Adler), ‘Corinna, daughter of Acheloodorus and Procatia, from Thebes or Tanagra, pupil of Myrtis; nicknamed Myia, ‘Fly’; lyric poetess; defeated Pindar, as the story goes, five times; wrote five books and epigrams and lyric nomes’). Campbell (1992) 18-19, the translation is his. In this regard, the *Suda* may lean on Aelian, but may also rely on the same source as Aelian.

36 — For the cult of ancient Greek poets as heroes (or heroines), see Clay (2004), and for a connection between this cult and Corinna’s grave as described in Pausanias, see Hanink (2018) 237.

37 — *VPM*, 10; see above.

38 — Stewart (1998); see also *OCD*, 5th ed., s.v. ‘Silanion’, by A. Stewart. Dillon (2010) 115 dates the statue of Corinna to 320 BCE.

Against the Greeks (*Oratio ad Graecos*) by Tatian (fl. c. 170 CE), the Syrian biblical writer, who later became an apostate. Among other intellectual authorities, Silanion is also known to have portrayed Sappho³⁹ and Plato⁴⁰. Tatian claims to have seen Silanion's Corinna, and many other works of figurative art, with his own eyes in Rome (*Ad Gr.* 33-4)⁴¹. It is fairly well established in scholarship that these works of art were put on display in the Portico of Pompey⁴², Rome's first public park⁴³, that belonged to the Pompeian Complex⁴⁴. The reason for this assumption is that some of the works mentioned by Tatian are also attested in other sources that indeed locate the items in the Portico of Pompey⁴⁵. Moreover, several pieces of

39 — Cic. *Verr.* 4.57 and Tatian, below. See also Stewart (1990), accessed through the Perseus Digital Library: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Stewart+sculpture+2.4.3&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0008>.

40 — Diog. Laert. 3.25. See Stewart (1990), n. above.

41 — Among these works of art, Tatian mentions the portraits of Praxilla sculpted by Lysippus, Learchis sculpted by Menestratus, Sappho sculpted by Silanion, Corinna sculpted by Silanion, Erinna sculpted by Neucydes, Myrtis sculpted by Boiscus, Myro sculpted by Cephisodotus, Anyte, sculpted by Cephisodotus and Euthocrates, Pantheucis sculpted by Euthocrates, Taliarchis sculpted by Euthocrates, Praxagoris sculpted by Gomphus, Clito sculpted by Amphistratus, Telesilla sculpted by Niceratus, Glaucippe (or 'Alcippe', as in Pliny the Elder, *HN* 7.34) sculpted by Niceratus, Mystis sculpted by Aristodotus, Phryne sculpted by Praxiteles and Herodotus, Glycera sculpted by Herodotus, Argaea sculpted by Herodotus, Besantis sculpted by Dinomedes, Melanippe sculpted by Lysistratus, Eutythis sculpted by Periclymenus (also reported by Pliny, *HN* 7.34), Evanthé sculpted by Callistratus, Neaira sculpted by Calliades, Laïs sculpted by an unnamed artist. This list thus includes eight poets, five mothers, four hetaerae and six named but otherwise unidentified women; see Thorsen (2014) 160-1, with notes. For an overview of the scepticism this astonishing list has prompted in scholarship from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, see Thorsen (2012), referring especially to Kalkmann (1887); Page (1953) 73, n. 6 and West (1990) 557. The foundations for this scepticism have been shattered by archaeological evidence matching Tatian's claims; see n. 46 below. For an overview of references outside of Tatian to these portraits and their artists, see Marcovich (1995) 61-5.

42 — Cf. e.g. Coarelli (1971-1972), Allen and Frel (1972), Fuchs (1982), 77; Sauron (1987); Stewart (1998); *LTUR* s.v. 'Theatrum Pompei'; s.v. 'Porticus Pompei'; Kuttner (1999) 123-45; Dillon (2006) 40-1, 184, n. 28, and (2010) 48; Rosenmeyer (2007) 279; Bowditch (2009) 425, and Evans (2009) 123-45. See Thorsen (2014) n. 11.

43 — Gleason (1994).

44 — Cf. Almeida (1981) table 32; Davies (2017) 219, 229-33; *LTUR* s.v. 'Theatrum Pompei'; s.v. 'Porticus Pompei', for the Complex in the context of Roman culture, see Farrell (2004-2005) and Thorsen (2018). The Complex was built in the sixties and fifties BCE in commemoration of the three triumphs of Pompey the Great – see e.g. Beard (2007) 7-41 and Östenberg (2009) *passim* – and included a theatre that was the first permanent stage in Rome, a temple for Pompey the Great's patron deity Venus Victrix and an adjacent garden, framed by the Portico of Pompey, at whose far end was the exedra where Julius Caesar was stabbed to death during a senatorial meeting on the Ides of March in 44 BCE. The Complex was inaugurated in 55 BCE (Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 52, 4) and the temple of Venus was inaugurated in 52 BCE (Aul. Gell. *NA* 10.1.7). Several female figures other than the statues of non-mythological poets, mothers and courtesans mentioned by Tatian were most likely also on display here, such as Praxiteles' Cnidian Aphrodite (Athen. *Deipn.* 13.591a; Plin. *HN* 34.79 and Dillon (2010) 48; possibly also mentioned by Tatian), plus colossal statues of the Muses, of which some are thought still to be extant (Fuchs (1982)), and fourteen female statues allegorically representing the *nationes* subdued by Pompey. The latter were made for the Complex by the sculptor Coponius (Plin. *HN*, 34.41-2). The art on display in the Portico of Pompey thus seems to have been composed of already existing works as well as some that were commissioned for the occasion.

45 — See previous n. regarding Glaucippe / Alcippe, who is said by both Tatian and Pliny to

archaeological evidence, confirming the information given in the ancient sources, have also been retrieved precisely from the area in Rome where this Pompeian Complex once stood⁴⁶.

Now, Tatian's information regarding Silanion's Corinna matches a miniature statue which is currently at the Musée Vivienel in Compiègne, France. The 48 cm tall⁴⁷ statuette displays fourth-century BCE features and carries the name of KOPINNA in Greek capital letters on its base; see **fig. 1** below. While the find-spot of the miniature statue remains unknown⁴⁸, it is certainly a Roman-era⁴⁹ marble replica⁵⁰ of what is assumed to be the Greek bronze original of Silanion. Moreover, in 1900 Salomon Reinach pointed out that what he previously had mistaken for an altar at Corinna's left foot was in fact an open *scrinium* (scroll-box) that visibly contained four scrolls⁵¹. This astonishing detail means that when we include the one scroll that the portrayed figure is holding in her hands, the total number of scrolls represented by this piece of art is five, which exactly equals the number of books (= scrolls) that, according to the *Suda*, made up Corinna's total output⁵². To my knowledge, the connection between these two pieces of information, the number of scrolls represented by the statuette and the exact same number of books (= scrolls) in Corinna's output as stated in the *Suda*, has never before been made in scholarship⁵³.

Despite the sensational match between attestations of an original statue by Silanion and the Roman copy, the statuette holds an inconspicuous place in academic discussions. In philological studies that focus on Corinna's poetry, the statue is at most referred to in passing, sometimes with a certain dose of what must today be considered unwarranted scepticism⁵⁴. And within the discipline of classical archaeology, where the

have given birth to an elephant, and a statue of whom Pliny locates in the Portico of Pompey (*HN* 7.34), as Pliny does for Eutychis, who is said by both Pliny and Tatian to have given birth to c. thirty children (Plin. *ibid.*).

46 — Archaeological evidence in support of Tatian's claim that he has observed the statue of Mystis by Aristodotus and Melanippe by Lysistratus has been retrieved in the vicinity of the Area sacra di Largo Argentina in Rome, which was covered by the Pompeian Complex; see Coarelli (1971-1972) and Stewart (1998).

47 — Reinach (1898) 162.

48 — See Reinach (1898) 161-6.

49 — Late second or third century CE. I am grateful to one of the anonymous readers for this piece of information.

50 — The marble is 'creamy white with prominent purple veins, pavonazzo, Phrygian marble, from the famous Roman mines in Anatolia, see Reinach (1900) 172'. I am quoting from one of the readers' generous reports.

51 — Reinach (1900) 169; the idea about the altar is found in Reinach (1898).

52 — See n. 35 above.

53 — I am most grateful to one of the anonymous referees, who pointed out the number of scrolls that Reinach had observed in the *scrinium*, for making this connection.

54 — There is a striking irony in the fact that Page (1953) 73-4 n. 6 laments that art historians

identification of the portrayed Corinna and the portrayer Silanion has never been seriously questioned, prominent scholars have downplayed the distinctive qualities of the portrait, as seen e.g. in Gisela M. A. Richter's claim that the statuette is 'a slight work, and very generalized', John Boardman's contention that the portrait's 'features are conventional' and Andrew Stewart's designation of it as 'the miserable little Korinna from Compiègne'⁵⁵. Less condemnatory is Sheila Dillon, who argues that the miniature displays 'delicate facial features, similar to many of the terra-cotta Tanagra-figurines'⁵⁶. However, characterizations such as these, which may indeed be accurate in terms of the statuette's artistic execution, arguably obfuscate the overarching idea. For what this appropriately dressed figure conveys as she stands next to her *scrinium*, which underscores both her intellectual occupation in general and, through the number of scrolls it contains in addition to the one that is rolled out between her hands, her specific identity as Corinna of Tanagra, as confirmed by the name on the base, is arguably the same as that which lies at the heart of this paper, namely the idea of female artistic authority.

The next items of relevance for the present investigation are three nineteenth-century pencil drawings of frescoes found in Pompeii. While these original frescoes are (probably) now lost, one photograph still exists of one of them⁵⁷, which is digitally accessible through the 'Pompeii in Pictures' (= PiP) project⁵⁸. Similarly, while the nineteenth-century drawings of all three frescoes, whose originals are preserved in the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (= DAI) in Rome, have so far remained unpublished⁵⁹, they have also recently been rendered digitally accessible through the online project

and archaeologists do not take into account the attempted demolition by Kalkmann (1887) of Tatian's claim to have seen Silanion's statue of Corinna in Rome, when West in his most recent contribution to the debate on the date of Corinna (1990) 557 refers to the exact same passage in Page to support his scepticism against taking Silanion's original statue or the miniature replica into consideration, without himself taking into account the archaeological evidence which has been available since the publication of Coarelli (1971-1972) and which demolishes Kalkmann's attempted demolition; see nn. 42 and 46 above for the archaeological evidence and Thorsen (2012) for the tendentious and – even before the discovery of the archaeological evidence – ultimately unscientific rejection of the relevance of Tatian's claims by Kalkmann.

55 — Richter (1965), vol. 1, 144, Boardman (1985) 105 and Stewart (1990) accessed through the Perseus Digital Library: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0008%3Apart%3D2%3Achapter%3D4%3Asection%3D3>.

56 — Dillon (2010) 128. Cf. Stewart (1998) 297, who also brings up the Tanagrian figurines, which is a plethora of terra-cotta statuettes, many in clearly artistic poses, produced in Tanagra from c. the third century BCE onwards. See Cook (1903) 696, referring to Miss Hutton, who makes links between the Tanagrian figurines and Corinna of Tanagra; Marina Prusac-Lindagen and I are currently revisiting the connection between these figurines and Corinna in a forthcoming paper.

57 — <https://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R6/6%2014%2043%20p5.htm>.

58 — <https://pompeiiinpictures.com>.

59 — Cf. the website of the FVP project, and kindly confirmed by the librarian at the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Rome, Daria Lanzuolo, in private correspondence.

'La fortuna visiva di Pompei: Archivio di immagini e testi dal XVIII al XIX secolo' (= FVP), hosted by the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa⁶⁰. In both the PiP and the FVP project, of which the latter is partly based on the archive of the DAI, the images are identified as representing Corinna alongside Pindar, plus Myrtis in one of them⁶¹.

The drawings, which are seen in **fig. 2**, **fig. 3** and **fig. 4**, and which I refer to as Leppert (= L) 83:10, L 83:45 and L 83:113⁶², are not necessarily exact reproductions of the original frescoes, as suggested by a comparison between the third image and the extant photograph, see **fig. 5**⁶³. However, all three drawings clearly represent variations on one theme, as was certainly also the case for the original frescoes. The theme is a constellation of figures engaged in the musical activities of singing and playing on stringed instruments. Two figures recur in all the images. One of these is a seated, bearded man, crowned with a garland (of laurels, it seems), who variously rests an instrument on his lap (a kithara in L 83:10 and L 83:113) and plays on it (a lyre in L 83:45)⁶⁴, while holding a plectrum in his right hand. The man is located to the left of the image and seems to gaze at the second recurring figure, a woman, who stands to the right of the image, facing the man. She, too, wears a garland around her head (of ivy, it seems) and plays on her lyre, which is sometimes supported by a shoulder strap (L 83:10; L 83:113), in one case with a visible plectrum (L 83:10) in her right hand. In one of the drawings (L 83:113) there is additionally a third figure. This figure is also a woman; she has no instrument, but wears an ivy crown, and gazes at the other woman as she is performing or about to perform. The two recurring figures have been identified, both in the PiP and the FVP project, as Pindar and Corinna. Similarly, the second female figure has been identified as Myrtis, a poet who, according to the ancient tradition, was the teacher of both Corinna and Pindar⁶⁵.

There is probably no way of knowing whether the figures in the original frescoes were already in antiquity meant to represent Corinna, Pindar and Myrtis or not. What is certain, however, is that their provenience is Pompeian and that they must be dated to the period before Vesuvius' eruption in 79 CE. Moreover, they display a male and female figure partaking in the artistic endeavour of playing music and singing. Notably,

60 — <http://pompei.sns.it>.

61 — See n. 3, above.

62 — Leppert 83 is the name of the folder at the DAI where the drawings are found, which are leaves 10, 45 and 113 in the folder.

63 — Cf. n. 57 above, cf. also Helbig (1868) Nr. 1378b; 308-9 for an autopsy description of two of the frescoes, including their reported colours, around the time they were discovered; see below.

64 — For the distinguishing qualities of the ancient kithara and the lyre, including their number of strings, see West (1992), *passim* and esp. 49.

65 — See n. 3.

both the male and female figures wear headbands. And indeed, one of the labels that the FVP project has employed in order to tag these images is *tenia-raffigurazione*, ‘headband-representation’, thus recalling Pausanias’ description of the picture of Corinna on display in the gymnasium in Tanagra, where she is said to mark her triumph over Pindar by crowning herself with a ταῦνία, which, as mentioned above, is a word especially used in association with victories according to *LSJ*.

Receptions after antiquity

Even if many aspects of the nineteenth-century drawings of the Pompeian frescoes remain enigmatic, the setting, which is evocative of a poetic contest, and the associations with victories, flagged through the wearing of headbands, are elements which arguably feed into the idea not only of male, but also of female poetic champions in antiquity. These aspects may thus help explain why the figures in the drawings (at some point in time) were understood as depicting Corinna and Pindar, since these two poets are famously reported as having competed against one another in the ancient texts discussed above.

Wolfgang Helbig, in his 1868 book on the wall-paintings in Pompeii, which at the time was so little known that it is referred to periphrastically as ‘a city in the Campania that was destroyed by Vesuvius’⁶⁶, makes precisely this connection as he writes about what appear to be the actual frescoes on which the nineteenth-century drawings discussed above are based⁶⁷. Notably, Helbig’s descriptions both confirm and differ from what we see in these drawings⁶⁸, which, notwithstanding certain dis-

66 — The original title of the book is *Wandgemälde der vom Vesuv verschütteten Städte Campaniens*.

67 — Numbered 1378, 1378b and 1379, cf. Helbig (1868) 308-9.

68 — One conspicuous difference concerns colour. In the fresco which seems to be reproduced in L 83:10 we are told that the man’s beard and the woman’s shoes are white. And in the fresco that seems to match L 83:43 Helbig reports that the man has a violet chiton with a blue border, a white cloak and brown hair, while the woman wears red shoes and a yellow chiton; cf. Helbig (1868) 308-9.

crepancies⁶⁹, also offer variations on their shared theme⁷⁰. This theme, Helbig suggests, is ‘perhaps [that of a] famous musical competition, which consequently brings the one between Pindar and Corinna to mind’⁷¹. Helbig’s evocative identification of the figures in the frescoes is thus an example of the postclassical reception of Corinna as a poetic champion⁷².

Notably, Helbig’s suggestion concurs with the idea of Corinna as a poetic champion in *A History of the Literature of Ancient Greece*, which was published in 1840-1842, shortly before the drawings of the Pompeian frescoes were made. This work was written by K. O. Müller, a professor at the University of Göttingen, but first published in an English translation by John William Donaldson, examiner at the University of London and fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. The book, which is heralded as the first of its kind in English, demonstrates how the ancient textual testimonies to Corinna could be understood in relation to Pindar as late as the nineteenth century:

Pindar’s native place was Cynocephalæ [*sic*], a village in the territory of Thebes, the most considerable city of Bœotia. Although in his time the voices of the Pierian bards, and of epic poets of the Hesiodian school had long been mute in Bœotia, yet there was still much love for music and poetry, which had taken the prevailing form of lyric and choral compositions. That these arts were widely cultivated in Bœotia is proved by the fact that two women, Myrtis and Corinna, had attained great celebrity in

69 — In the description that otherwise resembles L 83:45, Helbig claims to see a gem-decorated garland of laurel, which is almost indiscernible in that drawing but seems to be the same as in L 83:10; cf. ‘in der Mitte mit einem Edelsteine besetzten Lorbeerkränze geschmückt’. Moreover, Helbig claims that the fresco that otherwise most closely resembles L 83:45 shows the man with an eleven-stringed kithara, whereas the drawing shows him holding a four-stringed lyre. It seems likely that the actual fresco was damaged between the time when Helbig observed it and the time when the pencil drawing was made, as the latter clearly reproduces damaged areas of the original work of art. Similarly, in the fresco that seems to correspond most closely to L 83:113, Helbig sees a bandage around the head of the man, which is hard to discern in the drawing, in addition to the laurel crown Helbig also observes, which is still visible in the pencil sketch. Strikingly, Helbig claims that one of the figures ‘gegenwärtig fast ganz zerstört ist’ in the fresco which otherwise seems to correspond to L 83:113, which, judging from the drawing, appears completely undamaged. Moreover, Helbig also claims that, in this fresco, ‘[z]wischen dem Manne und der Mädchengruppe erhebt sich auf einer Basis, an welcher ein Scepter lehnt, eine oben in zwei obeliskentartige Spitzen endende Säule, an welcher ein gegenwärtiger unkenntlicher Gegenstand, [vielleicht] ein Ruder, angebunden ist’. All of this is nowhere to be seen in L 83:113, the drawing that otherwise most closely resembles the scene in question, which thus is a reminder of the possibility that the drawings are only loosely based on the original frescoes. Helbig (1886) 308-9.

70 — As Helbig himself also observes; thus, he claims that wall-painting nr. 1379 ‘scheint... in engem Zusammenhange mit der N. 1378 und 78b zu stehen’, Helbig (1868) 309.

71 — My translation of: ‘Vielleicht handelt es sich um einen berühmten musikalischen Wettstreit, wobei man zunächst an den zwischen Pindar und Korinna denken’, Helbig (1886) 309.

72 — I have not been able to establish whether Helbig’s evocative identification inspired the later identification of the figures in the drawings, which may be possible. Helbig’s suggestion is sustained by Schefold (1957).

them during the youth of Pindar. Both were competitors with Pindar in poetry. Myrtis strove with him for a prize at public games: and although Corinna said, 'It is not meet that the clear toned Myrtis, a woman born, should enter lists with Pindar', yet she is said (perhaps from jealousy of his growing fame) to have often contended against him in the agones, and to have gained the victory over him five times. Pausanias, in his travels, saw at Tanagra, the native city of Corinna, a picture in which she was represented as binding her head with a fillet in victory which she had gained in a contest with Pindar. He supposes that she was less indebted for this victory to the excellence of her poetry than to her Boeotian dialect, which was more familiar to the ears of the judges at the games, and to her extraordinary beauty. Corinna also assisted the young poet with her advice; it is related of her that she recommended him to ornament his poems with mythical narrations, but that when he had composed a hymn, in the first six verses of which (still extant) almost the whole of the Theban mythology was introduced, she smiled and said, 'We should sow with the hand, not with the whole sack'. Too little of the poetry has been preserved to allow a safe judgement of her style and composition. The extant fragments refer mostly to mythological subjects, particularly to heroines of the Boeotian legends; this, and her rivalry with Pindar, show that she must be classed not in the Lesbian school of lyric poets, but among the masters of choral poetry⁷³.

The observations regarding lyric and choral poetry aside⁷⁴, Müller and Donaldson's nineteenth-century presentation of Corinna as one of the ancient 'masters' – together with the contemporary identification of the figures in the fresco-based drawings as Corinna and Pindar by Helbig (and others) – mark an end point in the reception history outlined in this paper.

Ironically, the curtains were closed on the idea of Corinna as an artistic authority in scholarship after the sensational *editio princeps* of the Berlin Papyrus (P. Berol. 284) by Wilhelm Schubart and Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff in 1907⁷⁵. This papyrus contained new fragments of Corinna's poetry, which theoretically should have prompted profounder appreciations of one of the poetic 'masters' of antiquity, but which in reality were used to argue for a later date for Corinna. This argument has dominated scholarship on the poet ever since, and – as a corollary – relegated the idea that she criticised and triumphed over Pindar, which she could not have done if he was dead when she was born, to the shadows of research⁷⁶. The arguments advanced in favour of Corinna's

73 — Müller and Donaldson (1840), vol. 1, 288.

74 — See n. 82 below.

75 — Most notably the so-called 'Contest of Helicon and Cithaeron' and 'The Daughters of Aesopus' (Corinna Fr. 654 Campbell).

76 — Cf. n. 33 above and Lobel (1930), one of the first to use arguments based on the Berlin

later date, which are not even conclusive⁷⁷, have thus been detrimental to our appreciation of the extent to which concepts of artistic authority could be gender-inclusive in the ancient world.

Conclusion

*On n'y voit rien*⁷⁸. This title of a book by the art historian Daniel Arasse was translated into the imperative *Take a Closer Look* when it was published in English⁷⁹. The book is about how easily we miss out on the obvious, especially, perhaps, when looking at the past. This special kind of blindness is captured in the French title, which literally means 'we see nothing there'; yet, a remedy is offered in the English invitation to 'take a closer look'.

Corinna of Tanagra offers an excellent illustration of Arasse's point⁸⁰. Over the past century, the *on n'y voit rien* tendency regarding the idea of Corinna as an artistic authority has become the prevailing approach in scholarship on the poet. This can be observed in the standard reference tools of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (*OCD*) and *Oxford Bibliographies Online* (*OBO*). In the *OCD* article on Corinna, the 'ancient tradition' of her being a contemporary of and champion over Pindar is dismissed as 'biographical fancy'⁸¹; the *OBO* article on 'Greek poetry: elegiac and lyric', which naturally includes Corinna, has no information about Corinna's 'ancient tradition', only the elusive statement that 'Corinna of Tanagra is the most mysterious of the lyric poets, because it remains uncertain whether she should be dated to the fifth century BCE or the

Papyrus in favour of a later date, dismissing the ancient testimony to Corinna's contemporary interaction with Pindar as 'contradictory and sometimes rather childish information supplied by ancient authors', Lobel (1930) 356.

77 — As already touched upon, some of the most prominent Hellenists of modern scholarship, notably Lobel (1930), Page (1953) and West (1970; 1982; 1990), have strongly argued in favour of a later date for Corinna, but without taking into account the evidence in stone published by Coarelli (1971-1972) and further explained by Stewart (1998), and without producing conclusive evidence, as is pointed out by Bowra (1931), Davies (1988) and Vergados (2016), esp. 243-6. However, even Vergados' excellent points are almost ironically framed by the arguments for Corinna's later date, as his introduction and commentary to the poet occur in a volume entitled *Hellenistic Poetry*. I hope to explore the potential ideology of the hypercriticism that Corinna has been subject to both in terms of canon and marginality (cf. Formisano and Kraus (2018)) and in terms of gender in a future publication.

78 — Arasse (2003).

79 — Arasse (2013).

80 — And Arasse is perhaps closer to Corinna than one might first think, since he does discuss the works of Ovid, whose *Amores* famously feature a Corinna. For a connection between Boeotian Corinna, Silanian's Corinna and Ovid's Corinna, see Heath (2013) and Thorsen (2018); cf. n. 17 above.

81 — *OCD*, 5th ed., s.v. 'Corinna'.

Hellenistic period⁸²; and in the *OBO* entry on Pindar *on n'y voit rien* quite literally, as Corinna is not mentioned at all⁸³.

However, a possibility remains to 'see something there' by taking a closer look, as the title of Arasse's book in its English translation implies. I hope to have shown in the course of this article that when we do precisely that, take a closer look, the idea of Corinna as an artistic authority is an obvious element in her reception history. Moreover, it is an important element, because it testifies to a rare yet astonishing flexibility in antiquity, which allows intellectual authorities in the form of model poets to be women as well as men. For the two monuments that the people of Tanagra raised in Corinna's honour and the statue made by Silanion testify to a remarkable esteem for her as a model poet and intellectual authority. Notably, the settings of these Tanagrean monuments, as well as of the statue of Silanion, were conspicuously public. The memorial tomb of Corinna in Tanagra was meant for the whole city to see, and her portrait in the gymnasium had a function which may be called civic, in the sense that its obvious purpose was to offer a model for imitation for the citizens of Tanagra in competitions with other cities. The statue by Silanion may similarly have been intended for a public setting parallel to that of his portrait of Sappho, which was on display in the civic context of the town hall of Syracuse: this statue was famously looted by Verres (Cic. *Verr.* 4.57), and Tatian claims to have observed it in Rome too, where it was most likely put on display in that first public park of the city, framed by the Portico of Pompey – alongside a number of statues of women authors by named sculptors, including Silanion's Corinna (Tat. *Ad Gr.* 33)⁸⁴. The high regard for Corinna which is expressed in extant Roman poems from c. 30 BCE onwards may reflect the presence of precisely this portrait of her by Silanion in the Portico of Pompey⁸⁵. At the same time, the extant miniature copy of Silanion's Corinna suggests that there was a market for downscaled reproductions of publicly displayed honorific portraits of this kind that could decorate spaces that were potentially (but not necessarily) less official in character, such as villas and other domestic dwellings. Moreover, the nineteenth-century drawings suggest a wide range of precisely such less public settings, as the images they reproduce were reportedly found in various locations at the intersection between

82 — *OB*, s.v. 'Greek poetry: elegiac and lyric'.

83 — *OB*, s.v. 'Pindar', by M. Lefkowitz. Lefkowitz (1981 = 2012, cf. the chapter on 'Pindar') also vigorously argues for the separation of Pindar from Corinna and from basically any information from his ancient *vitae*, of which Pindar has exceptionally many.

84 — Cf. Coarelli (1971-1972); Sauron (1987); Gleason (1994); Stewart (1998) and Kuttner (1999); see also n. 44 and n. below.

85 — See Thorsen (2012) and (2014).

public and private⁸⁶. What we know and may reasonably assume about the settings of the figurative representations of Corinna thus challenges our conceptions of private versus public in the case of women in antiquity.

Moreover, it is likely that Corinna's tomb was not only public but also subject to the kind of reverence that we know could emerge around poets in ancient Greece, thus adding a heroine-cultic layer to the epithet 'divine' which she is given in the *VPM*. In this anonymous work and in Plutarch, Corinna is clearly presented as learned and in control of the situation, both qualities of an authority, as she warns Pindar, her fellow student, according to the ancient tradition. In Plutarch, Corinna is even presented as being pointedly witty at Pindar's expense in this context. This aspect, the idea that Corinna excels at the expense of her male poet-colleague, creates a tension in her reception history. Tellingly, the sources that deal directly with Corinna's triumph over him also find ways to downplay her importance. In Pausanias the means of reducing Corinna's achievement lie in his critique of the alleged dialectal preferences and bad taste of the judging audience and the sexism veiled as a compliment to her beauty. And in Aelian the means to belittle Corinna's victories lie in the condescending reproach, vented through the mouthpiece of Pindar, which explicitly targets the judging audience – but does so by degrading Corinna. Nevertheless, while Pausanias and Aelian may thus question the legitimacy of the idea that Corinna was a poetic victor over Pindar, they do not question the truth of the idea itself. This is a very important point. Indeed, as we have seen, the idea of Corinna as a poetic victor over Pindar continued to inspire scholars such as Müller and Helbig, perhaps those who made the drawings of the frescoes in Pompeii and most likely those who later catalogued these drawings. Maybe even the original frescoes were made to depict Corinna vanquishing Pindar in poetic contest.

Certainly, the present investigation has mapped the idea of an artistic authority in the reception history of Boeotian Corinna, not historical facts about her actual person. However, the relationship between ideas and facts is a complex one. For an idea to take hold, spread and have impact it must include some element of perceived truth, or, at the very least, perceived likelihood. At the same time, even if conclusive evidence concerning Corinna's date should one day be brought forth and definitively invali-

86 — The original of L 83:10 was found in the House of the Citharist (*Casa del Citarista*), or of Poponius Secundus, House I.4.5, room 23, south wall; cf. Richardson (2000) 64; 67; the original of L 83:45 in the House of the Triclinium (*Casa del triclinio*), House V.2.4, in a *cubiculum*; cf. Helbig (1868) Nr. 1378, 308-9; Schefold (1957) 71; Richardson (2000) 64; the fresco on which L 83:113 was based has been variously located in the home of C. Poppaeus Firmus, House VI.14.38 (which room is inconsistently recorded in the relevant scholarship); cf. Sogliano (1879) 132, no. 644; Schefold (1957) 136, (1962) 82; *PPP* vol. 2, 293; and the House of the Scientists (*Casa degli Scienziati*), House VI.14.43; cf. Richardson (2000) 65. *PPM* vol. 5, 463.

date the idea that she competed with and beat Pindar, it would not alter the fact that this very same idea is clearly manifest in both ancient and postclassical material. For ideas – with their inherent element of perceived truth or likelihood – are also real as such. This is amply demonstrated by the reception studies approach⁸⁷, which facilitates academic investigations of ideas – both *in* the past and *about* the past – and which has therefore been employed in the present paper. The reception studies approach thus offers an alternative to the simple dismissal of material from antiquity because it may appear irrelevant, insignificant or inappropriate from certain points of view.

It also follows from the nature of an idea, which necessarily involves some uncertainty as well as some perceived truth or likelihood, that, as long as no conclusive evidence that might invalidate Corinna's ancient, sixth/fifth century BCE date has yet been produced, it still remains a possibility that Corinna of Tanagra in her day and age was actually a celebrated artistic authority who could in fact lecture the great Pindar on how to compose poetry and even prove her supreme talent by besting him at his own game, perhaps as many as five times.

In any event, the reception history of δῖα Κόρινθα, 'divine Corinna', as outlined above should urge us to reassess her standing in the history of classical literature and to revise our conceptions of the ancient past so as to accommodate the idea of a female artistic authority and champion over a male in poetic contest.

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87 — *OCD*, 5th ed., s.v. 'reception'.

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Fig. 1: Roman miniature copy of Silanion's original bronze statue of Corinna (c. 320 BCE). Original findspot unknown. Marble. Late 2nd or 3rd cent. CE. Musée Vivenel, Compiègne, France. Reproduced with permission from © Musée Antoine Vivenel, Compiègne

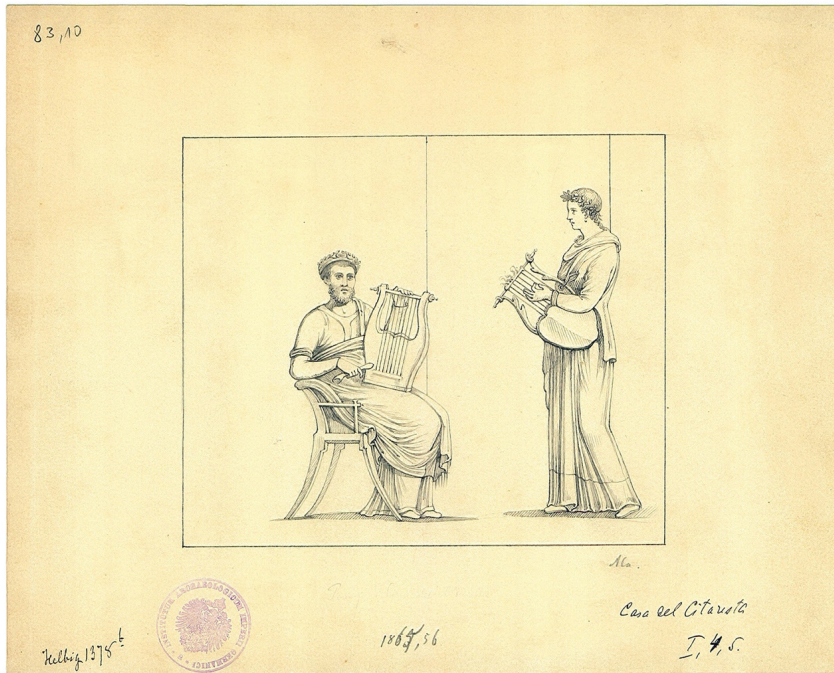


Fig. 2: Drawing (Leppert 83:10) assumed to represent Corinna and Pindar of a fresco originally found in Pompeii in the House of the Citharist (*Casa del Citarista*), or of Poponius Secundus = House I.4.5, room 23. 19th century. Pencil on paper. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome, Italy. Reproduced with permission from the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut

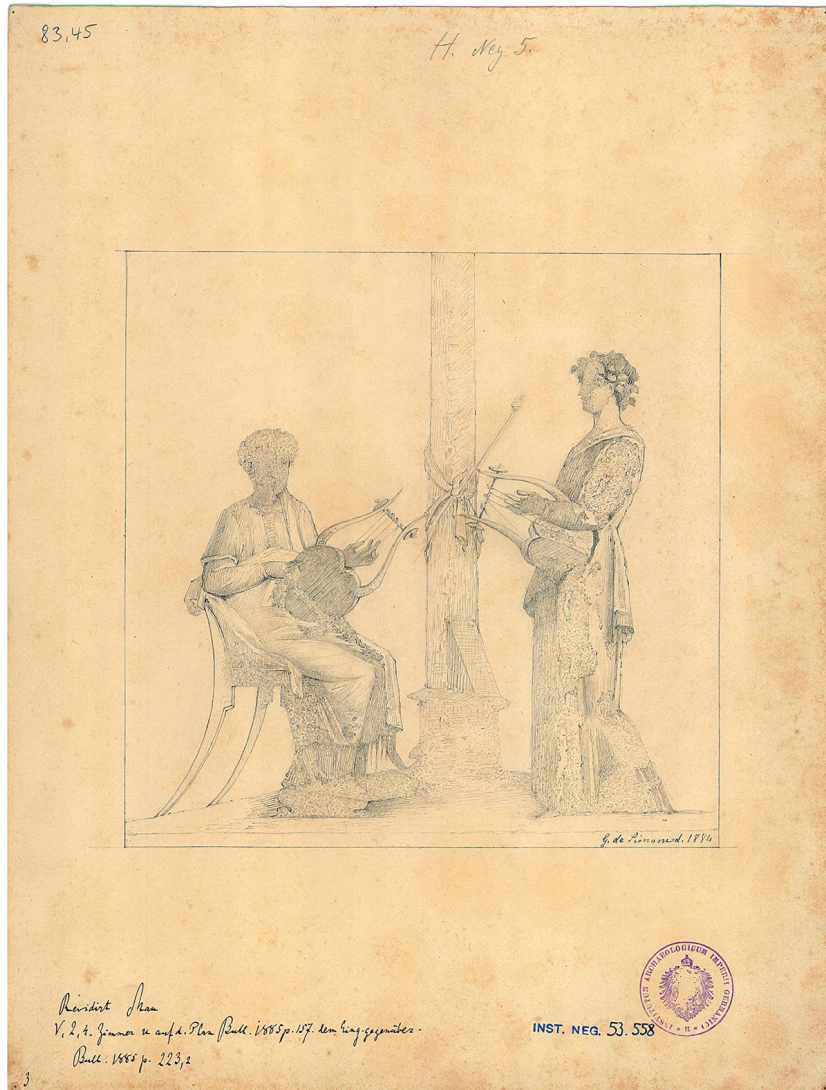


Fig. 3: Drawing assumed to represent Corinna and Pindar by Giuseppe De Simone (Leppert 83:45) of a fresco originally found in Pompeii in the House of the Triclinium (*Casa del triclinio*) = House V.2.4, in a *cubiculum*. Dated to 1884. Pencil on paper. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome, Italy. Reproduced with permission from the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut

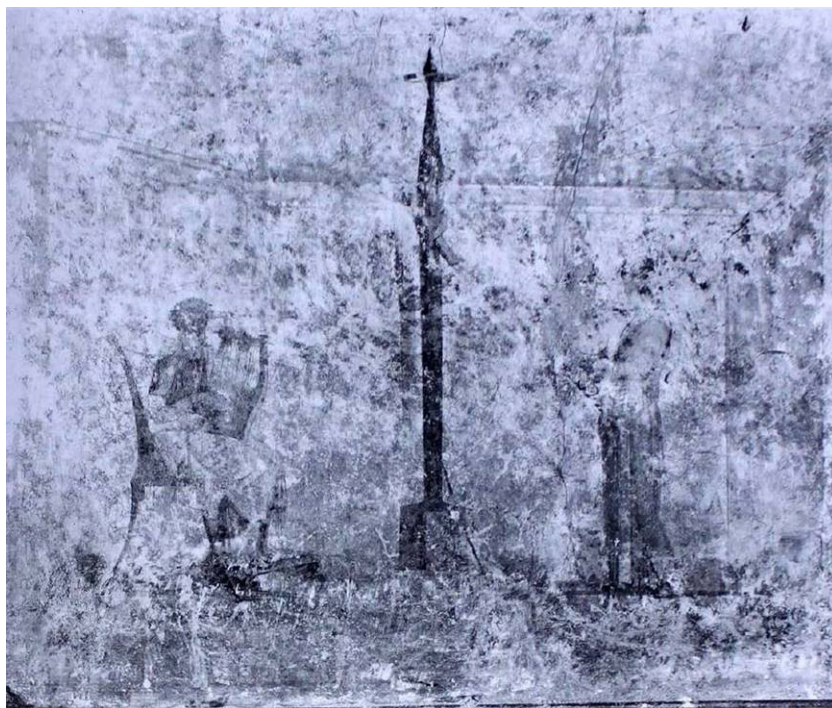


Fig. 5: Photo of a fresco found in the House of the Scientists (*Casa degli Scienziati*) = House VI.14.43 Pompeii. Room 16, exedra on north side of peristyle, claimed to represent Pindar, Corrina and Myrtis. Now in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples. The photo is reproduced here in anticipation of the permission requested from the National Archaeological Museum of Naples