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 Pindar, her alleged Boeotian compatriot, poet-colleague and fellow student. Indeed, as such, the idea

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1 — I wish to thank the editors Jacqueline Fabre-Serris and Judith Hallett for kindly welcoming this article and helping me improve my argument. Thanks are also due to the anonymous referees, whose efforts to aid me in improving this article have been beyond what could reasonably be expected; for generous help of various other kinds I am grateful to (in alphabetical order) Benedetto Benedetti, Robert Emil Berge, Stephen Harrison, Daria Lanzuolo, Maria Emelia Masci and last, but not least, Marina Prusac-Lindhagen.

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 <ιὼν>, ὡς μὲν Ἄφρων, θέμα ἐστίν, ὃ συζύγως οἱ αὐτοί φασί, τῇ μὲν ἱών, <τῇ δὲ ἐγών τὴν ἱών>, εἴγε τὸ παρὰ Δωριεῦσιν η εἰ μεταβάλλεται, τῇ δὲ ἐγώνγα τὴν ἱώνγα. Κόριννα· μέμφομη δὲ κὴ λιγουρὰν / Μουρτίδ τι βανὰ φοῦ. — Wilamowitz: Πινδαριοιο cod. | Π. post ὅτι transp. West] καὶ ἐν-ιὼνει δ’ εἰρώνων ἄρετας χείρωθαν [cf. Ηδν. π. μον. λέξ. α 18 (ii 924 Lentz)] τὸ γάρ
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 lyricorum⁷, 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

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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 Teleilla; 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 Pindarvus 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 Corinna, 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) as the singer of raging Athena’s shield in an epigram by the Rome-based Antipater of Thessalonica (fl. 11 BCE-12 CE), and as a subtle poet, evoking secrets, in the company of sophisticated authors like Callimachus, Lycophron and Sophron in the Silvae of Statius (b. c. 45 CE). In these Roman poems, we thus see the contours of an ancient, mythically themed and

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12 — Linked to Dionysius Thrax (2nd cent. BCE) and Alexander Polyhistor (1st cent. BCE, cf. de Breucker (2012)): γεγόνας δὲ λυρικοὶ οἱ καὶ πραττόμενοι ἐννέα, ὃν τὰ ὀνόματα ἔστι ταῦτα: Ἀνακρέων, Ἀλκμάν, Ἀλκαιός, Βακχυλίδης, Ἱβύκος, Πίνδαρος, Στρατόγορος, Σιμωνίδης, Σαπφώ, καὶ δεκάτη Κόριννα (Comment. Melamp. seu Diomed. in Dion. Thrac. (p. 21 Hilgard), ‘The lyric poets on whom commentaries are written are nine in number: Anacreon, Alcaeus, Bacchylides, Ibycus, Pindar, Steichoborus, Sophron, 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. Lycoph. (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.


16 — *Tu pandere doctus i carmina Battiaude latebrasque Lycophronis atri i Sophronae 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 Πίνδαρος γένος δί᾽ ἔπων, *Pindar’s Origin in Epic Verse*), which is of uncertain date. 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 Pindar:

> ἡ δὲ Κόριννα τὸν Πίνδαρον, ὃντα νέον ἔτι καὶ τῇ λογιότητι σοβαρῶς χρώμενον, ἑνουθέτησεν ως ἀμουσὸν ὃντα μὴ ποιοῦντα μύθους, οὗ τῆς ποιητικῆς έργον εἶναι συμβέβηκε, γλώσσας δὲ καὶ καταχρήσεις καὶ μεταφοράς καὶ μέλη καὶ ῥυθμοὺς ἡδύσματα τοῖς πράγμασιν ὑποτιθέντα. σφόδρ’ οὖν ὁ Πίνδαρος ἐπιστήσας τοῖς λεγομένοις ἐποίησεν ἐκείνο τὸ μέλος:
> Ἰσμηνὸν ἢ χρυσαλάκατον Μελίαν ἢ Κάδμον ἢ Σπαρτῶν ἱερὸν γένος ἀνδρῶν ἢ τὰν κυανάμπυκα Θήβαν ἢ τὸ πάντολμον σθένος Ἡρακλέος... οὖν ὁ Πίνδαρος ἐπιστήσας τοῖς λεγομένοις ἐποίησεν ἐκείνο τὸ μέλος.

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

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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 archepiscopus 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 Ἐροῖα (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:


tῷ δὲ λιγυφθόγγων ἐπέων μελέων θ ὑποθήμων
ἐπλετο δῖα Κόριννα· θεμελία δ’ ὤπασε μύθων
tὸ 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.


²¹ — See n. 3.
²² — LSJ s.v. ἄμουσος, A.
²³ — LSJ s.v. μύθος, II 1.
The elevated status of Corinna is here stressed through her epithet ‘divine’ (δῖα), and her authority is further bolstered through her designation as ‘advisor’ (ὑποθήμων) in her and Pindar’s common craft: poetics. 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 τά ἐς τοὺς θεοὺς μάλιστα δοκοῦσιν Ἑλλήνων· χωρὶς μὲν γὰρ αἱ οἰκίαι σφίσι, χωρὶς δὲ τὰ ιερὰ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐν καθαρῷ τε ἐστι καὶ έκτός ἀνθρώπων. Κορίννης δὲ, ἡ μόνη δὴ ἐν Τανάγρᾳ άσματα ἐποίησε, ταύτης ἐστι μὲν μνήμη ἐν περιφανεῖ τῆς πόλεως, ἐστὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ γυμνασίῳ γραφή, ταινίᾳ τὴν κεφαλήν ἡ Κόριννα, ἐν καθαρῷ τε ἐστι καὶ ἐκτὸς ἀνθρώπων. Κορίννης δέ, η μόνη δὴ ἐν Τανάγρᾳ άσματα ἐποίησε, ταύτης ἐστι μὲν μνήμη ἐν περιφανεῖ τῆς πόλεως, ἐστὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ γυμνασίῳ γραφή, ταινίᾳ τὴν κεφαλήν ἡ Κόριννα, ἐν καθαρῷ τε ἐστι καὶ ἐκτὸς ἀνθρώπων. Κορίννης δέ, η μόνη δὴ ἐν Τανάγρᾳ άσματα ἐποίησε, ταύτης ἐστι μὲν μνήμη ἐν περιφανεῖ τῆς πόλεως, ἐστὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ γυμνασίῳ γραφή, ταινίᾳ τὴν κεφαλήν ἡ Κόριννα, ἐν καθαρῷ τε ἐστι καὶ ἐκτὸς ἀνθρώπων. Κορίννης δέ, η μόνη δὴ ἐν Τανάγρᾳ άσματα ἐποίησε, ταύτης ἐστι μὲν μνήμη ἐν περιφανεῖ τῆς πόλεως, ἐστὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ γυμνασίῳ γραφή, ταινίᾳ τὴν κεφαλήν ἡ Κόριννα, ἐν καθαρῷ τε ἐστι καὶ ἐκτὸς ἀνθρώπων.

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 gymnasion 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 Tanagrean poets,

26 — ἐπιστῶν μέλεων 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 grave. This memorial to Corinna, Pausanias points out, is on display for the whole city to see (ἐν περιφανεῖ 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 gods. Notably, Pausanias reports that this picture shows Corinna crowning her head with a band as a gesture to mark her poetic championship over Pindar – again, appropriately so, as the term ταινία means ‘esp. headband, worn in sign of victory’. 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 dialect, 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 beauty.

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27 — LSJ, s.v. μνῆμα, A: ‘memorial, remembrance, record of a person or thing’.
29 — LSJ, s.v. ἀναδέω, A 2.
30 — LSJ, s.v. ταινία, A.
32 — The first of these points, which is about the alleged provinciality 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 Bootien’ (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 ποιητής 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’.

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 ὀν). 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,
especially as we are now told that Pindar was defeated by Corinna not only once, but as many as five times.35

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 Corinna,36 consistent also with her epithet as δῖα, ‘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

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35 — The same number of victories is found in the Suda: Κόριννα, Αχελῳοδώρου και Προκατίας, Θηρία ή Ταναγραία, μαθήτρια Μύρτιδος-ἐπωνύμαστο δὲ Μυῖα- λυρική, ἐνίκησε δὲ πεντάκις ὡς λόγος Πίνδαρον. Εἴρησεν βιβλία καὶ ἐπιγράμματα καὶ νόμους λυρικούς (Sud. K 2087 (iii 157s. Adler), ‘Corinna, daughter of Acheleodorus and Procatia, from Thebes or Tanagra, pupil of Myrtilus; 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 Sappho and Plato. 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). It is fairly well established in scholarship that these works of art were put on display in the Portico of Pompey, Rome’s first public park, that belonged to the Pompeian Complex. 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 Pompey. Moreover, several pieces of...

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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 Boicos, Myro sculpted by Cephisodotus, Anyte, sculpted by Cephisodotus and Euthyocrates, Pantheucis sculpted by Euthyocrates, Taliarchis sculpted by Euthyocrates, Praxagoris sculpted by Gomphus, Clito sculpted by Amphiaratus, Teleilla sculpted by Nicratus, Glauicpe (or ‘Alcippe’, as in Pliny the Elder, HN 7.34) sculpted by Nicratus, Mystis sculpted by Aristodorus, Phryne sculpted by Praxiteles and Herodotus, Glycera sculpted by Herodotus, Argea sculpted by Herodotus, Besantis sculpted by Dinomedes, Menaphe sculpted by Lysistratus, Eurychis sculpted by Pericylmenus (also reported by Pliny, HN 7.34), Evante sculpted by Callistratus, Neaira sculpted by Calliades, Lais 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, n. 6 and West (1999) 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.


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 nations 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 Glauicpe / 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 Vivenel 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

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.

56 — Dillon (2010) 128. Cf. Stewart (1998) 297, who also brings up the Tanagrean 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 Tanagrean figurines and Corinna of Tanagra; Marina Prusac-Lindagen and I are currently revisiting the connection between these figurines and Corinna in a forthcoming paper.
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 Pisa. 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 them.

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 83:113, 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. 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), 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 Pindar.

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,
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 *ταινία*, 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-

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


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

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 Cynocephalae, a village in the territory of Thebes, the most considerable city of Boeotia. Although in his time the voices of the Pierian bards, and of epic poets of the Hesiodean school had long been mute in Boeotia, 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 Boeotia is proved by the fact that two women, Myrtis and Corinna, had attained great celebrity in

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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, ‘zwischen dem Manne und der Mädchengruppe erhebt sich auf einer Basis, an welcher ein Szepter lehnt, eine oben in zwei obeliskenartige 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 der N. 1378 und 78b zu stehen’, Helbig (1868) 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 Bœotian 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 preser-
ved to allow a safe judgement of her style and composition. The extant
fragments refer mostly to mythological subjects, particularly to heroines
of the Bœotian 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 frag-
ments of Corinna’s poetry, which theoretically should have prompted
profonder appreciations of one of the poetic ‘masters’ of antiquity, but
which in reality were used to argue for a later date for Corinna. This argu-
ment has dominated scholarship on the poet ever since, and – as a corol-
larly – 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 conclusive\textsuperscript{77}, have thus been detrimental to our appreciation of the extent to which concepts of artistic authority could be gender-inclusive in the ancient world.

\textbf{Conclusion}

\textit{On n’y voit rien}\textsuperscript{78}. This title of a book by the art historian Daniel Arasse was translated into the imperative \textit{Take a Closer Look} when it was published in English\textsuperscript{79}. 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 point\textsuperscript{80}. Over the past century, the \textit{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 \textit{Oxford Classical Dictionary} (\textit{OCD}) and \textit{Oxford Bibliographies Online} (\textit{OBO}). In the \textit{OCD} article on Corinna, the ‘ancient tradition’ of her being a contemporary of and champion over Pindar is dismissed as ‘biographical fancy’\textsuperscript{81}; the \textit{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

\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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.

\textsuperscript{78} — Arasse (2003).

\textsuperscript{79} — Arasse (2013).

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

\textsuperscript{81} — \textit{OCD}, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed., s.v. ‘Corinna’.
Hellenistic period\(^{82}\); and in the *OBO* entry on Pindar *on n'y voit rien* quite literally, as Corinna is not mentioned at all\(^{83}\).

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 gymnasion 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 Pompey\(^ {85}\). 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

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\(^{82}\) — *O.B.*, s.v. ‘Greek poetry: elegiac and lyric’.

\(^{83}\) — *O.B.*, 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 *vita*, 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 private. 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-

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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 approach, 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 δία Κόριννα, ‘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. 4: Drawing assumed to represent Corinna, Pindar and Myrtis (Leppert 83:113) of a fresco found either in the home of C. Poppaeus Firmus = House VI.14.38 or in the House of the Scientists (Casa degli Scienziati) = House IV.14.43. 19th century. 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.