

The Landscape and Language of Korinna

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THE POETRY OF KORINNA, who tradition tells us hailed from Tanagra or Thebes, is known for its strong local flavor. Its language is certainly a type of Boiotian dialect, and the content of the poems and fragments that survive is deeply colored by local particulars of all types. The present article is loosely centered around controversies that have long plagued interpretation of her poetry: the question of her date, thought to be either roughly contemporary with Pindar (i.e. late sixth to fifth century) or significantly later, perhaps Hellenistic or at least late fourth century, and the related matter of her homeland: Tanagra or Thebes.¹ I consider here two issues facing an interpreter of Korinna that both, in somewhat similar ways, relate to these problems. The first is one that has not been much discussed by critics, her representation of Boiotian topography. The second, the language of the poems, is more traveled ground. In both cases I hope to shed new light on the central problems of Korinna's location in time and place, and the discussion of topography may potentially open a new perspective on Korinna's language.

Korinna's poetry survives to us on papyri and in a smattering of stray quotations from commentators or other ancient witnesses.² We have several relatively lengthy fragments and quite

¹ Tanagra according to Pausanias (9.22.3); the *Suda* s.v. identifies her as Θηβαία ἢ Ταγγραία. Most have sided with Pausanias.

² The best and most comprehensive edition is still D. L. Page, *Corinna* (London 1953), with introduction, text, commentary, and additional discussion; *PMG* contains a full text of the fragments.

a few shorter ones, many only a few words long. Her verse seems entirely mythic in content: we hear of Orion, Zeus and the Kouretes, and many others, as well as titles that show she treated the stories of Orestes, the Seven against Thebes, Iolaos, and the Teumessian fox, for example. The myths told are almost exclusively Boiotian in content, or at least setting; a striking exception to this might be her *Orestes*, which still, however, could treat events at Delphi or Phokis.³ It is fair to say that on balance critics have not been inclined to praise many aspects of Korinna's verse, sometimes for technical reasons, but usually because of a perceived amateurishness or simplicity in expression and construction.⁴ But there have been forceful defenders, as well, primarily from a gender-oriented perspective; she has been hailed as a rare female voice (often compared, favorably or unfavorably, with Sappho) and as a representative of a type of "women-identified" poetry to which we have little access from the ancient world in any period.⁵

Early commentators placed Korinna in the sixth or fifth centuries, mostly on the strength of an anecdote told by Pausanias, Aelian, and others about a contest she supposedly had with

³ Page made an attempt to suggest its performance at the Ismenion in Thebes, which would retain some link to Boiotia (the setting of part of Orestes' story at Delphi might provide another); see Page, *Corinna* 28.

⁴ This assessment goes back at least as far as Page, and is still the standard view; the most recent edition of the *OCT* (1996) asserts, though not entirely negatively, that Korinna's style is "simple; fluent narrative."

⁵ The term "women-identified" is used by D. L. Rayor, "Korinna: Gender and Narrative Tradition," *Arethusa* 26 (1993) 219–231, at 221–222. There is controversy here, as well, however: Marilyn Skinner, in a well-known article, has labeled Korinna's poetry "patriarchal" (consider that Sappho writes "personal" poetry whereas Korinna's verse is, as far as we can tell, entirely mythic): "Corinna of Tanagra and Her Audience," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 2 (1983) 9–20; also supported by D. Clayman, "Corinna and Pindar," in R. M. Rosen and J. Farrell (eds.), *Nomodeiktēs: Greek Studies in Honor of Martin Ostwald* (Ann Arbor 1993) 633–642, who, in the course of arguing for a Hellenistic date, wishes to recognize in Korinna's poetry the position that "the grand style is appropriate only for men, while the slight style is better suited to women" (see 641 with n.35).

Pindar.⁶ There is a smattering of other testimonia that support this date, especially a tale of her reproach of another poetess, Myrtis, for imitating Pindar's style—though that is difficult to interpret, since not all rebukes of that kind are *vis à vis* contemporary colleagues.⁷ Since Page's edition in 1953, there has been a strong trend towards skepticism of the early date. Linguistic, stylistic, and thematic arguments mounted by Page (himself somewhat equivocally), Segal, and especially West make a forceful, though not airtight, case for a late date.⁸ Some compelling circumstantial evidence seems to support the later date, as well: Korinna is not listed in the canon of lyric poets by the Alexandrians; in addition, if she was truly a poet with a reputation such that she could enter a competition with Pindar, it is more than a little odd that she is nowhere mentioned in our surviving literature, for any reason whatsoever, before the latter half of the first century B.C.⁹ Matters of her dating are complicated by the text of the papyrus in which the most extensive fragments survive, which was written around 200 B.C., to judge from its spelling and script.¹⁰ As for where she lived,

⁶ Paus. 9.22.3; Ael. *VH* 13.25.1–2.

⁷ See D. Collins, "Corinna and Mythological Innovation," *CQ* 56 (2006) 19–32, at 20–21, for a recent discussion of the fragment on Myrtis, *PMG* 664a. Collins mentions Stesichoros' rebuke of Homer and Hesiod (fr.193.1–7 Davies), Pindar's of Archilochos (*Pyth.* 2.54–56), and Solon's of Mimnermos (Solon fr.20 West); I would add Kallimachos' implicit rebuke of Homer and the cyclic poets (*Anth.Gr.* 12.43; Pfeiffer 28).

⁸ Page, *Corinna*; C. Segal, *Aglaia: The Poetry of Aleman, Sappho, Pindar, Bacchylides and Corinna* (New York 1998); M. L. West, "Corinna," *CQ* 20 (1970) 277–287, and "Dating Corinna," *CQ* 40 (1990) 553–557; others who accept the late date include Clayman, in *Nomodeiktēs*, and P. Guillon, "Corinne et les oracles béotiens: La consultation d'Asopos," *BCH* 82 (1958) 47–60, and "À propos de Corinne," *Annales Fac. des lettres d'Aix* 33 (1959) 155–168.

⁹ This is odd but not impossible; Collins, *CQ* 56 (2006) 19–20, remarks that if Korinna is early she might not have been known outside of Boiotia and her works could have been copied by the Alexandrians presumably without her having entered the canon of nine lyric poets.

¹⁰ See especially Page, *Corinna*, but also West *CQ* 20 (1970) and *CQ* 40

we have little explicit evidence other than citations in Pausanias and the *Suda* (see n.1).

Korinna and the Landscape of Boiotia

The first approach I wish to take is thematic. Many modern readers have made general pronouncements about the content of this poetry, mostly colored by Page's strong feeling that Korinna is epichoric, or local, or provincial, etc.—that is, that she is a minor-leaguer, playing in a local park, at least as compared to those in the majors such as Pindar or even Bacchylides.¹¹ There have been some attempts to counteract this, however, most recently by Derek Collins, who explores mythological innovation in the poems. By examining the treatment of a particular feature of Korinna's content, representation of the Boiotian landscape, I hope to rehabilitate her further by showing the subtlety with which she expresses details of topography. I will conclude by drawing some connections between this discussion and the matter of her date.

The contours of the Boiotian landscape occasionally find themselves represented in the region's poetry: Hesiod's Askra, for example, or the ubiquity of springs such as Dirke in the area surrounding Thebes. But while Hesiod and Pindar offer only fleeting glimpses of their native land and its particular topography and character, the verse of Korinna supplies almost constant reference to local topography, such as rivers, mountains, towns, and many other less prominent features of the Boiotian environment. In fact, Boiotian topography is fundamental to both major fragments, *PMG* 654 column i, the singing contest between Kithairon and Helikon, and column

(1990), and M. Davies, "Corinna's Date Revisited," *SIFC* 81 (1998) 186–194, on technical features of orthography and dialect; also below.

¹¹ Page, *Corinna* 45: "not even Sappho is so strictly confined to the interests of a province"; West, *CQ* 20 (1970) 286, concludes "while more gifted than most of the local poets whose festival compositions were honoured by inscription on stone ... Corinna's stereotyped metrical cola and unoriginality of phrase class her with them rather than with Pindar or Bacchylides."

iii, often referred to as the “Daughters of Asopos” fragment, and it is present in many others as well. In the singing-contest poem, we have enough of the papyrus to recognize that the contestants carry the names of none other than the two major mountains of Boiotia, Helikon to the west and Kithairon to the south. And the Daughters of Asopos fragment carries topographic information in more than one way: first, the speaker of a prophecy concerning the daughters names himself Akraiphen (iii.31) and indicates his lineage as a priest of Apollo (almost surely of Apollo Ptoios, a prominent Boiotian shrine in the territory of Akraiphiai), running from Euonymos to Hyrieus to Orion to Akraiphen himself. Two of the four priests in this lineage have Boiotian toponymic associations: Akraiphen with Akraiphiai and Hyrieus with Hyria; the others have Boiotian connections I will explore further below. The names of the daughters of Asopos, while the subject of some debate, also clearly had a topographic orientation. Though only one, Korkyra, is securely mentioned in the text, lists have been made based on conjecture and inference that include (aside from Korkyra) Thespia, Aigina, Thebe, Salamis, Tanagra, and perhaps Euboia.¹² A glance through the remaining fragments and testimonia of Korinna’s verse turns up a solid mention of Kephisos (655.1), as well as Ogygos (671), another Thespia (674), and the river Ladon, which is here most likely an alternate name for the Ismenos (684).

Let us allow, for a moment, that all these names can indeed be understood either as toponyms or as personal names with direct connection to associated toponyms (such as Akraiphen and Akraiphiai). If we were to plot them on a map, we would find that the surviving poetry of Korinna maintains an astonishing concentration on Boiotia. In fact, only a few non-Boiotian locations find mention at all, and at least three (Aigina

¹² This is Page’s list (*Corinna* 26), but it is based partly upon the readings and suggestions of others (particularly the mythological lexica of Hofer and Stoll, and Roscher).

and Salamis, if we count those, and Kephisos) are not so far away (Korkyra and Libya are certainly the farthest outliers). The “local” flavor of Korinna is underscored by these references: from the Ptoion and Akraiphiai in the north to Aulis and Hyria in the east to Thespiiai and Helikon in the west, the poems are bounded, in effect, by their expressed topography.

This feature of Korinna’s verse sets it apart from much other Greek mythic poetry, especially archaic and classical poetry. It is not “panhellenic,” at least in this respect; compare the verse of Pindar, which lights upon nearly the entire Greek world even in only the surviving epinician poems. Korinna, by contrast, gives a portrait of a relatively circumscribed area, with Tanagra located near the edge of a cluster of solidly Boiotian towns, shrines, and natural features in the vicinity of Thebes. She looks to an area bounded by Kithairon and Helikon, and does not gaze south towards Attika or east towards Troy. In addition, there is little mention of another Boiotian power in the northwest of the region, Orchomenos, or its associated territories. Though caution is in order, since so much of Korinna’s output has been lost, this underscores the Tanagran/Theban perspective of the verses, and could be significant if Korinna’s verse is read in a political context, a possibility I will return to briefly below.

How do these topographical features operate, and what do they mean? Let us take in more detail the two most developed examples, the mountains’ singing contest and the fragment concerning the daughters of Asopos. First, the mountains (*PMG* 654 col. i). We must admit that the fragment as we have it leaves us asking a fundamental question concerning Kithairon and Helikon: are they personae—that is, men, heroes, or perhaps gods—or are they, in some sense, the mountains themselves, personified? This is not an unfamiliar question for a reader of Greek poetry, since from Homer onward the poetic tradition occasionally identifies natural features with gods (the Iliadic Xanthos/Skamandros is a prominent early example). Still, there is an interpretative choice to be made: Kithairon and Helikon as personified mountain divinities might be familiar enough, even Homeric. But to understand these two actors

as men, eponymous heroes of the two famous mountains, is something different. We might still find it familiar, and even occasionally paralleled in early poetry,¹³ but our familiarity would, I will suggest, come mostly from a comfort with later poetry—perhaps beginning with Euripides, but primarily Alexandrian and Roman—in which personification of natural features of landscape often shades into etiology: witness Kallimachos' *Aitia* or the extensive examples in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.¹⁴

The state of the poem, though severely incomplete, does not entirely deprive us of insight on this matter. At the conclusion of the second contestant's song, which treats the upbringing of Zeus by the Kouretes, Hermes, after the gods vote, declares Kithairon the winner. Helikon takes the defeat badly (suffering with λούπησι ... χαλεπήσιν, "harsh pains," in lines 29–30):

[ὁ δὲ λο]ύπησι κά[θ]εκτος
 [χαλεπ]ήσιν φελι[κ]ῶν ἐ- 30
 [.....] λιττάδα [π]έτραν
 [.....]κεν δ' ὄ[ρο]ς· ὑκτρῶς
 [.....]ων οὐψ[ό]θεν εἴρι-
 [σέ νιν ἐ]μ μου[ρι]άδεσσι λάυς·
 [.....]εχ[...].νεγ[...].[.].[.] 35

In these lines, though they lack in all probability two verbs (which must come at the beginnings of lines 31 and 32), a distinction can be made between Helikon in line 30 and the ὄρος (mountain) in line 32. While it is possible that ὄρος in 32 refers to the same entity as φελικῶν in 30, it is far more likely

¹³ A good example from Homer is Neritos in *Od.* 17.207, who built a fountain on Ithaka with Ithakos and Polyktor. Neritos is particularly interesting because Mount Neriton, also on Ithaka (*Od.* 9.22 and 13.351), appears to bear his name. I am indebted to an anonymous reader for *GRBS* for bringing Neritos to my attention.

¹⁴ Clayman, in *Nomodeiktēs* 635 and 640–642, discusses links between the styles of Korinna and Kallimachos; see further below. On parallels in Ovid, see Segal, *Aglaiā* 321. For a different perspective, Collins, *CQ* 56 (2006) 26.

that the δέ preceding ὄρος indicates a change of subject. Use of δέ in this manner is Korinna's normal practice in this poem.¹⁵ Thus we should, I suggest, understand the name "Helikon" and the mountain, the ὄρος, as separate, or at least somehow delineated, entities. Of course, there is some danger in making such suggestions—if for no other reason, both the name Helikon and the word ὄρος might be questioned here on textual grounds, especially ὄρος. Still, if we do take the δέ as indicating that a translation such as "Helikon, possessed with cruel grief, [-ed] a bare rock, and the mountain [-ed],"¹⁶ we have a distinction between Helikon and mountain that points towards an etiological relationship. That is, that a persona of some type—a man—is meant by "Helikon" here, and, if we follow the natural pattern, the mountain, at this point in the narrative, is yet unnamed, to become the carrier of the defeated singer's name at some later point in time.¹⁷

The "Daughters of Asopos" fragment (col. iii) exhibits similar strategies in its representation of personae and places. In this fragment Asopos makes a prominent appearance, of course, as the father of nymphs who are to be married to Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo, and Hermes; the ensuing offspring will become heroes (lines 22–25). Asopos might be a Homeric Xanthos-type entity, an eponymous river "demigod" (to borrow Page's term).¹⁸ And though not many of his daughters' names are legible, Korkyra almost certainly appears, and with some probability also Thespia and perhaps Aigina and others. But even Page, who

¹⁵ Compare i.19, 22, 23, and 24, all of which contain the connective particle indicating a subject change.

¹⁶ A very conservative adaptation of Page's translation.

¹⁷ J. Ebert, "Zu Korinnas Gedicht vom Wettstreit zwischen Helikon und Kithairon," *ZPE* 30 (1978) 5–12, explores this in some detail, relying, however, on unnecessary supplements. See also Collins, *CQ* 56 (2006) 26. Though it is possible that the changed grammatical subject still refers to the same entity, first with a proper name, then with a generic noun, this seems awkward and less probable than the interpretation I suggest.

¹⁸ Page, *Corinna* 24.

goes to some length to reconstruct a list of names, admits that most “cannot be recovered” from the text.¹⁹ We might be best advised to recognize the important role of Asopos him- or itself as progenitor of what appears to be a host of nymphs who become ancestors of races of heroes and recognizable toponyms in, and occasionally outside of, Boiotia. The nymphs’ names serve to insert a solidly Boiotian story into the larger system of Greek foundation myth: as daughters of Asopos and mothers of heroes, the prominent Boiotian river’s offspring are located in a mythic framework that encompasses Boiotia but also reaches beyond central Greece.

I have mentioned the prophet Akraiphen who tells Asopos the fate of his daughters, and gives a brief list of his predecessors as priest of Apollo, presumably Apollo Ptoios. Here also, names are places, and their treatment is similar to that concerning the mountains. Akraiphen was preceded by Orion, whose predecessors were Hyrieus, and even further back, Euonymos (32–41). Even without recourse to later commentaries or the mythographic tradition, we can associate two of these figures directly with Boiotian places: Akraiphen with Akraiphiai and Hyrieus with Hyria.²⁰ Akraiphiai is a relatively prominent settlement, dating from at least the archaic period, on the eastern shore of Kopais, just west of, and associated with, the shrine of Apollo Ptoios; Hyria, which makes an appearance in the catalogue of ships (*Il.* 2.496), was on the Boiotian side of the Euripos channel separating Boiotia from Euboeia, and, significantly, was for a time a Tanagran possession (Strab. 9.2.12).

But connections to the landscape are far more extensive. The lineage of the priests of Apollo Ptoios begins with Euonymos, whose daughter was Aulis.²¹ Perhaps not incidentally, young Tanagrans regularly went to Aulis to enact a type of ephebic

¹⁹ Page, *Corinna* 26.

²⁰ J. M. Fossey, *Topography and Population of Ancient Boiotia* (Chicago 1988) 75–76, 265–271.

²¹ Steph. Byz. s.v. *Εὐωνυμία*.

contest.²² Next is Hyrieus, eponymous hero of Hyria, then Orion, who appears to be the Orion from legend since he now “inhabits the sky” (40). There is a tradition of Orion’s birth, and burial, at Tanagra, as well as a festival called the Orioncia there; alternately, Strabo mentions Orion’s birthplace as Hyria.²³ Both of these variants probably allude to an odd story of Orion’s birth in which Hyrieus, who has no wife, asks Zeus, Poseidon, and Hermes for a son after entertaining them in his home; they cover a bull’s hide with semen and tell Hyrieus to bury it for ten months, after which a son, Orion, is born from it.²⁴

The full lineage, then, comprises prominent personages in the Boiotian mythic world who are all connected, directly or indirectly, to Boiotian towns. And some must be understood as founders of a sort, at least in the case of Akraiphen and Hyrieus, whose names are both carried by local settlements with significantly ancient roots. Just as in the Kithairon-Helikon fragment, there seems to be some strategy to the places invoked, as well: they frame central Greece from the south and east shores of lake Kopais to the Euripos, and they connect the Boiotian—specifically Tanagran, as this priestly genealogy shows—landscape with a mythic tradition that touches also upon stories that extend beyond Boiotia’s borders (the best

²² J. Ma, “The Return of the Black Hunter,” *PCPS* 54 (2008) 188–205, at 198, citing L. Robert, *Opera minora selecta* (Amsterdam 1969–1990) II 1278–1281, III 1390–1393.

²³ Orion’s birthplace as Tanagra: Nicander *Ther.* 15, etc.; there was a monument to Orion in the city as well (Pausanias 10.20.3). On the Orioncia see Ma, *PCPS* 54 (2008) 198. Strabo 9.2.12 suggests Hyria as Orion’s birthplace.

²⁴ Palaephatus 51; Euphorion fr.101 P. (schol. *Il.* 18.486, II 171 D.); Ovid *Fast.* 5.493–536; Hyginus *Fab.* 195, *Astr.* 2.34.1; T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to the Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore 1993) 273, summarizes. Collins, *CQ* 56 (2006) 23–26, discusses Orion’s parentage in Korinna in some detail, and notes that Hesiod may have known of the birth from the bull’s hide (though in the Hesiodic fragment, 148b M.-W., the gods urinate on the hide).

example in this case being that of Orion).

The majority of these names point to a type of persona/place relationship similar to what I have traced above concerning Kithairon and Helikon. With the possible exception of Asopos, who seems to be a river-god more in the style of Xanthos, they are persons first. Just as I suggest is the case with the angered Helikon, Akraiphen and Hyrieus are not personified locations or abstract entities; they are *men*, priests of Apollo. Only after their existence do the towns that bear their names come to be, or at least come to be called what they are called. But the relationship is not expressed overtly, and where Akraiphen and Hyrieus are clearly men, or founding heroes, and Kithairon and Helikon seem to be men first, Asopos is a more ambiguous entity, potentially humanoid and landscape-feature at once—more at home in Homer or, even more so, in Hesiod.

I suggest that we can understand these topographic indications in Korinna's poetry both in a functional sense and in a more developed, poetic sense. Functionally there is no question that the preponderance of Boiotian topography—landscape features, rivers, towns, shrines—serves to locate this poetry squarely in the same milieu as that of its language. Moreover, there seems to be an inherent interest in delineation of boundaries, especially in the case of Kithairon, the mountainous frontier between Attika and Boiotia. The perhaps surprising absence of Orchomenos or areas associated with it in the fragments we have also points to a Tanagran or Theban provenance.²⁵ Indeed, more specifically, Tanagra fits well with the topographical picture since the genealogy of priests of Apollo Ptoios shows a strong Tanagran character.

But is this provincialism? If we consider the form of some of these indications, especially Kithairon and Helikon, and Akraiphen and his fellow priests of Apollo Ptoios, we see

²⁵ On the close connections between Thebes and Tanagra in the fifth and fourth centuries, see especially A. Schachter, "Tanagra. The Geographical and Historical Context," *Pharos* 11 (2003) 45–74, at 62–68.

instead a rather sophisticated poetic strategy. There is more than a hint of etiology here: Helikon is just distinguishable from the mountain that comes to carry his name, and Akraiphen and Hyrieus look like eponymous or founding heroes. Names that seem to waver between god-or-hero and location, such as Asopos and perhaps Ladon, are epic touches in the Homeric or Hesiodic mold, at home in poetry from any period. And though founding heroes who become namesakes of the places they found, as Akraiphen and Hyrieus seem to do, are relatively common from Homer onwards, etiologizing of physical features of landscape, as in the case of the mountains, is more akin to Alexandrian poetic practice, and differs in kind from epic or classical personifications such as Xanthos in the *Iliad*, Gaia or Ouranos in Hesiod, or even Ocean in *Prometheus Bound*.²⁶

The patterns I have been examining here speak against underestimating our poet. Though the presence of local topography does seem “epichoric” in a sense (as opposed to “panhellenic” at least), Korinna’s use of details of space is sophisticated enough to give pause to anyone wishing to write off this material as simplistic or worse. What we have is a type of mythic currency (one could call that “panhellenic”)—such as found in, say, Stesichoros or even Pindar—recast in a Boiotian light. That is, the examination of topography leads to the conclusion that instead of seeing a tiny glimpse of local, or at best, regional, tradition in these verses we see a focusing of a broader tradition through a Boiotian, perhaps a central- or southeastern-Boiotian, lens. Our best example of this comes in the Daughters of Asopos fragment, where a genealogy firmly rooted to the Boiotian, even Tanagran, landscape incorporates a story about the Asopid nymphs who will mother diverse, not always Boiotian, lines of heroes. But Helikon and Kithairon

²⁶ We do not need Ebert’s reconstruction (*ZPE* 30 [1978] 5–12) to make this observation. Segal however, upon discussing Ebert’s supplement, also suggests parallels with the Alexandrians (*Aglaiā* 320–321). There are early exceptions, e.g. Neritos in *Od.* 17 (see n.13 above).

show similar tendencies: the second contestant's song, about Zeus and the Kouretes, brings a touch of the panhellenic to the singing contest, and the mountains themselves might be the most prominent features of Boiotia, or the Boiotian frontier, to be exact, each well known throughout Greece for multifold associations with myth, cult, and even the creation of poetry itself. I suggest that this characteristic of Korinna's style marks it as late. But before expanding upon the claim, I wish to turn to another, more obviously "epichoric" feature of Korinna's verse.

Language and Landscape

Korinna's use of the Boiotian dialect shows, in fact, some interesting parallels with her representation of the Boiotian landscape. The Boiotian of Korinna's fragments is much discussed; on her language in general, Page's 1953 treatment is an excellent start (though it does not represent the beginning of the controversy over her date), and Martin West, Malcolm Davies, and David Campbell have contributed studies in the past several decades, among others.²⁷ I consider Korinna's language here with the perspective so far outlined in mind, and attempt to use that framework, developed from a thematic point of view, to advance the question of how her dialect can contribute to an evaluation of her date.

The characteristics of dialect shown in the Berlin papyrus present some serious difficulties. The papyrus was written in roughly 200 B.C., but the verses it preserves were almost surely composed earlier. The dialect is Boiotian, and it is usually agreed that the papyrus presents a decent example of Boiotian orthography from the period in which it was written.²⁸ Given the nature of the dialect's evolution, if the verses were com-

²⁷ And there are more; the discussion of the depth of Korinna's "naïveté" has taken every imaginable permutation on this point (see Clayman's brief, entertaining, note, in *Nomodeiktes* 640 n.32).

²⁸ Page, *Corinna* 46–60, discusses dialect and orthography; West *CQ* 20 (1970) 277–278, offers a good summary.

posed in the sixth or fifth centuries, they were most likely respelled for our papyrus; even if they were composed in 300, respelling is still possible, though it may not have been felt necessary, since changes in the Boiotian dialect that affected orthography were much more pronounced between the fifth and fourth centuries than between the fourth and third.²⁹ The extent of this respelling is difficult to quantify, and recovery of the “original” text, if it is not what we have, must depend on other indicators of the dialect’s development.

There have been arguments based on morphology that might point to an earlier or later date of composition. But they have not been unassailable, and often we do not have a secure enough text to mount a strong case in one direction or the other. In addition, morphologically the language appears to be a form of Boiotian that shows strong affinity with epic language—almost to the point of being “epic dialect” spelled as Boiotian, in fact.³⁰ But there is a problem here also, in that Boiotian, as a branch of Aiolic, did by nature have many affinities with the epic *Kunstsprache*. And of course the relationship between the epic dialect and Korinna’s Boiotian verse is close—it should go without saying that it is closer than we would expect non-poetic, vernacular, Boiotian would be to the epic. When we have a particular form that seems morphologically out of place in some way (say, *Ποτιδάωνος* in line 37 of the Asopos fragment, which does not look like a Boiotian genitive, which should be *-ωνος*),³¹ we are often, as in this case, unable to evaluate whether this is a feature of dialect or simply an epic borrowing. Other oddities of morphology—a good

²⁹ This is the position of Page, *Corinna* 75: i.e., if we assume the archetype from which the Berlin papyrus stems was contemporary with Korinna’s life, the poetess lived either in the fifth century or in the late third. West, *CQ* 20 (1970) 277–278, has rightly questioned this argument, however, and suggests that an intermediate date is possible.

³⁰ Page, *Corinna* 65, makes the decisive pronouncement, often repeated by others.

³¹ Page, *Corinna* 55, citing *IG* VII 2465.2 *Ποτειδάωνι*.

example is *χρουσοφαῖς* in 21–22 of the Kithairon-Helikon fragment, which looks like Attic *χρυσοφαεῖς* simply spelled as Boiotian—suffer from textual defects or ambiguities of orthography that make firm conclusions impossible. This particular form would be very interesting if it indeed is what should be read here: the Attic form would be unparalleled in our text of Korinna, and quite difficult to explain other than by an appeal to the text’s lateness.³²

The epic nature of the language is borne out by lexicon, which in these verses is also consistently marked by epicisms (e.g. *ἀγκουλομείταο Κρόνω* in i.14–15, *Λατοῖδας* in iii.32). And in fact the pervasive relationship with epic language might be a good starting point here. Without discounting the benefits of close discussion of morphology or lexicon, let us return to the observation made above, that Korinna’s language is, essentially, epic written as Boiotian. Indeed, Stephanie Larson’s recent discussion of Korinna’s language, in a book about Boiotian ethnicity, strongly emphasizes its epic qualities.³³ If we consider the relationship between vernacular and poetic dialect in the poems, then, we can liken their language to other lyric poetry composed in what we call the literary dialects; early lyric poets such as Alkman, Sappho, and Alkaios have similar relationships with both the vernacular dialects of their respective homelands and the language of epic.³⁴ If we consider further

³² Page (*Corinna* 55) on this word, after rehearsing a few ways this form might have come about without really being Attic, concludes: “The alleged Attic form may therefore be discharged from the court for want of sufficient evidence; but it leaves with a noticeable stain on its character.” See also West, *CQ* 20 (1970) 284 and 286 (“if genuine,” the word “greatly strengthen[s] the case for a later dating”).

³³ S. Larson, *Tales of Epic Ancestry. Boiotian Collective Identity in the Late Archaic and Early Classical Periods* (Stuttgart 2007) 115–127; see also S. Colvin, *Dialect in Aristophanes and the Politics of Language in Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford 1999) 129–130, on the literary character of Korinna’s Boiotian.

³⁴ S. Colvin, *A Historical Greek Reader: Mycenaean to the Koiné* (Oxford 2007) 53–56.

that Korinna's poetry is strophic, was most likely composed to be performed by a chorus, and treats almost exclusively mythic narratives, we can draw some even closer parallels. Alkman can stay in our group, but Sappho and Alkaios perhaps not, since their poetry is primarily personal. Korinna's verse is closer in kind to the compositions of the Doric lyric poets Stesichoros, Bacchylides, or Pindar, practitioners of a tradition reaching back to Alkman but one that by the classical period no longer required a poet to compose in a literary version of his or her own vernacular dialect (as neither Bacchylides nor Pindar do). In Korinna's case, of course, the superficial dialect *is* the vernacular dialect, but it is not Doric. It is Boiotian, and Boiotian has no, or at best an extremely meager, literary pedigree previous to her, as far as we are aware. If Korinna is a contemporary of Pindar, she is thus strongly archaizing in the sense that she aligns her literary language with her own vernacular.

If she is later, she will have company in the practices of some of the Hellenistic poets, especially Theokritos. Theokritos, from Doric Syracuse, uses features of his native dialect as an artistic device in many of his *Idylls*; though the language of the *Idylls* is clearly not one that was spoken at any time, it shows admixture of Doric and epic forms and is nearly as difficult to analyze in terms of date as Korinna's Boiotian (though happily we have less doubt when Theokritos wrote).³⁵ Other Hellenistic poets, such as Kallimachos and Herodas, contemporaries of Theokritos, use dialect similarly, but without the clear relationship between the vernacular of their homeland and literary dialect. Herodas, for example, wrote in the Ionic of his primary literary predecessor, Hipponax. Here, while the relationship between native dialect and poetic dialect is unclear, since very little is known of Herodas' life, the poet chose to write in language that

³⁵ On Theokritos' use of dialect see especially A. S. F. Gow, *Theocritus* (Cambridge 1950) lxxii–lxxx; C. Gallavotti, *Lingua, tecnica e poesia negli Idilli di Teocrito* (Rome 1952) 78–100; more briefly, R. Hunter, *Theocritus. A Selection* (Cambridge 1999) 21–26.

invokes literary pedigree. Still, the resultant poetic dialect shows similarities with Korinna's Boiotian, and underscores the artistic qualities of both.³⁶

A further productive comparison can be made by turning to early epic, especially Hesiod and the Hesiodic tradition of epic verse that includes the *Aspis* and the Hesiodic *Catalogue*. Though the Hesiodic poems are written primarily in the language and style of epic, they do exhibit occasional features of mainland Greek, even Boioticisms, in both morphology and lexicon.³⁷ These are rare, however, and the overall impression of the language, even in the *Aspis*, is of epic. Still, much of this verse is clearly Boiotian in some sense; *Works and Days* carries explicit indication of Boiotian origin, and the *Aspis* recounts a myth with Theban roots, the battle of Herakles with Kyknos. The *Aspis*, in particular, offers an interesting counterpoint to Korinna's verse. Probably composed in the sixth century, the small-scale epic shows a few typically Boiotian elements,³⁸ but maintains for the most part a strongly epic character. The strategy of assimilation with or differentiation from panhellenic models thus differs in scale from what we see in Korinna. In the *Aspis*, content that was Boiotian in origin (the Herakles myth) is presented in primarily panhellenic, epic, garb; little of the Boiotian vernacular remains, save for a few characteristic tics that serve to identify provenance and not much more. Korinna, on the other hand, presents similar content (Boiotian topography and other originally Boiotian mythic material such as the stories of Orion or the daughters of Asopos), dressed in

³⁶ On the Ionic dialect of Herodas, which has a similar intermingling of dialect and epic forms, see I. C. Cunningham, *Herodas: Mimiambi* (Oxford 1971) 211–217.

³⁷ Colvin, *Greek Reader* 52–53, discusses “mainland” features in the genuine Hesiodic corpus; see also Larson, *Epic Ancestry* 114, citing especially M. L. West, *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford 1966) 82–89, on possible Boioticisms in the *Aspis* and *Catalogue*.

³⁸ Namely digamma and the pronouns *τοί* and *ταί*; see Larson, *Epic Ancestry* 114 with n.22.

strongly vernacular garb. This is a similar approach to mediating the interaction between panhellenic epic and local interests and myth, but while the Hesiodic *Aspis* turns local stories into the *koine* of epic, Korinna couches her material in the style of regional lyric, and in predominantly local landscapes, too.³⁹

In all, this looks more like innovation than naïveté, and I would appeal to the earlier discussion of the Boiotian landscape for support. Some have seen Korinna's use of Boiotian dialect as simply a matter of regionalism: that this is poetry merely for Boiotians, by a Boiotian. But the strong presence of epicisms that cannot be attributed solely to the nature of Boiotian speaks against this. Instead, what applies for dialect also applies for representation of the Boiotian landscape: we have here not simply the local minor-league fare, but poetry that is Boiotian and panhellenic at once, a lyric version of the epic *Aspis*.

A Portrait and a Note on Time and Space

This brings us to the question of when Korinna lived. I argue that these two matters—one of thematic and one of formal composition—both point in the same direction, toward a date on the later side of the possible spectrum. Treatment of the topographic details that are so frequent in the verses shows a postclassical sensibility. The nature of the quasi-personifications of Kithairon and Helikon especially, and the treatment of eponymous heroes or heroines such as Akraiphen or the daughters of Asopos places, most often, persona before natural feature in an etiological relationship that is most easily paralleled in Hellenistic compositions.⁴⁰ The occasional outlier, such as Asopos, a type of Homeric deity-and-river all in one, merely points to the Hesiodic/Homeric background of this

³⁹ Collins, *CQ* 56 (2006) 26–28, notes Hesiodic influence in arguing for a panhellenic worldview.

⁴⁰ Some readers, most notably Segal, *Aglaia*, have commented upon this as a Hellenistic sensibility, but I hope to have been able to trace it in a more concrete way; specifically on Hellenistic qualities of Korinna's style, see also Clayman, in *Nomodeiktes*.

mythic material, and might be called a thematic epicism, if you will.

As far as language is concerned, I suggest that the parallel with thematic matters also points to a post-classical date of composition. Choral lyric treating mythic narratives in Boiotia in the classical period is best exemplified by Pindar, of course, who wrote in the literary Doric typical of much choral poetry in the fifth century B.C. Korinna's verses strike a different chord, and might be nothing more than small-town epichoric ditties with no aspirations beyond the Boiotian fields. But the discussion of her treatment of the landscape has, I hope, made this seem at least unlikely. Far more probable is that form follows theme here. These verses represent an attempt to use "literary Boiotian" instead of "literary Doric" just as they treat predominantly Boiotian spaces in the process of integrating them within a system of myth that extends outside the region. Korinna's literary Boiotian is thus simultaneously parochial and cosmopolitan: parochial because it is Boiotian, and cosmopolitan because it couches itself in the panhellenic literary *koine* of epic. In matters of both language and landscape, then, her practice has more in common with, or at least more viable parallels to, Hellenistic compositional technique than anything we find in archaic or classical lyric. The closest parallels for this relationship of epic and vernacular, other than Alexandrians like Theokritos or Herodas, might just be Alkman or Stesichoros. These two choral poets, however, one Lakonian and the other west-Greek, who wrote in literary versions of their own vernacular (unlike Pindar), are so early that we are hard-pressed make Korinna their contemporaries.⁴¹

In 1998 Andrew Stewart revived a quiet corner of the discussion on Korinna's date by drawing attention to a list of statue bases in Rome described by Tatian (II A.D.) that includes men-

⁴¹ See Page, *Corinna* 80–83, who, in a discussion of parallels in other lyric poets to Korinna's usage of dialect, concludes that Stesichoros might be the closest parallel.

tion of a statue of Korinna.⁴² Tatian attributes the statue to the sculptor Silanion, who flourished around 325 B.C. according to Pliny. Though most literary scholars have ignored this evidence, or been skeptical of Tatian's claims to have seen such a statue, Stewart argues that Tatian's list is sound, and that Korinna's date should not be moved later than around 320. His argument is based on two convincing details, at least one of which earlier skeptics did not have at their disposal: first, that there is now evidence from the portico of Pompey in Rome that at least some of the statues Tatian mentions did in fact stand there (inscribed statue bases have been found);⁴³ and second, a possible copy of the Korinna statue, now in the Musée Vivienel at Compiègne, exhibits style of dress and coiffeur that match late fourth-century trends closely. Stewart mentions also that Silanion was known for innovation in what we might term a "proto-Hellenistic" vein—for instance he silvered the bronze on the cheeks of a statue of the dying Jocasta to indicate the pallor of death.⁴⁴ If Korinna's representation of topographic features, and her use of literary dialect, is any indication of poetic milieu, I suggest the middle or late fourth century just might be about right and agree with Stewart that Silanion might be a perfectly matched sculptor to create a likeness of her. Both Silanion and Korinna would be innovators, harbingers of styles that would become more

⁴² A. Stewart, "Nuggets: Mining the Texts Again," *AJA* 102 (1998) 271–282; Tatian's list is addressed by most critics, but until Stewart's article most, at least literary critics, have dismissed this as evidence, sometimes harshly (e.g. Page, *Corinna* 73 n.6; Davies, *SIFC* 81 [1998] 194 n.28; West *CQ* 20 [1970] 280). For a good summary see J. Larson, "Corinna and the Daughters of Asopos," *Syllecta Classica* 13 (2002) 47–62, who at 47–49 accepts the testimony of Tatian in arguing for a fifth-century date.

⁴³ Stewart, *AJA* 102 (1998) 279; the bases were first published by Coarelli (F. Coarelli, "Il complesso pompeiano del Campo Marzio e la sua decorazione scultorea," *RendPontAcc* 44 [1971–1972] 99–122; cited by Stewart, 279 n.34).

⁴⁴ Stewart, *AJA* 102 (1998) 281 with n.38, citing Plin. *HN* 34.81 and Plut. *Mor.* 674A.

prominent in the following century. Boiotia of the mid to late fourth century, after the Theban hegemony, would also offer a political landscape conducive to this type of clearly “patriotic” composition.⁴⁵

Tanagra or Thebes, then? Here, though language does not offer us much, representation of landscape, and the historical context of the late fourth century, can provide some answers. Setting aside the later evidence—certainly on that ground Pausanias’ Tanagra should be trusted over the *Suda*’s Thebes—the Asopos fragment, with its priestly genealogy that incorporates Hyrieus, Euonymos, and Orion, all with connections to Tanagra, presents strong evidence that a Tanagran context is the right one. The Asopid poem makes use of genealogy to express Tanagran influence over Boiotian places such as Aulis, Hyria, and of course the sanctuary of Apollo Ptoios, through Akraiphen, its priest and namesake of the town associated with the oracle. It is more than coincidental that these names and places all connect to Tanagra in some way; this cannot be said of Thebes. Thebes, of course, sacked in 335, was not refortified until 316 by Cassander. Korinna’s verse thus fits very nicely at Tanagra and in the period between the destruction of Thebes and the *terminus ante quem* suggested by the evidence from Tatian and Silanion: 335–320.

In sum, we would understand a Tanagran Korinna whose poetic height came in the first years of the Hellenistic kingdoms, who anticipated the mannered regionalism of the Alexandrians, a poetess with a panhellenic worldview couched in a regional mode of expression. We have a type of Boiotian lens coloring what seems to be predominantly post-classical strategies of poetic discourse, both thematic and formal, and

⁴⁵ For the suggestion that Korinna composed during the Theban hegemony, 371–362 B.C., see A. Schachter, “The Singing Contest of Kithairon and Helikon: Korinna, fr.654 *PMG* col. i and ii.1–11,” in A. Kolde et al. (eds.), *κορυφαίω ἀνδρί. Mélanges offerts à André Hurst* (Geneva 2005) 275–283. Collins, *CQ* 56 (2006) 31, speaks of the “patriotism” of Korinna’s verse, though he supports a classical date.

perhaps we even have a portrait by an artist who thought in like terms. And her use of the landscape of her native Boiotia shows a willingness to play with entrenched tropes, especially the nature of personification, to ground her poetry in the epic tradition, to create novel representations of traditional tales, and to elevate her native city within its region and beyond, at a time of a vacuum of traditional Theban authority in Boiotia. She uses established mythopoetic techniques alongside innovations, and is a slavish imitator of neither Hesiod nor the lyric tradition. In this sense she is both before her time and connected to her past.⁴⁶

October, 2009

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⁴⁶ I thank audiences who heard versions of this material at Penn State, Temple, a roundtable on classical landscapes in literature at Wellesley, and at the 2008 meeting of the American Philological Association in Chicago. In all cases I received valuable comments. My arguments were sharpened in particular in conversation with Stephen Wheeler, Paul Harvey, Mark Munn, David Lunt, Christopher Eckerman, Betsey Robinson, Carol Dougherty, and also by helpful comments by Kent Rigsby and the readers for *GRBS*.