DATING CORINNA

In *CQ* 20 (1970), 277–87, I argued for dating Corinna to the third century B.C. In my *Greek Metre* (1982), p. 141, I continued to assume this date, observing that not everyone accepted it but that I knew of no attempt to answer my arguments. I must confess to having overlooked at least one such attempt, by A. Allen in *CJ* 68 (1972/3), 26–8; and now M. Davies has mounted another in *SIFC* 81 (1988), 186–94, largely repeating Allen's points but with some new touches. Allen upholds the traditional fifth-century date. Davies has yet to come to a decision, but meanwhile he is eager to discredit what he regards as an unsatisfactory case for a Hellenistic dating.

I propose to rebut their objections, not because I fear they might carry the day with a sober and attentive judge, but because, while they are left unrebutted, it is too easy for anyone who is attached to the idea of a fifth-century Corinna, but does not feel up to fighting for it, to dispense himself by means of a note in the form 'West's arguments ... have been countered by ...'.

The 'most substantial, ingenious, and original' of my arguments, in Davies' opinion, is drawn from the arrangement of Corinna's works in the ancient edition. I argued, after Maas and Lobel, that the poem beginning ἐπί με Τερψιχόρα (*PMG* 655) occupied the initial place and was designed for that position, as an introduction to the collection. The practice of composing an introductory poem for a collection and so giving it literary unity is not attested before 300 B.C. Allen accepts that Corinna composed the poem as an introduction, but he thinks this would have been possible in the fifth century. He refers to the so-called Seal of Theognis. This, however, has no bearing: there is no good reason to think that the poem in question (Thgn. 19–26) was intended by Theognis to stand at the beginning of his book or that it did so in pre-Hellenistic times; on the contrary, we know that his book, as current in Xenophon's day, began with the elegy 183ff.[1] Davies takes a more sophisticated line. He too accepts that *PMG* 655 stood at the beginning of Corinna's poems, but he suggests that it may have owed this position to a later editor, and that its programmatic character is only apparent. He rightly notes that ἀισομ[έναν in line 2 need not refer to anything beyond the poem itself, being 'idiomatic for a lyric poet's declaration of intent'. However, the plural object, καλὰ ϝεροῖα, *may* imply more than one song; we cannot be sure, not knowing what the word really means, but if it means 'narratives', as D. L. Clayman suggests,[2] plural songs do seem likelier than a single one. When Corinna adds

> μέγα δ' ἐμῆς γέγαθε πόλις
> λιγουροκωτίλυς ἐνοπῆς,

this is surely not a presumptuous claim about the effect this particular song is (already in its opening lines) having, but a statement about her established standing, about the success of her songs generally. It leads on to statements about the scope and character of her poetry, with a list of mythical topics. On this, Davies writes, 'A list of topics of song, potential or real, is also a familiar rhetorical device from the earliest days of Greek lyric. In a manner one associates with the *priamel* Corinna may well be dismissing former topics of her poetry before moving on to the actual topic of the present poem.' *O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!* Davies seems to me to be trying a confidence trick here. The 'familiar rhetorical device' is presumably represented on

[1] See my *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (1974), pp. 40ff., 149f.

[2] *CQ* 28 (1978), 396f., connecting the word with ἐρέω and εἶρω; apparently approved by Davies, 187 n. 4.

the one hand by the *recusatio* technique, where a series of names are mentioned from a story that is not going to be told coherently (Alcm. 1.1–12, Ibyc. 282.10–22), and on the other by the formula 'Shall I sing of... or... or...?' (*Hymn. Ap.* 207ff., Pind. fr. 29, cf. *Isth.* 7.1ff.). But Corinna is clearly neither reviewing possible themes nor dismissing them: she is indicating the range of subjects that she has actually covered in her songs. If this was merely preparatory to announcing the theme of the present song, it was an abnormal and a cumbersome way of proceeding, especially for someone who (according to the legend) reproved Pindar for 'sowing with the whole sack' in the matter of myths.[3] If on the other hand we take Corinna to be simply looking at her *œuvre* as a whole, then it is in line with the preceding reference to Tanagra's delight in her songful utterances, and it is fully comprehensible only as part of a poem specially composed to preface the collection.

There is another feature of this poem that points in the same direction. As Lobel observed when he published the papyrus,[4] it differs from most of Corinna's fragments in showing no division into strophes. So far as we can see, it is composed in stichic glyconics (with medial or final choriamb). If it were strophic, we should certainly expect the end of the strophe to be marked by some variation, probably catalexis as in 654 iii. The most obvious explanation of the anomaly will be that 655 was not, like the other poems, composed to be danced. Strophic structure is not indispensable to dancers, but if the girls of Tanagra were accustomed to matching their movements to five- or six-line stanzas, one wonders how they would control themselves in the absence of such structuring. If 655 was composed simply to be read, there was no need to make it strophic.

I conjectured that the same poem contained the criticism of Murtis for setting herself up in competition with Pindar (664), and I remarked that this censure again makes us think of the third rather than the fifth century, being most closely paralleled by Theocritus' criticism (7.47) of those who vainly cuckoo in rivalry with Homer. Allen thinks it implausible that such a 'typically Alexandrian disagreement' should be proclaimed 'in parochial Tanagra, far from sophisticated literary circles'. He begs a question. How can we judge the degree of literary sophistication attainable by a Tanagraean poetess? Is it anyway so very sophisticated to speak in the general spirit of the age (see below)? Allen also thinks that the phrase ἔβα ποτ' ἔριν suggests an actual encounter. Pfeiffer and Page[5] likewise thought that it implied a contemporary challenge to Pindar. I fail to see why the challenge must be contemporary. Pindar's poetry lived on and could be regarded as dominating its particular field for all time. There is no reason why a Hellenistic poetess should not be described by a critic as 'competing against Pindar' in exactly the same language as might have been used of a contemporary of Pindar – just as Theocritus describes the poets he mocks as ποτὶ Χῖον ἀοιδὸν ἀντία κοκκύζοντες. The force of the Theocritean comparison – first made by P. Guillon – is lost on Davies, who writes, 'But the notion of one poet "blaming" another is as early as Stesichorus' *Palinodes* where the poet blamed both Homer and Hesiod (fr. 193 P).' He might have mentioned Solon's even earlier criticism of Mimnermus. But the point of comparison is not just 'the notion of one poet blaming another'. It is one poet blaming another for trying to emulate a third, a 'classic' who is really *hors de concours*. The presupposition that the most famous poets are in a class of their own, not to be competed with on their own terms, is typically Hellenistic and not fifth-century.

[3] Plut. *Glor. Athen.* 348a.
[4] *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, xxiii. 61.
[5] *Corinna* (1953), 31 n. 1.

I pointed out the huge differences of content, metre, language, and style separating Corinna's partheneia from those of Pindar and Bacchylides. Allen has nothing to say in reply. Davies resorts to the suggestion that because the content of Corinna's poetry is so different (narrative, concentrating on local Boeotian legend), we should not be surprised if the metre and style are different too. This quite fails to meet the essential point that Corinna's poetry, in all these respects, is wholly unlike what we know of choral lyric in Greece (including Boeotia) in Pindar's time. It fits a later period much better, with its self-conscious regionalism, its assertion of Boeotian dialect (whether or not the transmitted spelling is original), and the monotonous simplicity of its metres, for which I compared Aristonous' Paean of 334 B.C., the Epidaurian hymn to the Mother of the Gods, and other post-classical material.[6] The technique of Corinna's glyconics, with their high frequency of final choriamb instead of medial, again has its closest analogues in Aristonous and in the late-second-century Limenius. Allen admits this but growls obstinately 'there is nothing in Corinna's ionics or glyconics which rules out their composition in the time of Pindar'. I agree, it is not *ruled out*, but the evidence at our disposal makes it the less likely alternative.[7]

I agree with Davies that Corinna's naïveté is not to be diagnosed as 'Hellenistic pseudo-naïveté' but as 'the genuine article'. It does not by any means follow, however, that it is 'archaic' naïveté. Naïveté was not banished from the world by the early Ptolemies.

I pointed out that Corinna refers to the story of Zeus' being hidden by the Kouretes, a story common among the Alexandrian poets but not attested before the late fifth century. In *The Orphic Poems* (1983), pp. 48ff., 123ff., 131ff., 174, I have traced it back to a theogony composed *ca.* 430 under the name of Epimenides and another composed a little later under the name of Orpheus. To this comparatively late date for the emergence of the myth in literature Allen objects that Eumelus is said to have mentioned it. Davies, who has recently edited the epic fragments, is more accurate. What is attested for Eumelus is that he located Zeus' birth in Lydia. This may be *compatible* with the Kouretes story, as Davies says, but it certainly need not imply it and does not particularly suggest it. A reference to the story by a contemporary of Pindar, then, would be quite isolated and in my opinion very surprising.

My remaining arguments were based on points of language and diction. I will repeat the most significant items and counter the objections made by Allen and Davies.

654 i 13, ζάθεος applied to persons. Both of my critics take refuge in the emendation δαθίο[ι (to agree with ἄντροι), whereas the accent in the papyrus, δάθιο[, implies δάθιον agreeing with [βρέφο]ς. I am perfectly sure that if I had based *my* argument on an emendation, they would have been swift to seize on the fact as a chronic weakness in my case. Had no accent been written, I should myself have preferred the supplement δαθίο[ι, but since someone who had the word complete has written the accent, and we are in no position to prove it mistaken, we ought to respect its evidence.

Ibid. 18, τάδ' ἔμελψεν closing the account of the song. R. Führer in his exhaustive study of speech-framing mechanisms in early lyric[8] showed that τάδε so used was paralleled only in Hellenistic verse. Allen follows Bolling, *AJP* 77 (1956), 283, in

[6] *CQ* 20 (1970), 286; cf. *Greek Metre* 141f.

[7] Davies (189) gives no proper account of the metrical considerations at issue.

[8] *Formproblem-Untersuchungen zu den Reden in der frühgriechischen Lyrik* (*Zetemata* 44, 1967), pp. 40f.

dividing ταδε into τὰ δέ. This seems to me extremely unnatural and without advantage. Davies says, 'The resulting "Abschlussformel" is still relatively isolated, but might perhaps be compared with τῶν ἕνεκ' ἦλθ' Ὀδυσεύς, ἵνα οἱ πόροι ἀγλαὰ δῶρα (*Od.* 19.413) or Pind. *Ol.* 6.17f. τὸ καὶ | ἀνδρὶ κώμου δεσπόται πάρεστι Συρακοσίωι (cf. the Homeric formula ἐπεὶ τό γ' ἄκουσε), two early ways of resuming after a speech mentioned by Führer.' No real analogy here for τὰ ἔμελψε, and even if τά is possible, I do not see how the same can be said of δέ. It is supposed to be a case of δέ 'ἀντὶ τοῦ γάρ', but it is a mystery to me why anyone should think γάρ conceivable here. Davies also tries to argue that we cannot expect an early parallel for τάδ' ἔμελψεν because we have no similar account of a song contest in early literature. 'To this extent, comparison of Corinna's phrase with passages where τάδε depends on a verb of *speaking* is misleading.' Why? Why should ἔμελψε be combined with τάδε more readily than ἔειπε'. This is a red herring.

Ibid. 29, κάθεκτος, first in Demosthenes; fifth-century verse uses κάτοχος or κατάσχετος. Both Allen and Davies refer to ἀνεκτός in Homer. That only shows that κάθεκτος is a possible formation for the fifth century. The fact remains that it is not found in use so early; and it has a very prosaic appearance.

654 iii 15, δουῖν implying late Attic δυεῖν, unless Wilamowitz was right in conjecturing δουῦν. Allen merely refers to Wilamowitz; Davies says nothing at all.

Ibid. 25, ἀγείρω ... τρίποδος, an unusual use of the adjective, with which I compared Philodamus Scarpheus' ἀγήρων ... ναὸν ἄνακτι Φοίβωι. Allen and Davies cite Homer's application of the epithet to Athena's aegis. But it is one thing to use it of a miraculous object carried by a goddess, never seen by human eyes, and as imperishable as she is herself; quite another to use it of structures at a Greek cult centre. Corinna's use is far closer to Philodamus' than to Homer's.

655 fr. 1.5 λιγουροκωτίλυς. I said that one would expect λιγυκωτίλος rather than λιγυροκωτίλος in a contemporary of Pindar, and I wondered where else, before Philox. Leuc. 836.41 χλιεροθαλπές, an adjective with the suffix -ρο- was compounded with a verbal second element. My critics have not produced one, so I will give them χλοεροτρόφον at Eur. *Pho.* 826. Late Euripides, however, does not take us out of the orbit of dithyrambic diction. Allen can do no better than suggest that λιγουροκωτίλος 'may have been coined for special effect'. Davies asks, 'can we be so very sure that a contemporary of Pindar would not, when metre prompted, have expressed the relatively unusual notion "lightly chattering" by using the epithet λιγυροκωτίλος? As K. J. Dover reminds us,[9] "the adaptation of obscure words and the invention of new compounds are not specially characteristic of Hellenistic poetry".' Not for the first time, Davies is blurring the issue. What is significant is not the fact that λιγυροκωτίλος is a new coinage, but the manner in which it is formed. Nor is it a matter of being 'very sure', but of being prepared to give due recognition to a pointer, one that happens to point in the same direction as a number of others.

674 Θέσπια καλλιγένεθλε φιλόξενε μουσοφίλητε. Davies wonders why I think this looks late in style. Well, not because of the hymn-like accumulation of epithets, but rather because of the density of meaning packed into the series, the bestowal of this hymn-like treatment on a town, and the light in which the town is seen. It suggests to me a Thespia that has become a self-conscious tourist centre, trading on its association with Hesiod, and able to refer to genealogical poetry in which its eponym was assigned her place in a worthy family line. This certainly suits the Hellenistic town, where the 'Hesiodic Muses' were honoured and the Mouseia were an

[9] *Theocritus* (1971), lxvi.

important festival.[10] We can imagine such activity in the fourth century, at least after 350, but it is much less plausible in the fifth. We should not overlook the allusive learning of Corinna's καλλιγένεθλε. She expects her audience to know the antiquarian lore about Thespia's origins. And incidentally, the form Θέσπια, with the second syllable shortened, is not metrically guaranteed before the mid fourth century (*CEG* 788). In Herodotus the town is still Θέσπεια in the best manuscripts, as in Homer, and the ethnic should presumably be written Θεσπειεύς. In Thucydides, Xenophon, and Isocrates we read Θεσπιαί, Θεσπιῆς, Θεσπικός, etc., but systematic modernization in the tradition can by no means be excluded.

These are my arguments, or rather, amplifications and revetments of arguments which I would prefer to be read in their original context. What is to be said on the other side? Davies, as I have mentioned, leaves the dating question open and does not argue for a fifth-century Corinna. Allen takes his stand on the ancient references to her being Pindar's teacher or contemporary. The earliest explicit one is in Plutarch, though I willingly concede that Propertius must be of a similar opinion when he calls Corinna *antiqua* (2.3.21). In Pausanias' time it was the belief at Tanagra, as appears from his description of a painting in the gymnasium there (9.22.3). But Allen goes too far in inferring from this painting and from Plutarch that it was 'a Boeotian tradition', and that Propertius' allusion 'presupposes the local Boeotian tradition'. The belief that Corinna lived in the classical period could perfectly well have arisen in the second or first century B.C. anywhere where her book, but no further information, was available. Her reference to Pindar in her first poem would be quite enough to suggest that she stood in some personal, perhaps protective relationship towards him.[11] Once the news got out that the works of a new classical lyric poet from Tanagra had been found, it would very readily be accepted and promulgated at Tanagra itself. This was just the sort of thing that gave a Hellenistic town prestige. And Pindar's teacher!

Allen's short article is accompanied by another of like dimensions by J. Frel on the iconographical evidence for Corinna. He claims that it supports the statement by Tatian that a statue of Corinna was made by Silanion, who worked in the second half of the fourth century. Tatian's testimony is notoriously untrustworthy.[12] The archaeological evidence that is supposed to confirm it consists of a Roman statuette which has lost its original head but appears to be derived from a fourth-century model. It bears a retouched inscription identifying it as Corinna. I referred to the object in my 1970 article (280), and pointed out that there is no proof that the original as well as the copy was intended as Corinna. To quote myself: 'if she did not exist in the fourth century, and a demand for busts of her only arose in a period of imitation, what was to stop a Sappho being used as a model?' Frel admits that this is a valid question.[13] The best he can do by way of reply is to ask, 'if a sculptor of the Roman times was perfectly able to recreate a statue in the style of the fifth century, why should he use a fourth-century type for one of the *non traditi voltus* from the fifth century?' I should answer, because there were no fifth-century models for poetesses. In any case that sort of authenticity was not considered important. No one sought to give Sappho an archaic face.

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[10] *IG* 7. 1785 (= *SIG*³ 1117), 4240b, c, Paus. 9.27.5; Fiehn, *RE* VI A. 45f.
[11] Cf. M. R. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (1981), pp. 64f.
[12] See Page, *Corinna* p. 73 n. 6.
[13] Davies too (p. 194 n. 28) finds my scepticism 'reasonable'.