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### CORINNA

There are a lot of arguments in science regarding Corinna's personality and works. There are two main issues: a) Defining presumable period of Corinna's life and activity; b) Identifying the reasons of her popularity since certain époque.

a) Different scientific assertions result in deep gap between époques of Corinna's life and activity. Traditionalists think Corinna belongs to late archaic - early classical époques and is a contemporary to Pindar. Others regard her as a poet of late-Hellenistic époque.<sup>1</sup>

I. What are the arguments of traditionalists' assumptions are based on?

1. The data on her works: as it is known, one fragment of Corinna's works survived, where she condemns 'sweet-voiced' Myrtis for daring rivalry with Pindar. According to this fragment Corinna is a contemporary to Pindar, i.e. she acted in V century BC.

2. The tradition, where one can obviously and directly see that she lived in Pindar's époque. For instance, according to Plutarch she won poetry competition against Pindar for five times (Plutarch, *On the Glory of Athens*, 4, 347). Ancient author Pausanias tries to explain Corinna's victory over Pindar. We encounter the following in Pausanias' works: 'I think her success was probably chiefly due to her dialect as opposed to the Dorian of Pindar, she created in a dialect, familiar to Eolians. Besides, if one can trust a picture, Corinna must have been the most beautiful woman of the mentioned period' (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, X, 22, 3). As it is obvious from this saying, Pausanias might had seen Corinna himself or possessed

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<sup>1</sup> Schmid W., Stählin O., *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, I-II, 7 Bde., München 1920-1948, I, Bd. 1, 445; Lesky A., *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, München 1971, 167.

trustworthy information about her grave stone in Tanagra and her picture in Gymnasia as a sign of her victory over Pindar.

Suda's Corinna's biography was written based on the information of ancient period. We read that Corinna was Achelodorus' and Procratia's daughter, Theban or Tanagran poet, a pupil of Myrtis, a lyric. She defeated Pindar for five times, wrote five books of lyric songs, epigrams and nomoses. Based on this data some scholars think that there might exist a work about the poetic agon, like Homer and Hesiod's agon.

3. Linguistic analysis of Corinna's poetry, which shows tense link to traditions of popular language (it will be discussed below). This can link Corinna to earlier-classical époque, than to Hellenistic.

4. 'The Canon of the Lyric' - it is known that famous law of lyric-poets was developed in Hellenistic époque, where nine best poets of Greece are listed. True, Corinna was not in the list from the beginning, but she was put there later. 'Canon' represents only the poets, having been acted before Hellenism.

II. Arguments of opponents of Corinna's early dating:

1. None of ancient sources mention Corinna before II-I cc. BC. It is not likely that such a popular poet was ignored by whole classicism and great Alexandrian philologists; Corinna's name was not mentioned in the initial variant of the 'The Canon of the Lyric', she was put there later.

2. Analysis of language and style of Corinna's works shows reference to Euripides' tragedies created in middle period of his activity, which can be explained by the fact that poetess of late period used to apply to Euripides' tragedies, when this tragedian had gained a huge popularity in Hellenistic époque.

3. As for the references to Pindar and Myrtis in Corinna's works, it is an example of literary fiction, which became a basis for later-period authors to connect Corinna to Classical époque, i.e. reconstruct Corinna's biography based on poetic fictions.

As we can see, the starting point that feeds these two contradictory assumptions is: on the one hand, the sources that mention Pindar and Corinna together, and assertion of falsification of these sources on the other. I agree with the idea of early dating of Corinna's work and life, so I will not refer to it further. I will try to criticize the arguments of the opponents of Corinna's early dating:

1. It is surely to be taken into consideration that Corinna's name is not mentioned in Ancient sources until a certain period. There might exist several explanations for this: a) during the whole classical period Corinna was regarded

as a poet of a local importance in respect with a subject-matter. Respectively she was not given certain importance at the time when the attention of society was driven to the poetry, oriented to general Hellenistic values. It is certain that many names of poets, belonging to certain localities, were forgotten. We could have never found out the names of poets that Sappho and Alcman mention. The fact is that they really existed and if not the authors that had been in a need of mentioning those, they would have been sunk into oblivion. In Hellenistic époque an interest grew towards less famous or totally strange names. Corinna might have been among them, the poetry of which caught a reader's attention and interest was so high that she was put in the list of Greece best poets; b. Corinna's late appearance might be explained by a plain accident; we can assume that the sources that would mention Corinna did not survive; The key authors that discussed the cardinal issues of poetry development, omitted Corinna, because she did not seem significant to them by her meter, subject-matter, view-point.

2. As for the issues of language and style, it is quite complicated to prove anything. The fact that there is some similarity between Euripides and Corinna can be explained by their inclination to one and the same tradition. Besides we know Boeotian poetry so badly, that it is impossible to define at what extent Corinna's poetry is early or late in relation with Boeotian poetry.

3. The third argument attributes poetic fiction to tradition. This is not certain in either. One fact should be definitely considered: the ancient tradition, which was not unanimous even at dating Homer, reveals surprising agreement at dating Corinna and chooses Pindar's époque for defining the period of her activity. This, naturally, is based on the Corinna-created works, as well as the legend about their agon. We can hardly believe that a poetess, acting in Hellenistic époque would belong herself to earlier period and nobody would doubt about it. No ancient source can be found, which would argue Corinna's belonging to classical period. This is the reason why we agree with the assumption of those scholars that regard late-archaic and early-classical period as the time of Corinna life and act. In addition an orientation on Sappho's poetry is observed in women's poetry from late-classical period (it will be discussed below in details). We think that originality of Corinna and her contemporary Myrtis enables us to regard the mentioned époque as a period of their activity, when a Sappho model did not have a big influence on Hellenistic poetry.

b) Activity. D. Page dedicates twenty pages to Corinna's activity in his *Poetae Melici Graeci*.<sup>2</sup> There are 36 fragments plus 6 fragments of unidenti-

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<sup>2</sup> Page D., *Supplementum Lyricis Graecis*, Oxford 1962, 325-358.

fied Boeotian poets, some of which could belong to Corinna, but it is hard to prove now. Among the fragments that we have at hand there are few of any importance that could help in forming an idea about Corinna's poetry. Mainly these are 2-3 fragments, obtained after papyrus discoveries.

Fr.1, first published in 1907, embraces about 62 lines that could be read. The rest, much damaged part of the text, about three times more than the identified part, is quite chaotic and vague.

Fr.2 (POxy, 2370) was first published by Lobell and consists of 16 lines and there is some concept in it, but the work seems to be of a bigger volume. Besides, there are fragments confirmed in indirect sources (about twenty lines). They are collected from the works of the authors that quote Corinna in different aspects (mainly as examples of the forms, characteristic to Boeotian dialect).

Notwithstanding these few materials, Corinna seems to have been quite a productive poetess. This fact is confirmed in Suda's biography, where Corinna seems to have written 'five books, epigrams and lyrical nomoses' (Suda, *Corinna*). As we can see, the classification is quite general; it mainly embraces three classes of works.

As for the existing texts, they can be grouped according to a thematic principle. Surely, this can be said only about the fragments, which can be read. It seems that Corinna actively used mythological information. If we regard Plutarch's information about the relations of Pindar and Corinna trustworthy, we can conclude that the latter was quite moderate in using myths: she would urge her contemporary 'to sow them by a hand and not by a sack' (Plutarch, *On the Glory of Athens*, 4, 347). One quite an interesting tendency can be observed in Corinna's works: the poet avoids poetic realization of already elaborated myths and attempts to choose the ones from local Boeotian legends that were ignored by great Greek poets. For instance: Fr.1 tells us about the agon of two brothers: Helikon and Kitheron. At musical-poetic contest conducted at Olympus Helikon would sing about how Kurets raised infant Zeus, kidnapped by Rea in disguise from Kronos.

In Fr.2 Corinna tells us the story of Asopos' daughters that were married to Zeus, Poseidon and Hermes. 'They fulfilled the order of Cyprus and Eros. They gave a birth to the constant, immortal and glorious generation of half-divinity heroes.' The poet names Akraiphon, Euonymus, Hierus and Orion. As soon as we look through antic sources to find out if they mention these heroes, we observe regularity: these sources do not know them at all or the episodes, related to them, which we encounter in

Corinna's works, are unknown to them. Consequently, we can say that Corinna's confirmed and only source is Corinna herself (cf. RML).

Boeotian city Akraiphnion is connected with Akraiphnen's name. And Tanagra, the divinity protecting the city of the same name, was Asopos' daughter (Pausanias, IX, 20, I). It is obvious that in both cases the songs are composed based on local, namely Boeotian legends.

Besides the reflection of mythological cycles, popular in Greece, can be observed in Corinna's poetry. Namely: she seemed to have a work, dedicated to the attack of the Seven against Thebe, as well as the song, dedicated to killing of Teumesian fox by Oedipus. The theme of Heracles in one of her poems was represented by hero's faithful friend-Iolaos. If the mentioned thematic is limited by the cycle of Boeotian and Theban legends, the work *Orestas* (?), which has not survived, might have been of a totally different character. We might consider its plot in the frame of Trojan myths' cycle.<sup>3</sup>

According to sayings, Corinna had written poems about Athena's shield (Antipater of Thessalonika, *Athena Pallas*, 9, 26); Apollo and Athena (Plutarch, *On Music*, 14) and others gods (Herodianus, *Words without parallels*, 2, 917). The name of Corinna's work *γερπία* is disputable. It had been considered for a long time that it was a story-teller old woman. In this case, it is assumed that Corinna's works were of an ironic character. But on one of the newly discovered papyruses we come across *γερπία* instead of *Φερπία*, the meaning of which is still unknown.<sup>4</sup>

It should be pointed out that a major part of Corinna's fragments are presented in sources for confirmation of this or that grammatical thesis. Nevertheless, nothing specific can be said about the linguistic peculiarities of this poetess, because of meager materials. Boeotian dialect, as well as signs of general Greek poetic upper-dialect can be observed in her fragments. Her language and style seem to be fed by epic tradition.<sup>5</sup> The arguable issue that is still to be solved is when Corinna's text was written down so, as it has reached us from the orthographic point of view. Majority of scholars think that it might have happened in 225-175 BC.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore it is interesting to find out what is the reason for Corinna's originality that managed to draw attention of Antic society. First of all, we

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<sup>3</sup> Lesky A., *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, München, 1971<sup>II</sup>, 167.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Hoffmann O., Scherer A., *Geschichte der griechischen Sprache*, Bd. I, Berlin 1969, 88.

<sup>6</sup> Hoffmann, 1969.

should refer to one key issue: what was the main thematic of Corinna's works and who she wrote for. It is significant that notwithstanding few survived fragments, Corinna's works themselves answer these questions (fr. 664 (b) P., fr. 655 P.).

We think that in these two fragments Corinna indicates quite clearly what the topic of her songs is: who she is praising. These are hero men and hero women. The whole polis, the city where she acted, namely Tanagra, is her audience. And mainly women, living in the polis, are her listeners. It is interesting, that Corinna never mentions other city than Tanagra in survived fragments, and she never crosses its border. Therefore it can be definitely said that Corinna's view-point is limited by this audience. Consequently it is obvious that the heroes, that Corinna praises, are framed in local, Boeotian context. The poetess is interested in the issues that are interesting and close to her specific audience. One more circumstance should be noted: Corinna directly separates women among Tanagran people, as the direct addressees of her songs. We should focus of one interesting detail in the above-discussed fragment. Corinna says: '...Terpsiqora summons me so that I can sing beautiful songs about great heroes to Tanagran 'white-peplosed' women' (Fr. 755 P). This passage witnesses the poet's strive to heroization of women's interests, which can, on its part, reflect the ideals of emancipation of classical époque women, discussed above. This fragment also shows that Corinna had well-realized the importance of her songs for her audience. She stresses out that she sings beautiful (καλά) songs about great (μέγα) heroes and that 'polis rejoices at these songs.' If we recall what we have already discussed above, namely local nature of the myths, selected by Corinna and the high share of Boeotian dialect in her writings, it becomes obvious why the poetess' name did not pass beyond the borders of her audience and the city in the classical époque. Corinna's poetry caught interest only when the audience revealed interest towards the very locality of the poetry. It happened in Hellenistic époque. This might explain the fact why she was listed among lyric-poets of Ancient Greece.

The issue of Corinna's style is to be discussed separately. As soon as we get familiar with the fragment we feel originality of Corinna's language, which can be named as non-highly-flown narration. What do we mean: In the survived poetry we cannot come across the poetic tool, that Homer's epos, Sappho's poetry, her contemporary Pindar's works are so rich with. We mean the way of thinking, poetic formulas, simile, epithets, etc. which give highly-flown style to a poetic piece. We fail to find literary

similes, metaphor or other poetic tool in the survived fragments. The only thing that can catch our attention is a name with an epithet, but their analysis makes it clear that she does not strive to a significant highly-flown style. Using this epithet while describing an event is just a traditional narration.

If we go back to a highly-flown style that was characteristic to Sappho's poetry, we can assume that Corinna's style strongly opposes the style of her predecessor poetess. She was definitely different from her contemporary and compatriot Pindar. Naturally a question arises, how can be explained Corinna's clearly defined narrative style, which differs her from highly-flown style of melic poets. We think that it is realized artistic originality. It seems that the Poetess' main objective was to ignore ornamental, highly-flown style and convey information in a plain and easy way. It goes without saying that such poetry was not liked in ancient Greece in V century BC. Since Hellenistic period two directions had been distinguished in literature: stressed ornamental and artificial style on the one hand, and scientific heaviness on the other. Corinna's poetry seemed to attract readers by its plainness and natural style.

And last, we are interested in the specifics of Corinna, as a poetess. We think several moments should be outlined here: a) regional limitedness; as it was mentioned her listeners inhabit in one polis ('My polis rejoices at my bright songs', fr. 655 P); b) thematic limitedness; we mean local legends, which attract interest of only one region (Boeotia), that other poets did not pay attention at all; c) interest towards the stories on hero-men and women ('Glory to virtue of men and women heroes' fr. 664 P) and focus on female audience ('I sing beautiful songs about great heroes to Tanagran 'white-peploused women' fr. 655 P).

I think, because of meager survived fragments, it is complicated to talk about other specific womanish signs of Corinna's poetry. I mean women's world, their emotions, perception of events, which is so strong in Sappho's poetry. Corinna must have been very popular in Hellenistic world and ancient Rome; the fact that great Ovid named his beloved after her name, only confirms this fact. Another great Roman poet Propertius equals the poetic excellence of his beloved to Corinna's (II, III, 21). It should be added as well that Corinna was the only one, after Sappho, having a privilege to be listed in 'The Canon of the Lyric' among male poets (even in late tradition).