

Aarhus Seminars in Classical Antiquity

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Twentieth-Century Receptions of Corinna of Boeotia: From 'Divine' to 'Parochial'

After the sensational discovery in the twentieth century of the most substantial fragments of the poet Corinna of Boeotia, Denys Page, one of the most prominent Hellenists at the time, launched the idea that she was 'parochial', viz. 'limited or provincial in outlook or scope', with long-lasting impact on later scholarship. In the pre-twentieth century tradition, Corinna was known as 'divine' (*Vita Pindari Metrica*, 10) and depicted as superior in real time to Pindar (c. 518-438 BCE), both in poetic expertise and poetic contest, according to several ancient sources. These sources include a painting in Tanagra (victory, attested in Pausanias), texts by the authors Plutarch (*De glor. Ath.* 4.347f-348a, poetic expertise), Pausanias (22.2-4, seemingly one victory), and Aelian (*VH* 13.25, victories), plus the anonymous *Vita Pindari Metrica* (9-11, poetic expertise) and a Suda article (K 2087, victories). Additionally, there are possibly three frescoes in Pompeii (I.4.5, room 23; V.2.4, in a cubiculum, and either IV.14.43 or VI.14.38, victory). Among these sources, Pausanias and Aelian stand out, as they reductively suggest that Corinna's success was a result of her appeal to her and Pindar's 'ignorant' audience, who allegedly suffered from a 'lack of taste/a-musicality'. In other words, Pausanias and Aelian suggest that Corinna won unfairly. This paper argues that Page's designation of Corinna as a 'parochial' poet, while he investigates the linguistic and literary specificities of her – then – newly discovered fragments, can be understood in the light of these ancient remarks about Corinna's appeal to an ignorant audience.



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