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Korinna's "Shuttle Maidens" and "Daughters of Minyas": protreptic myths for good Boeotian girls

Korinna of Tanagra, who bested Pindar five times, wrote on local mythology. Two of her poems survive in prose epitomes, (the Loeb edition, *Lyra Graeca* by J.M. Edmonds [1927] 22-7), but do not appear in recent books on Greek women poets (Snyder 1989, Rayor 1991, and Balmer 1996). Nonetheless, the poems are important for understanding the role of such writings in women's society. Applying feminist and queer theories (cf. Dowden, *Death and the Maiden*, and Detienne, *Revista di Occidente* 102, 1989, 29-41), this paper examines their protreptic elements and their intended results.

"Minouaiê" or "The Daughters of Minyas," tells of the three adult daughters of king Minyas of Orchomenos, Leukippê, Arsippê, and Alkathoê. These three love weaving so much that they scorn their women neighbors "for leaving the city to go and be Bacchantes in the mountains." Dionysos is affronted and appears to the maidens as a bull, a lion, and a leopard (analogues of male sexuality), while their loom streams nectar and milk (analogues of their sexuality and motherhood). The women are frightened and draw lots as to who would make the sacrifice; it falls to Leukippê, and with the help of her sisters, they tear her son Hippasos to pieces, and go into the hills to be Bacchantes. Eventually, Hermes turns them into a bat, a white owl, and an eagle owl, "and all three fled the light of the sun" (cf. Praxilla 1, to Adonis).

The second poem, "Koronaiê" or "The Shuttle Maidens," tells of Orion's two daughters Metiochê and Menippê. An oracle demands that "parthenoi two" dedicate themselves to "deities two" to avert a plague. The girls hear the oracle, dedicate themselves to Persephone and Hades, and slit their throats with their shuttle, "accepting death for their neighbors' sake." In reward, the two deities raise their ashes to the sky as two comets, and the people of Boeotia, in thanks, build a shrine to their honor at Orchomenos.

Both stories have female homosocial settings. In the Minouaiê the subjects are adult; their actions, according to queer theory, amount, however, to a "betrayal" of their social subset, just as their belated attempt to (re-)enter it brands them as "interlopers" who flee "the light of the sun." The adult sisters present anti-models of behavior that are stark and their fate is miraculous, both exaggerations appropriate to an audience of prepubescent girls beginning their socialization as women.

In the Koronaiê, the female homosocial is set within the larger context of the entire community which expects civic duty of its citizens. Early feminist theory would postulate a "male" authorial voice, advocating female participation in the maintenance of patriarchy (cf. Ortner, *Feminist Studies* 1, 1972, 5-21); the voice, however, is "female," as is the insistent female setting (the "natural" crisis of the plague, the death at the loom, the apotheosis as comets [not fixed stars], and the establishment of a female shrine [contrast Myrtis 1 on a male shrine in Korinna's Tanagra that is "anembaton" to females]).

The Koronaiê's audience should be older than the Minouaiê's. The expected duty is total, more than just to loom and female society. Like ephebes, the parthenoi must be ready to consecrate their life for their city (cf. Anyte, AnthPal 7.492; and Connelly, AJA 100, 1996, 53-80, esp. 61-4). To avert the plague, the girls must identify the "deities two" (not Apollo and Artemis, but Persephone and Hades, models for their "marriage"); and they receive a shrine like a "demosion sema" for fallen youths.

Korinna's two poems thus address two sequential stages in the socialization process of women: prepubescence in the Minouaiê, pubescence in the Koronaiê. The authorial voices differ appropriately; both are female: that of the Minouaiê is motherly, raising specters against bad behavior, but that of the Koronaiê is official, commending good behavior with state honors. The gendered voices of these two myths, while ostensibly female, betray, however, the overriding concerns of a patriarchal system.