

SAPPHO AS THE TENTH MUSE IN HELLENISTIC EPIGRAM

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In the proem to his *Στέφανος*, or *Garland*, Meleager notes that he has woven together, along with the flowers particular to other poets, “many lilies of Anyte, and many lilies of Moiro, and only a few flowers of Sappho, but they are roses.”¹ In attributing the rose to Sappho, Meleager recalls her own assertion that some unnamed person will receive no part of fame or the “roses of Pieria” (Sappho *PLF* 55):

κατθανοῖσα δὲ κείσῃ οὐδέ ποτα μναμοσύνα σέθεν
ἔσσει· οὐδὲ †ποκ'† ὕστερον· οὐ γὰρ πεδέχῃς βρόδων
τῶν ἐκ Πιερίας· ἄλλ' ἀφάνῃς κὰν Ἀΐδα δόμῳ
φοιτάσῃς πεδ' ἀμαύρων νεκῶν ἐκπεποταμένα.

When you are dead, you will lie with no one ever
remembering you,
And you will not exist ever again; nor will you have
any share

1 I would like to thank P. A. Rosenmeyer for her intellectual support and for her many comments on earlier versions of this paper. I would also like to thank Laura McClure, Silvia Montiglio, Andrew Wolpert, Graham Zanker, Joseph Romero, John MacIsaac, and the anonymous reader for thoughts and suggestions that have indubitably made this a better work. Any errors are, of course, my own, as are translations unless otherwise noted. Epigrams that can be found in Gow and Page 1965, I have so labeled, i.e., G-P 1.5–6 = *AP* 4.1.5–6.

Of the roses of Pieria, but you will wander unknown in
 the house of Hades,
 Flittering among obscure corpses.²

An association between rose imagery and the Muses (here evoked by the reference to their home Pieria) may have been a Sapphic invention. Whereas elsewhere convention has the Muses “crowned with violets” and presenting gifts of knowledge,³ roses are the Muses’ gift to Sappho, and the flower has a symbolic association with desire, loveliness, the *locus amoenus*, and sensuality; the rose is something of a signature image for Sappho.⁴ David Campbell (1983.261) notes that “Sappho links the Muses to the theme of her fame, which she develops more fully than any of her predecessors.”⁵ As for the other poets whom Meleager names and the flowers particular to them, it should be noted that while some poets are associated with the same floral species (Anyte and Moiro, for example, share the lily), no other poet shares the image of the rose with Sappho. Perhaps Meleager chose the rose metaphor to define Sappho’s poetry because the image of the rose is so integral to it and because she applies the metaphor “roses of Pieria” to poetic competence, linking the Muses and Aphrodite as sponsors of divinely sanctioned song.

2 Aristides (*Or.* 28.51) probably refers to this fragment when he states: “I think that even you have read Sappho, where boasting to some of those women who seem to be fortunate, she says that the Muses have made her truly rich and enviable, and that even after her death she would not be forgotten” (Behr 1981).

3 Thgn. 249–50; Pind. *Isth.* 7.23, *Pyth.* 1.1–2.

4 The image of the rose occurs in *PLF* 2.6, 55.3, 74a.4, 94.13, 96.13; words compounded with “rose” also appear with some frequency: βροδοδάκτυλος, *PLF* 96.8; βροδόπαχυν, *PLF* 58.19 and pKöln (2004) line 9 (see West 2005); and βροδοπάχες, *PLF* 53.

5 Hesiod’s encounter with the Muses is a significant touchstone here. Both Hesiod and Sappho assert a privileged relationship with the Muses, yet whereas Hesiod represents himself as one of the rustic shepherds whom the Muses disparage as “mere bellies” (*Theog.* 26), Sappho defines her position in relation to other mortals as elevated. See Crotty 1994.130–59 for a discussion of the literary connection in early Greek poetry between the belly and human suffering. Katz and Volk (2000), however, argue that the belly functions as a vessel for divine voice and signals the poet’s complete dependence on the Muses for possession and inspiration. Either interpretation of the Hesiodic narrator’s description of himself as “belly” stands, I think, in contrast to Sappho’s characterization of herself as one who has been made “blessed” and “honored” by the Muses (also Sappho *PLF* 32). It has been suggested (De Martino 1987) that Sappho deliberately imitates Hesiod’s encounter with the Muses in her own imagined encounter with Aphrodite. Skinner (1991.89) argues that “Aphrodite replaces the traditional epic Muse as the fountainhead of [Sappho’s] literary inspiration.”

While Meleager's collection does not, in fact, contain any authentic poems of Sappho, his association of Sappho with the rose is in accordance with the Hellenistic epigrammatic convention of highlighting one or two aspects of an archaic poet and his or her corpus to the exclusion of all other possible attributes or traits.⁶ Such minimalist images encapsulate whole systems of meaning as they nod in the direction of other texts: particular poems by the archaic poet in question, themes recurrent in his or her oeuvre, and other literary epigrams. In this instance, Meleager has distilled in the image of the rose the ethos of Sappho's poetry and her claim to the Muses' gift. It is also quite likely that Meleager, in alluding to the "roses of Pieria," had in mind a number of Hellenistic epigrams that depict Sappho as a Muse and trumpet her claim to poetic competence.

Meleager's association of Sappho with the rose provides a convenient introduction to the topic of Sappho's representation as a Muse in Hellenistic epigram.⁷ By Meleager's time, the icon of Sappho as a Muse had become standardized to such an extent that epigrammatists react to and correct not only Sappho's own poetry but also the rich body of previously circulated epigrams that speak of her as a literary figure in biographical terms.⁸ As a mortal or tenth Muse, the Hellenistic poets graft her into the preexisting matrices of well-developed, programmatic conventions that attribute poetic inspiration to the Muses, particularly those conventions resonant with Hesiodic visionary images and language. Like Meleager's reference to Sappho's roses, echoes of Sapphic motifs, combined with allusions to Hesiod's epiphany of the Muses and to other epigrams in circulation that

6 The spurious epigrams ascribed to Sappho are: a pseudo-dedicatory inscription of a votary object to Artemis by Arista (*AP* 6.269); a pseudo-epitaph of a girl, Timas, who died before marriage (*AP* 7.489); and a pseudo-epitaph for a fisherman (*AP* 7.505).

7 See also Barbantani 1993.28–47 for a discussion of epigrammatic representations of Sappho as one of the nine canonical lyric poets. Barbantani (6–7) suggests that the influence of peripatetic treatises, particularly the biographies of Chameleon, in conjunction with the influence of Alexandrian edited texts, particularly those of Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarchus, were of great significance in the selection of the so-called "canon" of the nine lyric poets; see note 24, below.

8 Momigliano's study of ancient biography (1971) informs my own assumption that the Hellenistic epigrams that feature Sappho are "biographical" in the sense that they state something about Sappho as a historical figure, however much they were subject to distortion. Momigliano argues that the Hellenistic and Roman biographies were as interested in developing character "types" as they were in outlining known or perceived characteristics of the historical figure and his or her life. He argues (p. 7) that "any account in verse or prose that tells us something about an individual can be taken as preparatory to biography."

feature Sappho, figure prominently in the development of the “Muse” trope. The epigrammatists gradually evolve the figure of Sappho as a Muse by responding to each other while they employ corrective allusions to the Hesiodic tradition. Integrated into learned, poetic responses to the Hesiodic tradition, the figure of Sappho as mortal Muse during the Hellenistic and Roman periods becomes a kind of “tag,” a decorative convention used to display the epigrammatist’s literary sophistication.⁹

The trend that creates a pseudo-biography for Sappho with one prevailing attribute (the epithet “Muse”) is in keeping with the way other archaic poets are represented in epigrams. They are generally praised in pseudo-epitaphs in impressionistic, literary portraits that derive from a category or sub-genre of their own poetry,¹⁰ or in epigrams that isolate a scholarly selection of poets, organized by genre, to be read by the cognoscenti (*AP* 9.571, for example). The generic conventions of epigram insist on the narrowly defined scope of such tropes, and Hellenistic poets employ them in refined and allusive treatments of the nine canonical archaic lyric poets.

Elsewhere in the literature of antiquity, Sappho was often represented sexually: she was a subject of burlesque representations in comedy (Diphilus, Antiphanes, Menander, et al.) and in later literature influenced by comedy (the Ovidian so-called *Epistula Sapphus*). Other writers asserted, perhaps to counter popular belief, that there were “two Sapphos”: the poet and the Lesbian courtesan (Seneca *Ep.* 88, Athenaeus 13.596b, Aelian *V.H.* 12.19). She became an object of infamy as a “lover of young girls” (Ovid *Tr.* 2.365) with whom she was said to have had pederastic relationships comparable to those of Plato’s Socrates (Maximus of Tyre 18.9); and she was represented as an ugly, spurned lover of the beautiful, arrogant ferryman, Phaon. Out of unrequited desire for him, she committed suicide by plung-

9 Thus Catullus 35.16–17 comments that Caecilius’s girlfriend is a *Sapphica puella / musa doctior*.

10 The idea is Rosenmeyer’s, who states (1992.21): “Critical stereotypes develop during the poet’s own lifetime, as certain facets begin to be ignored and others to be stressed. Again, both the poetry and the biographical fictions contribute equally to the crystallization of a ‘persona’ . . . As new poets are accepted into the canon, their dominant traits or highlights are selected to contrast and fit with other pre-existing elements in the literary tradition.” So, for example, even though a number of fragments survive that indicate that Ibycus was highly fluent with epic themes, Hellenistic epigrams render his apocryphal image chiefly as a pederastic, sympotic seeker of pleasure (e.g., *AP* 9.184). Lefkowitz 1973.116 emphasizes the dangers of interpreting Sappho’s poetry using “critical stereotypes” about her generated in antiquity as apocrypha: “Thus biography, itself derived from interpretation of the poems, is in turn reapplied to the poems and affects our interpretation of them.”

ing into the sea from the promontory of Leukadia (Menander frag. 258 K, the Ovidian *Epistula Sapphus*, *Suda* under “Sappho,” Strabo 10.452).¹¹ In the genre of epigram during the Hellenistic period, however, Sappho does not appear as a lover of girls or of Anacreon, Hipponax, Phaon, or any other male figure; there is no preoccupation with her sexuality—in fact, as a literary figure, she seems to be cleansed of sexuality. While her sexuality is virtually ignored, her relationship to the Muses remains in focus.¹² And where there is some evocation of the erotic in her poetry, those erotic dimensions are generally not extended to her epigrammatic persona.

I would like to contrast briefly the general tendency in Hellenistic epigram to depict Sappho as a mortal or tenth Muse rather than as a sexual being with the fairly standard eroticized personification of Anacreon as a disheveled, drunken, lascivious old man indulging in sympotic activities (15 G-P = AP 7.27, Antipater Sidonius):

Εἷης ἐν μακάρεσσιν, Ἀνάκρεον, εὖχος Ἰώνων,
 μήτ' ἐρατῶν κώμων ἄνδιχα μήτε λύρης·
 ὕγρὰ δὲ δερκομένοισιν ἐν ὄμμασιν οὖλον αἰείδοις
 αἰθύσσων λιπαρῆς ἄνθος ὑπερθε κόμης,
 ἥ ἐπρὸς Εὐρυπύλην τετραμμένος ἥ ἐ Μειγιστὴν
 ἢ Κίκονα Θρηκὸς Σμερδίεω πλόκαμον,
 ἡδὺ μέθυ βλύζων, ἀμφίβροχος εἵματα Βάκχῳ,
 ἄκρητον θλίβων νέκταρ ἀπὸ στολίδων·
 τρισοῖς γάρ, Μούσαισι Διωνύσῳ καὶ Ἑρωτι,
 πρέσβυ, κατεσπείσθη πᾶς ὁ τεὸς βίωτος.

Anacreon, the glory of the Ionians, may you be among
 the blessed,
 Never without your desired revels or your lyre;

11 For the biographical tradition of Sappho in antiquity, see Lefkowitz 1973, Nagy 1977.173–77, Hallett 1979, Parker 1993, Stehle 1996, Bowman 1998.

12 Barbantani 1993.29–30 suggests that Sappho's treatment in epigrammatic “poesia sulla poesia” is less extensive than Pindar's precisely because of sexually ambivalent representations of her in comedy. We know from Athenaeus (13.599 D; Kassel-Austin 1986.5.94) that the middle comic poet Diphilus, in his version of *Sappho*, made Archilochus and Hipponax Sappho's lovers. Hermesianax's *Leontion* 47–56 depicts Alcaeus and Anacreon as rivals in the erotic pursuit of Sappho. For the question of the authenticity of the Ovidian *E.S.*, Knox 1995.12–14 provides a summary of the most pertinent problems relating to the manuscript tradition.

But may you always sing softly with your eyes looking
 out
 From underneath your perfumed hair as you shake
 your garland,
 As you turn towards either Eurypyle or Megisteus
 Or the Ciconian curls of Thracian Smerdies,
 Gurgling forth sweet wine, with your clothes utterly
 soaked with Bacchus,
 Squeezing unmixed nectar from your robes;
 For to these three: the Muses, Dionysus, and Eros,
 Old Man, your whole life was devoted.

The sympotic imagery of this epigram may have been influenced by Anacreon's erotic poetry:¹³ Anacreon (and his later imitators) focus on the expression of the beloved's eyes (e.g., *PMG* 360); Anacreon calls for wine and garlands so that he can box with Eros (*PMG* 396); and he praises the man who, when thoroughly drunk with wine, remembers the splendid gifts of the Muses and Aphrodite rather than discussions of politics and quarrels (*PMG* 96d). Other epigrammatic, literary portraits of Anacreon use similar imagery, and, generally speaking, Anacreon's sensuality and inebriation are the characteristics the epigrammatists attempt to describe using innovative turns of phrase or details of description (squeezing nectar from his drenched robes, for example) to make each portrait clever and unique within a larger tradition. In such portraits, the epigrammatist directs the reader to "see" Anacreon as the symposiast his sympotic poetry would lead us to believe he was. And although Anacreon also composed much political poetry, one would be hard pressed to come to that conclusion if one were to trust the Hellenistic epigrams as the sole testimony for the content of his oeuvre.¹⁴

Sappho also composed erotic poetry, and one might characterize Sappho *PLF* 2 as sympotic, yet the epigrammatists tend to separate the persona of Sappho from her sensual body. Where her erotic poetry is mentioned, the epigrammatists do not depict a Sappho engaging in a symposium or in

13 For an expanded discussion, see Urios-Aparisi 1993, Cyrino 1995–96, and, particularly, Rosenmeyer 1992.22–27. See also 3 G-P = *AP* 7.24 and 4 G-P = 7.25 for similarly eroticizing literary portraits by "Simonides."

14 See also Dioscorides 19 G-P = *AP* 7.31; Antipater Sidonius 16 G-P = *AP* 7.29, 17 G-P = *AP* 7.30, 14 G-P = *AP* 7.26, 13 G-P = *AP* 7.23; Anonymous *AP* 7.28; "Simonides" 3 G-P = *AP* 7.24, 4 G-P = *AP* 7.25.

erotic play as they do male poets (with one very late, Byzantine exception).¹⁵ Rather, they tend to highlight her intimate association with the Muses, and they do so using programmatic language. Silvia Barbantani (1993.30) suggests that the theme of “Muse” emerges in connection with Sappho as a way to subordinate the erotic to the sacral—a more appropriate sphere of representation for a woman. I would add that, via the filiations of the trope of Muse, the epigrammatists express their own agonistic claims to literary competence and authorial control.

Nossis, who was active in the 280s or 270s, is the author of the earliest surviving epigrammatic treatment of Sappho (11 G-P = AP 7.718):¹⁶

ὦ ξεῖν', εἰ τύ γε πλεῖς ποτὶ καλλίχορον Μιτυλήναν
τᾶν Σαπφούδ' χαρίτων ἄνθος ἐναυσόμενος
εἰπεῖν ὥς Μούσαισι φίλαν τήν' αὖτε Λόκρισσα
τίκτεν· ἴσαις δ' ὅτι μοι τοῦνομα Νοσσίς, ἴθι.

O stranger, if you should sail toward Mytilene of the
lovely choruses,
Inspired with¹⁷ the bloom of Sappho's Graces,
Say that a Locrian woman bore one who is dear to the
Muses,
and that you know my name, Nossis. Go!

Interest in the poetic voices of women in antiquity has brought this formerly obscure epigram into greater prominence. In particular, scholars have focused on Nossis' relationship to the literary tradition and, especially, to Sappho. Marilyn Skinner (1991.95) calls Nossis a “Hellenistic imitator” of Sappho and claims that they both adhered to an “alternative, woman-identified concept of artistic creativity.”¹⁸ Kathryn Gutzwiller (1998.86) pushes this line of thought even further by suggesting that Nossis “delivers to the reader not just the ‘seal’ of her name, but, through a rhetorical

15 AP 5.246 by Paulus Silentarius in the age of Justinian, published in the *Cycle* of Agathias.

16 Here I follow Gutzwiller's text (1998.85 and note 6). Gutzwiller suggests that the poem was modeled after an epigram by Asclepiades in which a cenotaph requests passers-by to bring the news to Euippus's father in Chios that his son, whose name only survives, has perished at sea (31 G-P = AP 7.500).

17 Gow and Page (1965.2.442) note that the participle ἐναυσόμενος in Call. frag. 203.13 (and 65), Plat. Ax. 371 E, and Ael. frags. 89 and 246 means something akin to “to be inspired with.”

18 See also Skinner 1989 for Nossis' self-identification with Sappho.

sleight of hand, a statement of her position within literary history” as a literary inheritor of Sappho’s poetry and as an “intermediary” between past and future women poets.¹⁹

The language with which Nossis conveys to the reader her relationship to her predecessor is reminiscent of the Sapphic motif of the Pierian rose: she wishes the reader-stranger to convey her name to Sappho’s homeland and to install it there as a competitor for fame. The “bloom of charms” (or of “the Graces,” the mythological and allegorical companions of Aphrodite), the χαρίτων ἄνθος of line 2, is surely the rose that, as one of Sappho’s most vivid images, has certain connections to her erotic poetry and calls to mind Sappho’s own collocation of the Muses and rose imagery in the phrase “roses of Pieria.”²⁰ Moreover, Nossis asserts a privileged relationship with the Muses, as did Sappho, claiming that she is φίλαν by them, a boast implying that the Muses consider Nossis a kinswoman, a member of their company and an equal.²¹ In this epigram, Nossis claims her place in the literary tradition and the right to the fame and prestige that ought to accompany it; she does so by employing flower imagery (and in particular, the “bloom of the Graces”) reminiscent of Sappho’s, and by promoting her relationship to the Muses as had Sappho.

Sappho appears again in a slightly later epigram, but this time it is she, rather than the author of the epigram, who is in the company of the Muses. At the close of the third century, Dioscorides composed this epigram entitled “On Sappho the Mytilenean, the μελοποιὸν (‘melic poet’), the θαυμαζόμεναν (‘wondrous’) composer of lyric poetry.” Here, the author depicts Sappho as a member and companion of the divine community (18 G-P = AP 7.407):

19 See also Barbantani 1993.30–31 for a discussion of this epigram.

20 Sappho mentions the Graces and the Muses together in Sappho *PLF* 128 and 103.8; and, in Sappho 53, the Graces are βροδοπάχες, “rose-armed.” Snyder 1997.79–95 performs a semantic analysis of Sappho’s use of *charis* in association with *habrosune* and the adjective *poikilia*; she suggests that these terms reappear frequently in Sappho’s poetry, usually to enrich descriptions of “lush space[s] rich with unfolding erotic possibilities.” Nossis may also mean “bloom of Graces” to be a critical term for delicacy or charm, a term very much *en vogue* in the Hellenistic era and applied with other terms like ἡδὺς and λείπτος to imply refinement and polish (Fowler 1989.168–69). If this is so, Nossis may be lingering playfully between the decadent luxuriousness of Sappho’s *charis* and the literary tastes of her own era and milieu. White 1980.17–20 suggests that Nossis uses the metaphor of “rose” as an obscene pun on the clitoris.

21 The phrase “dear to the Muses” generally connotes poetic authority (e.g., Call. *Aet. frag.* 1.2., Theoc. *Id.* 7.95).

Ἥδιστον φιλέουσι νέοις προσανάκλιμ' ἐρώτων
 Σαπφώ, σὺν Μούσαις ἧ ῥά σε Πιερίη
 ἢ Ἑλικῶν εὐκισσος ἴσα πνείουσαν ἐκείναις
 κοσμεῖ τὴν Ἑρέσω Μοῦσαν ἐν Αἰολίδι,
 ἢ καὶ Ὑμὴν Ὑμέναιος ἔχων εὐφεγγεα πύκην
 σὺν σοὶ νυμφιδίων ἴσταθ' ὑπὲρ θαλάμων,
 ἢ Κινύρεω νέον ἔρνος ὀδυρομένη Ἀφροδίτῃ
 σύνθρηνος μακάρων ἱερὸν ἄλσος ὀρής.
 πάντῃ, πότνια, χαῖρε θεοῖς ἴσα, σὰς γὰρ αἰοιδὰς
 ἀθανάτας ἔχομεν νῦν ἔτι θυγατέρας.

Sweetest bed of desires for the young in love,
 Sappho, surely, along with the Muses, Pieria
 Or ivied Helicon honors (κοσμεῖ) you,²² who breathes
 like them,
 You Muse of Aeolian Eresus,
 Or even Hymen Hymenaios, who, holding a brightly
 flaming torch,
 Stands with you over the bridal chambers,
 Or you, a partner in mourning, look on at the sacred
 grove of the blessed
 With Aphrodite as she bewails the young scion,
 Adonis;
 Greetings, mistress, in every way equal to the gods; for
 even now we still hold
 Your songs as your immortal daughters.

This relatively early epigram is the first that survives to address Sappho as a Muse: not only do the Muses and Pieria honor her, but she is counted among their number as the “Muse of Aeolian Eresus.” As one who “breathes like” the Muses, she is represented as actually performing the functions of the Muses—of “inspiring” in the Latinate sense—with the Muses’ ability to animate through breath, to stimulate poetic impulses, and to penetrate the poet and guide composition.²³ Piero Pucci’s discussion of

22 For a discussion of *kosmos*, see note 41 below.

23 Plato describes poetic inspiration as ἐνθουσιασμός, the state of being possessed by a god (*Ap.* 22a–c, *Ion* 533c–34e, *Menex.* 99c–e, *Leg.* 682a, 719c–d). For discussions of “enthusiasm,” “mania,” and “ecstasy” during poetic inspiration, see Tigerstedt 1970, Barmeyer

“breathing” as a word enjoying special status is particularly relevant here: it owes its pedigree to the incipit of Hesiod’s *Theogony*, in which the presentation of the scepter and the “breath” of the Muses (*Th.* 30ff.) to the poet represents the power of *poesis*, “the soundless nature of inspiration and the necessity of controlling poetic language” (1977.28). Dioscorides has chosen poetic vocabulary resonant of Hesiod’s epiphanic encounter with the Muses to personify Sappho as a Muse, although a more isolable allusion to Hesiod (and, simultaneously, to Dioscorides) will emerge in epigrams by “Plato” and Antipater Sidonius (below).

Dioscorides brings into focus just a few of Sappho’s various modes of composition, highlighting them according to occasion: evoking her erotica, he calls her a “sweetest bed of desires”; the presence of Hymen Hymenaios stands in for her numerous epithalamia and Adonis for her lamentations of him, perhaps to be performed for the Adoneia (*PLF* 140 and 168). We can see an approach to literary selection and textual organization at work in this epigram in which only a few modes were selected to represent Sappho’s entire oeuvre. We know that the Alexandrians (possibly Aristarchus, 216–144 B.C.E.) arranged Sappho’s poems in either eight or nine books, but we do not know exactly when this occurred or precisely how the collection was structured.²⁴ Later epigrams mention “pages” or “leaves” of a book and

1968.102, and Murray 1981. Kambylis’s seminal 1965 study of the development of the symbolism (particularly water and laurel) employed by Homer, Hesiod, Callimachus, Propertius, and Ennius to express the “phenomenon” of poetic crafting should also be noted. He sees in the Alexandrian poets’ employment of various motifs concerning the Muses a form of double-hindsight for the poet: the poet expresses a kind of nostalgia for the mystery and ineffability of the “poetic” that Homer and Hesiod located in a divine source as he speaks to members of his own circle through the learnedness of his allusions. For the influence of Hesiod’s vision in classical poetry, see also Hutchinson 1988.277–95, Wimmel 1960, Commager 1962.9–49, Clausen 1964, Newman 1967, Lyne 1978, Pratt 1993.

- 24 Yatromanolakis (1999) discusses the editorial reception by Alexandrian scholars of Sappho’s oeuvre, particularly as it relates to the organization and composition of metrically arranged “books” of Sappho’s poems. Yatromanolakis argues against a nine-book Alexandrian edition. Scholars debate whether Sappho’s poems went through two Alexandrian editions. Ancient testimony (Sappho T 236 Voigt) tells us that Aristarchus’s edition of Alcaeus replaced another by Aristophanes (257–180 B.C.E.), who was well known for his editions of lyric poetry. Williamson 1995.40 argues that Sappho’s works must also have gone through two editions, the first by Aristophanes. Yatromanolakis 1999.180, n. 4, however, notes that although there is evidence for Alcaeus, there is no direct evidence that Aristophanes made an edition of Sappho. The Alexandrian edition (or editions, as the case may be), is (are) generally believed to have been organized by meter rather than genre or occasion and to have contained at least eight (possibly nine) books of poems. Tullius Laurea, *AP* 7.17, wrote a pseudo-epitaph in which Sappho tells the passer-by that she has “placed a bloom”

signal a shift in the experience of poetry from aural reception to visual absorption.²⁵ Dioscorides' epigram, however, emphasizes the performative aspect of the poetic experience, constructing a metapoetic fiction in which Sappho participates as a divinity in a cast of cletic and hymnal addressees whom she celebrates in her own poetry.

As in Nossis' epigram, Sappho's birthplace receives tribute, but here the physical location of the place is linked with the divine ("You Muse of Aeolian Eresus"), a parallel to the conceptual linkage between the Muses and Pieria and Mt. Helicon. Not only is Sappho depicted as a divine Muse, but throughout the poem, she is presented as being in the company of the gods while they honor (κόσμει) her: Hymen Hymenaios stands over the bridal chambers σὺν σοί, and she is a σύνθρηνος of Aphrodite (perhaps recalling Sappho's request for Aphrodite to be her σύμμαχος or "ally"),²⁶ bewailing the death of Adonis in the grove of the blessed.²⁷ Sappho is addressed as πότνια, a term Sappho herself uses in the vocative case to invoke Aphrodite's pity and allegiance in her cletic hymn to the goddess (*PLF* 1.4), and a term that reinforces the divine status achieved by Sappho in

for each of the Muses "for my nine," which some scholars (particularly Williamson) interpret to mean the nine edited volumes of her poetry collected and circulated by Alexandrian scholars. Yatromanolakis (182–84), however, argues that Laureas's "nine" cannot be taken as solid evidence that an Alexandrian copy in nine books descended to him, and that the number nine may nod toward the number of the Muses, with whom Sappho is so closely associated in epigram. He also suggests that the tenth-century *Suda* entry on Sappho that claimed that she wrote μελῶν λυρικών θ' in addition to epigrams, elegiacs, iambs, and monodies may have rested on the evidence of Laureas and other biographical sources, which are either ambiguous or non-extant, and he notes (p. 182) that the late second- or early third-century papyrus biography of Sappho (P. Oxy 1800 frag. 1 = Sappho T 252 Voigt) has a lacuna at the critical place where the author of the biography stated the number of her books.

- 25 Ath. 13.596cd, for example, preserves an epigram by Posidippus in which "the Sapphic white pages (σελίδες) speak." Rosenmeyer 1997.131 notes that "here Sappho's fame rests on a page that speaks, a phrase that wonderfully combines the impact of orality and textuality . . . the poetry is at once song and script" as oral and textual traditions intertwine.
- 26 In Sappho *PLF* 1, the poet calls for an epiphany of Aphrodite and asks the goddess to σύμμαχος ἔσσο, "be my ally." The language in the epigram by Dioscorides, particularly the prefix συν, recalls the symbiotic nature of Sappho's own, perhaps more hopeful than realized, representation of the relationship between herself and Aphrodite.
- 27 Perhaps an echo of Hesiod's μακάρων νήσοισι (*Op.* 171), where heroes and demi-gods enjoyed eternal rest. In his commentary on this passage, West 1978.193 states: "μακάρες unqualified in the poetic language almost always means 'the gods,'" and thus the isle of the blessed is a place "where exceptional mortals are admitted to feast forever with the gods, thus becoming immortals themselves."

this epigram. The epigram closes by rejoicing in the πότνια who is θεοῖς ἴσα, “equal to the gods,” and by asserting that her songs are still held to be “immortal daughters.”

Dioscorides links Sappho with the divine; she is an inspiring Muse and her progeny, her songs, are immortal. As the apotheosized recipient of the Muses’ sponsorship and, in turn, a source of poetic inspiration for others, she is modeled as a prime mover of poetic activity. Moreover, deities who preside over the creative impulses of the human and natural world are in her presence: Hymen Hymenaios, the god of marriage, Adonis, the dying consort of the goddess of sexual fertility, and Aphrodite herself. Sappho’s own constructed poetic identity as the divine agent of both Aphrodite and the Muses resurfaces in this playful epigram. The fiction Dioscorides creates re-embodies her not as a sensual being but as a mythologized abstraction for poetic inspiration, one that has an elevated literary pedigree.²⁸ Dioscorides resurrects Sappho as an apotheosized being, and he elevates the status of her poetry while focusing on a narrow selection of her oeuvre.

Dioscorides’ epigram is the first in the Hellenistic tradition to define and apotheosize Sappho as a Muse. A spurious epigram attributed to Plato and probably in circulation by 250 B.C.E. reformulates and advances this conceit (*AP* 9.506):²⁹

ἐννέα τὰς Μούσας φασὶν τινες· ὥς ὀλιγώρως·
ἡνίδε καὶ Σαπφὼ Λεσβόθεν ἡ δεκάτη.

Some say there are nine Muses, but this is too few;
For behold, Sappho from Lesbos is the tenth.

D. L. Page (1981.126) suggests that this epigram is “well below the normal standard” because it merely repeats a common Hellenistic trope. I would argue that it is not merely repetitive but that “Plato” has improved upon Dioscorides’ model. The whole epigram, a mere two lines, is dedicated

28 See Barbantani 1993.33–36 for discussion of this epigram by Dioscorides. Barbantani (34–35) suggests that Sappho is not represented here as just a *poeta docta*, “ma è una persona dotata di veri sentimenti, che, transfusi nelle sue opere, possono essere percepiti come consolanti ai propri da tutti gli innamorati.”

29 For dating of the poem, see Page 1981.126. If this date is correct, one can conclude that it is the first extant Hellenistic epigram to depict Sappho specifically as the tenth Muse. For a discussion of problems relating to authorial authenticity, see Ludwig 1963.

to redefinition. The point of “Plato’s” epigram is not simply to restate the conceit already fashioned by Dioscorides, namely, that Sappho is a Muse. Rather, I think, “Plato” responds to this motif and develops it by recasting the number of the Muses. There were nine Muses as early as Homer (*Od.* 24.60), and the number was confirmed in the literary tradition by Hesiod, who gave them individual names and apportioned to each hegemony over a specific art (*Th.* 56ff.). “Plato’s” statement recalls this Homeric and Hesiodic tradition and adjusts it to redefine Sappho’s place in the literary canon.³⁰ She is not simply represented as joining the divine community—she is numbered among them. While “Plato” points to Sappho as the “tenth” with the demonstrative ἡνίδε, he also implies that the Muses are now a closed group.³¹ The word placement of the epigram reinforces this reading: Μούσας and Σαπφῶ occur at the same metrical point in each of the lines, while ἐννέα and δεκάτη enclose them. One might also note that, unlike Dioscorides, “Plato” leaves references to Sappho’s poems entirely out of the epigram: Sappho’s *poetry* is only indirectly the subject of the epigram; the focus rests upon the fashioning of the *persona* of Sappho as a deified (and catalogued) abstraction.

Antipater of Sidon also capitalizes on the motif of Sappho as the tenth Muse (12 G-P = AP 9.66):

Μναμοσύναν ἔλε θάμβος ὅτ’ ἔκλυε τᾶς μελιφώνου
Σαπφῶς μὴ δεκάταν Μοῦσαν ἔχουσι βροτοί.

Astonishment took hold of Mnemosyne when she heard
mellifluous
Sappho, wondering whether mortals possessed a
tenth Muse.

Gow and Page date Antipater Sidonius’s death (or the collection of his poems) to about 125 B.C.E. and suggest that he was actively writing after the 150s, since one of his epigrams (AP 7.493) refers to the sack of

30 The London scholia of Call. *Aet.* frag. 1.45–46 (Pfeiffer I, p. 7) suggest that Callimachus called Arsinoë II a “tenth Muse”; “Plato” may be borrowing this epithet from Callimachus to honor Sappho; see Nisetich 2001.64 for further discussion.

31 Antiphilus of Byzantium, however, in AP 9.192, makes the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* the tenth and eleventh Muses. Antiphilus can be dated by AP 9.178, which thanks Nero for his restoration of Rhodes’ liberty in A.D. 53.

Corinth in 146 B.C.E. This later date makes it possible that Antipater Sidonius used “Plato’s” epigram as a model, since the circulation of “Plato’s” poetry corresponds to roughly 250 B.C.E. Both “Plato” and Antipater confine their epigrams to two lines each, and both treat Sappho as the tenth Muse. “Plato” corrects Homer, Hesiod, and the view of most mortals (that there are nine Muses) to promote Sappho as the tenth. Antipater adds his own innovation to the lineage of literary epigrams on Sappho by involving the mother of the Muses: he improves upon “Plato’s” allusion to Hesiod’s *Theogony* (53ff.) by recalling the passage in which Mnemosyne gives birth in Pieria to the Muses, who are nine in number and whose roles are defined.

Antipater’s epigram describes the reaction of Mnemosyne as she quite suddenly realizes that Sappho’s voice is equal to those of her own daughters, when Sappho lingers between the human and divine worlds. Word placement reinforces Sappho’s status at the very moment of her elevation and inclusion in the community of gods: the epigram begins with the divine (Mnemosyne) and ends with βροτοί, “mortals,” while Sappho is in the middle between the two; Σαπφοῦς and βροτοί frame the second line, with δεκάταν Μοῦσαν balanced between them. Just as “Plato’s” word placement reinforced his corrective declaration, the antithetical word placement in Antipater’s brief epigram highlights the occasion in which Sappho transcends the human world. If we assume that Antipater’s poem involves a “double reference” to both “Plato” and Hesiod,³² this example perhaps best illustrates the process with which Hellenistic poets developed the epigrammatic persona of Sappho. By alluding not just to Sappho’s poetry, which is generally treated as having high status, but also to the allusive epigrams of other poets, each competes for a place in the literary tradition.

Another epigram by Antipater Sidonius treats Sappho as a “mortal Muse among the immortal Muses” in an invocation to her homeland (11 G-P = AP 7.14):

Σαπφώ τοι κεύθεις, χθὼν Αἰολί, τὰν μετὰ Μούσαις
ἀθανάταις θνατὰν Μοῦσαν ἀειδομένην,

32 Wills 1998 provides a sensible approach to the problem of allusion and defines a “double reference” as follows (p. 284): “B refers to C by single reference; then A refers to B and C. This differs from combined reference (in which A refers to B and A refers to C) because the two antecedents have a previous relationship between them. Example: Catullus refers to Callimachus; then Virgil simultaneously refers to Callimachus and the Catullan imitation.”

ἄν Κύπρις καὶ Ἔρως συνάμ' ἔτραφον, ἅς μετὰ Πειθῷ
 ἔπλεκ' αἰείζων Πιερίδων στέφανον,
 Ἐλλάδι μὲν τέρψιν σοὶ δὲ κλέος, ὦ τριέλικτον
 Μοῖραι δινεῦσαι νῆμα κατ' ἡλακάτας,
 πῶς οὐκ ἐκλώσασθε πανάφθιτον ἡμαρ ἀοιδῶ
 ἄφθιτα μησαμένῃ δῶρ' Ἑλικωνιάδων;

The Aeolian earth covers you, Sappho, the mortal Muse
 Singing amongst the immortal Muses,
 Whom Cypris and Eros nourished together, and for
 whom Persuasion
 Wove an everlasting garland of the Pierian Muses
 As a delight for Hellas and a token of glory for you.
 O Fates,
 Spinning round your thrice coiled thread with your
 distaffs,
 Why did you not spin out an all-imperishable day as
 the imperishable gift
 Of the maidens of Helicon for clever song?

Antipater makes an unmistakable allusion to Sappho's "Pierian roses," and uses, as Sappho did, floral imagery to express in symbolic terms the collective power of Aphrodite and the Muses and the undying fame (i.e., in the image of a victory garland) that accompanies their sponsorship. The allusion serves to recall both Sappho and the incipit to Hesiod's *Works and Days*, in which the poet calls upon the Muses "from Pieria" to sing about Zeus: Μοῦσαι Πιερίηθεν ἀοιδῆσι κλείουσαι, δεῦτε, Δί' ἐννέπετε.³³ The Muses in the last line are called Ἑλικωνιάδων, a form of *variatio* in a poem in which the Muses and their various epithets are mentioned four times, and also a reference to Hesiod's incipit to the *Theogony*: Μουσάων Ἑλικωνιάδων ἀρχώμεθ' αἰεΐδειν.³⁴ Once again, an epigrammatist evokes the iconic figure of Sappho in language reminiscent of Hesiod's vision, and he does so in order to refigure a familiar nexus of tropes to advertise simultaneously Sappho's poetry and his own familiarity with the canon and its language.

33 Also, *Theog.* 53, in which Mnemosyne gives birth to the Muses on Pieria, and Sc. 205–06, where the Muses are called Πιερίδες.

34 Also, Hes. *Op.* 658; Pind. *Isthm.* 2.34, *Pae.* 7b4.

In this epigram, the mortality of Sappho is emphasized by the opening invocation to the Aeolian earth and the Fates' treatment of her. The poet creates an antithesis between death and immortal life (ἀθανάταις θνατὸν and αἰζῶον, lines 2 and 4; πανάφθιτον ἡμαρ, line 7). Her mortality is contrasted with her κλέος (line 5), the privilege she received from deities and deified abstractions (the Muses, Cypris, Eros, and Persuasion, each of whom Sappho names in her own poetry),³⁵ in the claim that physical immortality should have accompanied the imperishability of her fame.³⁶ Against this antithetical language of life and death, fame and ignominy, Antipater treats (the female) Sappho as a marginally apotheosized figure: he creates a contrast in the phrase "mortal Muse" that underscores the pathos of her physical death.³⁷

Scholars have examined Sappho's repeated allusive treatment of epic themes and how she applies Homeric warrior language to the discourse of eros, particularly where it expresses sensuality between women (especially Sappho 16 and 31).³⁸ The Homeric dimension of her poetry is unmistakable, however minimally we can determine with any degree of precision the degree to which the dialogue between Sappho and Homer is

35 Sappho invokes Eros in a fragment (Sappho *PLF* 47); a testimonial states that she invoked Peitho as the "the mortal-bewitching daughter of Aphrodite" (Sch. Hes. *Op.* 73). Barbantani 1993.36–37 suggests that while Apollo "nourishes" Pindar (*AP* 2.382–88), the *princeps lyricorum* (Pindar is first in the lists of the nine, *AP* 9.184 and 9.571), Antipater Sidonius stresses Sappho's "passione e l'abilità nel trasportarla nel canto" by having Cypris and Eros "nourish" her.

36 Sappho herself used the phrase κλέος ἄφθιτον in the context of the wedding of Hektor and Andromache (*PLF* 44.4). This same phrase was used by Achilles to the embassy when he says that his mother Thetis informed him that he has two fates: either he will besiege Troy and never go home but his κλέος will be undying, ἄφθιτον, or he will go back to his homeland and his glory will be destroyed (ὠλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν), but he will live a long time, ἐπὶ δὴρὸν . . . αἰὼν (*Il.* 9.413–16). The Homeric language in these passages plays strikingly with the antitheses of life and death, everlasting fame and utter obscurity. Perhaps the epigrammatist is playing with Sapphic echoes of Homer here?

37 Antipater Sidonius treated Homer (8 G-P = *AP* 7.2, 9 G-P = *AP* 7.6) with similar reverence, although he is not termed a Muse but rather has a μέγα στόμα that sings ἴσα Μούσαις (7.2.1) or he is the Μουσῶν φέγγος . . . ἀγήραντον στόμα κόσμου παντός (7.6.3–4). Also, Alcaeus (11 G-P = *AP* 7.1) creates a similar mood of pathos for Homer by contrasting his mortal grave in Ios with the metaphor that he is the "star of the Muses and the Graces." Anonymous *AP* 7.3 is a pseudo-epitaph in which the passer-by is asked to venerate "a godlike Homer" (θεῖον Ὅμηρον); cf. *AP* 7.7.

38 Winkler 1990.162–87 argues that Sappho refashions Homeric language, scenes, and experiences and adapts them to make them more accessible and comprehensible to women. Also, Rissman 1983, Campbell 1983.10–18, duBois 1995.6–10, 98–126, 191–92, and Rosenmeyer 1997.

isolable at the level of verbal allusion. Perhaps it is this tendency in her own poetry to refigure Homeric warrior scenes, metaphors, language, and values to suit the demands of lyric modes (i.e., symposiastica, epithalamia, etc.) that inspired Hellenistic epigrammatists to fashion her as a female Homer. Homer, also frequently depicted in Hellenistic epigram as “godlike” (see note 37, above) and as having a very close association with the Muses, serves, in Patricia Rosenmeyer’s terms (1997.135), as the “gold standard . . . the epitome of success and fame” against whom Sappho does not compete, but rather serves as the very best of a separate category. Another Antipater (not the Sidonian), expresses such a sentiment in another single couplet that compares Sappho to Homer (*AP* 7.15):³⁹

οὐνομά μεν Σαπφώ, τόσσον δ’ ὑπερέσχον ἀοιδῶν
 θηλειᾶν ἀνδρῶν ὅσσον ὁ Μαιονίδας.

My name is Sappho, and I surpassed the song of women
 As much as Homer surpassed the song of men.

In this epigram, Sappho and Homer are marked as belonging to separate categories by the correlative pronouns, τόσσον and ὅσσον, and the juxtaposition of θηλειᾶν and ἀνδρῶν is underscored by its isolation in the first half of the pentameter before the caesura. But, what, precisely, do these words mean? Is the reader to understand that Sappho surpassed other women poets by as much as Homer did other male poets, and that she is, therefore, “first female, second a poet”?⁴⁰ Or should the reader understand that ἀοιδῶν θηλειᾶν means something like “women’s music,” that is, poetry for women, about women and their experiences in love, ritual activity, marriage, domestic duties, etc., while ἀοιδῶν . . . ἀνδρῶν signifies poetry sung for and about men waging battle in foreign lands and negotiating in political assemblies?

39 Robinson 1963.14 suggests that this epigram by Antipater is probably from the base of a lost statue of Sappho in the famous library at Pergamum, an epigram that Jucundus and Cyriac were able to cite many hundreds of years later (Fraenkel *Inscriptionen von Pergamon* I.118.198; *CIG* 3555).

40 Rosenmeyer 1997.135. There is a precedent in Aristotle (*Rh.* 1398b) for defending Sappho’s status despite her sex. In this passage, Aristotle, arguing that the wise are honored universally, provides a number of examples: Archilochus is honored by the Parians despite his slanderous poetry, Homer is honored by the Chians even though he himself was a foreigner, and Sappho is honored by the Mytileneans even though she was a woman.

The same question could be asked of Antipater of Thessalonika's epigram in praise of the nine female lyric poets (*AP* 1.65):

Τάσδε θεογλώσσους Ἑλικὸν ἐθρεψε γυναῖκας
 ὕμνοις, καὶ Μακεδὼν Πιερίας σκόπελος
 Πρήξιλλαν, Μοιρῶ, Ἀνύτης, στόμα, θῆλυν Ὅμηρον,
 Λεσβιάδων Σαπφῶ κόσμον ἐϋπλοκάμων,
 Ἥρινναν, Τελέσιλλαν ἀγακλέα καὶ σέ, Κόριννα,
 Θοῦριν Ἀθηναίης ἀσπίδα μελψαμένην,
 Νοσσίδα θηλύγλωσσον ἰδὲ γλυκυαχέα Μῦρτιν,
 πάσας ἀενάων ἐργάτιδας σελίδων.
 ἐννέα μὲν Μούσας μέγας Οὐρανός, ἐννέα δ' αὐτὰς
 Γαία τέκεν, θνατοῖς ἄφθιτον εὐφοροῦσαν.

Helicon and the Macedonian promontory of Pieria
 Nourished these god-tongued women with hymns:
 Praxilla, Moiro, the mouth of Anyte, the female Homer
 Sappho, the glory (κόσμον)⁴¹ of the lovely-tressed
 Lesbian women,
 Erinna, glorious Telesilla, and you, Corinna,
 Celebrating in song the raging shield of Athena,
 The female-tongued Nossis and sweet-sounding Myrtis,
 All artisans of everlasting leaves of books.
 Great Gaia bore the nine Muses from Ouranos, but
 these nine
 She bore as an imperishable source of joy for
 mortals.

This epigram nicely conflates the iconic representations in Hellenistic poetry of Sappho as the female Homer and Sappho as Muse: the number of poets in the epigram parallels the number of Muses; the last two lines of

41 Pucci 1980.164 makes an interesting connection between the Hesiodic prerogative of the Muses to “speak the truth” in “praise” (of the gods in the Hesiodic context) and the “order” (*kosmos*) used by the Muses in song to establish a praise-narrative, confer “meaning” upon the object of celebration, and establish the grounds by which that “meaning” may be interpreted by the audience or reader. Pucci suggests that *kosmos* functions teleologically in all of its linguistic resonances as an integral function of the poetic purpose and of its reward—the circulation of glory.

the epigram, constructed within a μὲν . . . δ' clause, parallel the ἐννέα μὲν Μούσας with ἐννέα δ' αὐτὰς; the programmatic Helicon and Pieria nourished them; and Sappho is among them as the "female Homer," the acme of artistic skill among her θεογλώσσους colleagues. Moreover, the notion that Sappho is the tenth Muse has been reconfigured and corrected once again to promote an authoritative selection of female poet/Muses to be read (as texts, as the σελίδων of line 8 suggests) by the erudite scholar-poet.⁴²

Once again, why is Sappho labeled with the modifier θῆλυν "Ὅμηρον? The formal association with Homer suggests that her prestige surpasses all the others and that she is the master of her trade. But is she a kind of second-rate Homer precisely because she is θῆλυν, or is she a θῆλυν "Ὅμηρον because her poetry appropriates Homeric motifs in an attempt to articulate the erotic experiences of herself and other women? It is difficult to escape the former assumption, given the attention she receives in antiquity precisely because of her sex. Indeed, the whole epigram treats these nine poets as a separate category altogether, for all of them are women, and none of them, save Sappho, achieve canonization among the *novem lyrici* (discussed below).

A number of details in the epigram, however, lead me to believe that the latter suggestion may also be operating. Sappho is called the κόσμον (see note 41, above) of the Λεσβιάδων . . . ἐϋπλοκάμων ("the glory of the lovely-tressed Lesbian women") in apposition to the phrase "female Homer," so the epigram places her in her social milieu: the women of Lesbos who comprise the subject of a great deal of her poetry. The subject matter of Corinna is explicitly stated as well ("the raging shield of Athena"), and even though such a subject is more closely aligned with Homeric epic,⁴³ it is Sappho who is associated with Homer and not Corinna.⁴⁴ Moreover, Nossis receives the epithet θηλύγλωσσον. While the epithet could be interpreted ambiguously, still, above all the other poets in the epigram (save Sappho), her poetry is the most woman centered and includes literary

42 Posidippus epigram 17.6 G-P = Athen. 13.596c offers an interesting parallel (see note 25).

43 In addition to the "shield of Athena" mentioned here, Corinna also composed poetry on the Seven Against Thebes (Apoll. *Pron.* 119c), Oedipus (Sch. Eur. *Phoen.* 26), and the Contest between Helicon and Cithaeron (*Pap. Berol.* 284, *Berl. Klassikertexte* 5.2.19).

44 Contrast, for example, *AP* 9.190 (Anonymous) in which Erinna is compared to both Homer and Sappho: "Her three hundred lines are equal to Homer's . . . As much as Sappho is better than Erinna at melic poetry, just so much is Erinna better at hexameters." Here it is Erinna who is equal to Homer, not Sappho.

portraits and dedicatory epigrams from fictional women in honor of Hera and Aphrodite.⁴⁵

The aim of this essay has been to follow the process by which Sappho becomes figured as an iconic Muse in Hellenistic poetry. Yet this process presents a problem of the sort we have just encountered in the representation of Sappho as the female Homer: is Sappho's representation as a Muse different from the treatment of male poets (Homer, Archilochus, et al.), and if so, why? The Hellenistic epigrammatists restrain themselves from apotheosizing all other lyric poets, and even Homer, who is "godlike" and the "star of the Muses and Graces,"⁴⁶ is not "the god of song." While Sappho herself used the motif the "roses of Pieria" to promote her position as poet at the expense of some other woman who will wander ἀφάνης in the house of Hades, one might, as has Judith Hallett (1979.447), conclude that Sappho was ranked as a Muse because "she had not earned literary stature through toil and competition," as male poets did, or, perhaps, because the Muses embodied a particular aspect of idealized femininity. The Muses are highly gendered, and one might characterize their function in relation to the traditionally male craft as nurturing. The epithet "Muse" implies an ambiguity precisely because it is feminized praise.

Perhaps more interestingly, however, we can observe the ways in which the Hellenistic poet-scholars utilize the figure of Sappho to advance their own poetic programs: while they react to their inherited tradition and contribute to the establishment of a canon, the epigrams they compose reflect an agonistic tension that rests upon two axes, namely, the intertextuality that underlies the motifs used to express Sappho's elevated position in the canon and the narrowing of her representation into an iconic figure as adaptations and corrections of other epigrammatic representations emerge. Sappho is the only woman poet to make it into the canon: in fact, the number of melic poets assigned to the canon is limited by the number of Muses (nine) and, therefore, by the very motif that the epigrammatists used to express Sappho's elevated status as a Muse among the Muses or the tenth Muse. An anonymous author of uncertain date defines the canon of the "nine lyric poets" and highlights this point (*AP* 9.571).⁴⁷

45 Cf. 3 G-P = *AP* 6.265, 5 G-P = *AP* 6.275, 8 G-P = *AP* 6.353, 4 G-P = *AP* 9.332, 7 G-P = *AP* 9.604, 6 G-P = *AP* 9.605, et al. See Gutzwiller 1998.80–88 for a discussion of these epigrams; see also Paduano Faedo 1970.

46 Cf. Alcaeus 1 G-P = *AP* 7.1.

47 This epigram on the canonical *novem lyrici*, together with *AP* 9.184, provides the point of inquiry for Barbantani's 1993 study of epigrams on the lyric poets. The other anonymous

ἔκλαγεν ἐκ Θηβῶν μέγα Πίνδαρος, ἔπνεε τερπνά
 ἡδυμελιφυόγγου Μοῦσα Σιμωνίδεω,
 λάμπει Στησίχορός τε καὶ Ἴβυκος, ἦν γλυκὺς
 Ἄλκμάν,
 λαρὰ δ' ἀπὸ στομάτων φθέγγατο Βακχυλίδης,
 Πειθὼ Ἀνακρείοντι συνέσπετο, ποικίλα δ' αὐδᾷ
 Ἄλκαῖος ἱκύκνω Λέσβιος Αἰολίδι
 ἀνδρῶν δ' οὐκ ἐνάτη Σαπφὼ πέλεν, ἀλλ' ἐρατειναῖς
 ἐν Μούσαις δεκάτῃ Μοῦσα καταγράφεται.

Pindar from Thebes clanged greatly, the Muse of sweet-
 voiced
 Simonides breathed delightfully,
 Stesichorus and Ibycus shone brightly, and Alcman was
 sweet.
 Pleasant things were uttered from the mouth of
 Bacchylides,
 Persuasion followed Anacreon, and Lesbian Alcaeus
 sang
 Intricately strains in dense Aeolian.
 But Sappho was not the ninth among men, but is
 written
 As the tenth Muse among the lovely Muses.

While another anonymous epigram also lists the canon of the nine lyric poets, Page (1981.340–41) suggests that *AP* 9.571 “is not simply a list, but is written for the sake of the point in its last couplet—that Sappho is not a ninth poet, but a tenth Muse.” Page also notes that the epigram concentrates on this point and uses only vague terminology to describe the other poets. It might also be noted that, while the other poets receive a line or less devoted to their descriptions (save Alcaeus, who receives a line and a half), Sappho receives two full lines, and these are prominently placed

epigram, *AP* 9.184, lists the nine lyric poets of archaic and classical Greece whom the Alexandrian scholars collected and edited. The same poets are listed as canonical (Pindar, Bacchylides, Sappho, Anacreon, Stesichorus, Simonides, Ibycus, Alcaeus, and Alcman). Sappho, however, is not called a Muse but rather is represented by the phrase “the Aeolian Graces of Sappho,” a phrase that evokes Nossis’ treatment of Sappho (11 G-P = *AP* 7.718.2, as discussed above).

at the closing of the epigram as the “punchlines.” Moreover, the very last word of the epigram, καταγράφεται, functions as what David Ross calls the “Alexandrian footnote,”⁴⁸ an intertextual marker signaling the author’s response to the representation of Sappho as the tenth Muse by “Plato” (13 G-P = *AP* 9.506) and Antipater of Sidon (12 G-P = *AP* 9.66).

Thus Sappho seems to receive a place of prominence in the tradition of lyric poets, yet at the same time, the epigrammatist deliberately treats her as a separate category, as she is delineated from the others by the δ’ . . . ἀλλ’ in line 7. Moreover, while the emphasis on the other poets lies in what emanates from their voices, Sappho alone is referred to in terms of a tradition of written evaluation—not pertaining to the essence of her poetry per se but of her narrowed “biographical” attribute of “Muse.” While there is deference in the metaphor of an apotheosized inspirer of poetry, the Alexandrians tended to segregate her from the male poets of the same genre. And yet the insistence on including Sappho and the topos of Muse with which epigrammatists articulate their own agonistic claims to poetic competence complicate the gendered tension in the trope.

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48 Ross 1975.78. Hinds 1998 dedicates a portion of his first chapter, subtitled “Incorporating the Alexandrian Footnote,” to this very issue in Roman poetry. He notes that phrases like *fama est*, *dicitur*, and *ferunt* signal specific allusions by the poet and that such allusions “mimic the citation style” of a learned commentary. “What emerges, then, is a trope for the poet’s allusive activity, a figurative turn” whereby the poet portrays himself as a literary scholar and his allusion as a learned citation (p. 2). Moreover, Hinds sees this activity as an attempt to reproduce in Roman literature the erudition of Alexandrian intertextuality.

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