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Abstract The theme of the beloved woman as a dominant figure and/or a deity (πότνια, δέσποινα) is far better attested in Latin love elegy than in Greek literature. The aim of this paper is to draw a sketch of the development of such a theme, and especially of its vocabulary, in Greek poetry from the Hellenistic period down to Late Antiquity. The influence of pederastic epigram — Dioscorides, Alcaeus of Messene, Meleager, and above all Strato of Sardis — appears to be more relevant than scholars used to assume it is argued that even Paul the Silentiary, celebrating beautiful women as both deities and mistresses, possibly owes more to Greek homoerotic tradition than to his alleged knowledge of Latin poetry.

Keywords Greek epigram, erotic poetry, Meleager, Strato of Sardis, Paul the Silentiary

Résumé Le thème de la femme aimée comme figure dominante et/ou divinité (πότνια, δέσποινα) est beaucoup mieux attesté dans l’élégie amoureuse latine que dans la littérature grecque. Le but de cet article est de décrire dans ses grandes lignes le développement de ce thème, et surtout de son vocabulaire, dans la poésie grecque de la période hellénistique jusqu’à l’Antiquité tardive. L’influence de l’épitaphe homoérotique — Dioscoride, Alcée de Messène, Méléagre, et surtout Straton de Sardes — semble être plus importante que les savants n’ont l’habitude de le penser : nous soutenons que même Paul le Silentiare, qui célèbre de belles femmes comme divinités et maîtresses, doit probablement plus à la tradition homoérotique grecque qu’à sa connaissance présumée de la poésie latine.
A graceful, if not very distinguished, quatrain, transmitted by both the Palatine and the Planudean Anthology (anon. AP V 26 = FGE 1062-5), celebrates the beauty of an unnamed woman’s hair:

Εἴτε σε κυανέῃσιν ἀποστίλβουσαν ἐθείραις,
εἴτε πάλιν ξανθαῖς εἶδον, ἄνασσα, κόμαις,
ἴση ἐπ᾿ ἀμφοτέρων λάμπει χάρις. ἦ ῥά γε ταύταις
θριξὶ συνοικήσει καὶ πολιῇσιν Ἐρως.

Whether I saw you, milady, with glossy raven locks or again with blond hair, on both the same charm shines. Truly Love will make its home in your hair even when it is grey\(^2\).

Its most recent editor, the late Sir Denys Page, describes it as “an uncommon sort of epigram”. In his view, ἄνασσα (line 2) must refer to a queen or a lady

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\(^1\) According to modern editions, \(P\), \(i.e\). Planudes’ famous autograph of his anthology of epigrams (Marc. gr. 481), reads ἀπ᾿ ἀμφοτέρων, accepted by Dübner, Paton and Beckby. Francesco Valerio, who is currently preparing a new critical edition of Agathias’ epigrams and other studies on the transmission of the Greek Anthology, kindly checked the manuscript (f. 75r) for me and let me know that Planudes first wrote ἐπ᾿, then corrected it into ἀπ᾿. He also informed me that ms. Q, \(i.e\). Brit. Mus. Add. 16409, an early apograph of \(P\) copied before Planudes’ final corrections (Cameron, The Greek Anthology, p. 345-350; the manuscript is also available online: see <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_16409>), reads ἐπ᾿ as well: this proves, as Valerio rightly argues, that ἀπ᾿ is nothing but a trivialization originating as an afterthought by Planudes.

\(^2\) Translations from the twelfth book of \(AP\) are those by Paton, The Greek Anthology; from the fifth book, those by Paton and Tueller, The Greek Anthology; I have introduced minor changes where necessary. Other texts I translated on my own.
from a royal/imperial family; while “all other epigrams addressed to such persons are formal and respectful, *de bas en haut*, here “the matter and the tone imply an extraordinary degree of familiarity between the poet and the queen”⁴. In fact, both matter and tone strongly suggest an erotic epigram⁵; the mention of dye⁶ is more suitable to the poet’s darling (σῶς κόρην εὔμορφον: thus the lemmatist J of the *Palatine Anthology⁶*) than to a royal lady, and the last sentence appears to be nothing but another occurrence of the well-known theme “I will never cease to love you, not even when you will be old and grey”⁷. The one and only reason why Page held his view is ἄνασσα itself, apparently unattested with reference to a ‘normal’ girl or lady⁸. But does this carry so much weight?

I think it does not. It would be easy to note that relevant parallels may be found in the language of Latin love elegy (*domina*, etc.)⁹; it would be even easier to reply that we do need Greek parallels, since the influence of Latin authors on Greek poetry from the first Imperial period – Page tentatively dates *AP V* 26 to the 1st century AD, rightly in my view¹⁰ – is still much disputed¹¹. We cannot make a case of Odysseus calling Nausicaa ἄνασσα at Od. VI 149 and 175: he uses such a vocative because he speculates that the girl might be a goddess, and for all the erotic overtones of the episode as a whole¹², it goes without

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4 Waltz & Guillon, *Anthologie*, p. 31 n. 3, call it a “madrigal”. Thus also Lieberg, *Puella divina*, p. 180, and Yardley, “Paulus Silentiarius”, p. 240, as far as we can elicit from his brief mention of this passage.
8 Page, *Further Greek Epigrams*, p. 314, quoting several parallels for ἄνασσα = ‘queen’ in epigrams (cf. also Call. *Aet.* fr. 112 Pt. = 215 Massimilla, v. 2 οὐ λέπορος, referring to either Arisinoe II or Berenece II, see Prioux, “Callimachus’ queens” p. 208; Ben Acosta-Hughes points out to me Callimachus’ attitude towards his queens as “a striking combination of reverential and familiar”). “The only misuse of the term known to me”, Page writes, “is Peek 728, an uncouth Armenian rock-inscription of the second or third century A.D.” No misuse at all: the poem – ἐνθάδε κεῖται ἄνασσα Ἀθηναῖς, ἥν ποτ’ ἐγώγε / ἠγαγόμην εὔνουν πρὸς γάμον ἡμέτερον, κτλ. – is now re-edited or third century A.D.” No misuse at all: the poem – ἐνθάδε κεῖται ἄνασσα Ἀθηναῖς, ἥν ποτ’ ἐγώγε / ἠγαγόμην εὔνουν πρὸς γάμον ἡμέτερον, κτλ. – is now re-edited to the 1st century AD, rightly in my view – is still much disputed. We cannot make a case of Odysseus calling Nausicaa ἄνασσα at Od. VI 149 and 175: he uses such a vocative because he speculates that the girl might be a goddess, and for all the erotic overtones of the episode as a whole, it goes without

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42 L’épigramme dans tous ses états : épigraphiques, littéraires, historiques
saying that Odysseus is not in love with Nausicaa. Yet Greek poetry indeed offers some relevant parallels, if not for the use of ἄνασσα, for the theme of the beloved woman as πότνια, δέσποινα and the like, i.e. as a dominant figure and/or a deity. Let us try to draw a sketch of the development of such a theme, and especially of its vocabulary, from the Hellenistic period down to Late Antiquity.

4 Love as δούλεια is a traditional motif — if not a very widespread one — in Greek literature, at least from the 5th century BC onwards; but this does not imply that a woman be called δέσποινα. Similarly, comparing women to deities is as ancient a device as the Homeric δῖα γυναικῶν, be this in regard to beauty or to any other virtue; and the youth calling his girlfriend Κύπριδος ἔρνος in Ar. Eccl. 973 testifies to Greek erotic imagery appropriating this theme well before the Hellenistic period. Yet to describe the beloved woman as ‘my goddess’ is quite another matter. In fact, the puella divina is not very frequent in amatory epigrams of the 3rd century BC. The most relevant text is AP V 194, ascribed to either Asclepiades or Posidippus:

Αὐτοὶ τὴν ἁπαλὴν Εἰρήνιον εἶδον Ἔρωτες,  
Κύπριδος ἐκ χρυσέων ἐρχομένην θαλάμων,  
ἐκ τριχὸς ἄχρι ποδῶν ἱερὸν θάλος, οἷά τε λύγδου  
gλυπτήν, παρθενίων βριθομένην χαρίτων,  
καὶ πολλοὺς τότε χερσὶν ἐπ᾿ ἠιθέοισιν ὀιστοὺς  
tόξου πορφυρέης ἧκαν ἀφ᾿ ἁρπεδόνης.

The Loves themselves had their eye on soft Eirenion as she issued from the golden chambers of Cypris — a holy bloom from hair to feet, as though carved of white marble, laden with virgin graces. Many an arrow to young men’s hearts did their hands then let fly from purple bowstrings.

5 The tender Eirenion is “a sacred shoot” (l. 3): the adjective implies that she “is the metaphorical offspring of one or the other of the divine beings mentioned in the poem”. She is compared to a marble sculpture (ll. 3-4), which may in turn

13 The locus classicus is Plato, Symp. 183a, on lovers ἐθέλοντες δουλείαν δουλεύειν οἷας οὐδ᾿ ὁ δοῦλος οὐδείς. Brief surveys in Copley, “Servitium amoris”, p. 286-288; Lyne, “Servitium amoris”, p. 118-120; Yardley, “Paulus Silentiarius”, p. 240 and n. 8; Murgatroyd, “Servitium amoris”, p. 590-594 (their different views on the relationship between the Greek origins of this theme and its fuller development in Latin elegy need not detain us here); on P.Oxy. 3723 = SSH 1187 see Morelli, “Sul papiro”, p. 402-404. It is the man who usually acts as δοῦλος of either a woman or a boy, yet the opposite situation, i.e. the woman as slave, is also attested: see Copley, “Servitium amoris”, p. 289; Esposito, Il Fragmentum, p. 144-145.

14 Cf. the praise of Helen’s beauty at Il. III 156-158 and Od. IV 122. A very early variation of this theme is in the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, ll. 92ff.: Aphrodite in disguise pretends not to be a deity (l. 109: οὔ τίς τοι θεός εἰμι· τί μ᾿ ἀθανάτῃσιν ἐίσκεις;), yet Anchises insists in comparing her to a goddess (l. 153: γύναι εἰκυῖα θεῇσι). See Faulkner, The Homeric Hymn, p. 173-174.

15 Lieberg, Puella divina, p. 13-34, provides a good survey, mainly focusing on early Greek epic and lyric. On postclassical epigram, see Page, The Epigrams, p. 96.

16 Ποσ(ε)ιδίππου ή Ασκληπιάδου Π Πι (Asclep. HE 966-73 = °34 Guichard = °34 Sens; Posidipp. °23 Fernández-Galiano = °126 Austin-Bastianini).

17 Sens, Asclepiades, p. 231. Commentators have pointed out that, if θάλος is a trite metaphor, the phrase ἱερὸν θάλος appears to be quite uncommon (see Ludwig, “Die Kunst”, p. 325-326; Guichard, Asclepiades, p. 386-387; Sens, Asclepiades, p. 230-231). In Arat. SH 84-85, ξείνων ἱερὸν θάλος refers to one Αγκλείδης and to Antigonus Gonatas respectively — with no erotic nuance at all; see Martin, Histoire, p. 17-18 and 137-139. Scholars also compare Hedyl. AP VI 292, 3-4 = HE 1827-8 ἰδὲ ἐρωτεύεται ἑαυτῷ ἐρωτῶν / καὶ Χαρίτων ἡ παῖς ἀμβρόσιος τὸ πρόσωπον ὅσα ἁμηράντων ἤ τὸ πρόσωπον τῷ θάλσει. Yet ἁμηράντως is not the same as ἠρώτις; and note that in Hedylus’ epigram Niconoe, the παῖς, is not a ‘divine girl’ but just a
suggest the image of a goddess; and if it is the girl, not the Erotes, who comes from Aphrodite’s golden bed-chamber (l. 2)18, “the phrase may be understood as a way of saying that Eirenion’s own home is (figuratively) the house of Aphrodite”19. All of this conjures up the presentation of the young woman as a second goddess of love. Light-hearted variations on this theme recur more than three centuries later in Rufinus’ epigrams20: from the well-known “you are like a goddess, and will make me blessed like a god”21, to the entertaining parallel between the Judgement of Paris and a beauty competition of three courtesans displaying their very genitals22, up to the statement that beautiful Melite deserves to be placed in a shrine just like a deity’s statue23. All these are quite conventional themes. Is there any occurrence of a (beloved, or just attractive) woman not being merely compared to deities, but rather acting like them or replacing them in some way?

6

I can quote two texts, one from the late Hellenistic period, the other probably belonging to the Imperial age. The former is AP V 137 = HE 4228-31, where Meleager declares that Heliodora is “his sole deity”:

 Erotai tais Peithous kai Kypridos Hliodwuras
 kai palai tis aipas ophulou Xyrtos,
  aiptai gar mi’ emoi grafetai theos, d’ to pothenon
 ounu’ en akrhite sygkerasa pio mia.

 Fill the cup for Heliodora as Persuasion and Cypris, and again for the same woman as a sweet-speaking Grace. For I describe her as my one goddess, whose enticing name I mix in with unmixed wine when I drink.

7

The quatrain has received little attention25, yet it is interesting as one of the very few Greek parallels for the theme of mea Venus, well attested in Latin poetry26. The latter text is the only extant fragment of the Πλοκαμίδες, a lost hexameter poem by the otherwise unknown Menophilus of Damascus (SH 558):

sexy courtesan dedicating something to Priapus in gratitude for victory in a beauty-competition (Galli Calderini, “Glā epigrammi”, p.53-87).

18 I agree with Sens, Asclepiades, p.227-230, in accepting Martorelli’s ἐρχομένη (later proposed by Jacobs as well) for the transmitted ἐρχόμενοι, retained by most editors. See also Tarán, The Art, p.42 n. 74. Ludwig, “Die Kunst” p.327, would rather keep ἐρχόμενοι accepting Dilthey’s ἦγον at l. 1: “the Erotes themselves led tender Eirenion as they came from Cypris’ golden bed-chamber”.


21 AP V 94 = 35 Page: At l. 4 γαμῶν is to be preferred to Planudes’ γαμων: see Höschle, Verrückt, p.54-55 with n. 141-143 (quoting previous literature).

22 AP V 36 = 12 Page, II, 9-10: ολλό σαφώς η πεπονθε Παρις διὰ τὴν κρίσιν εἰδώς, τὰς τρεῖς αθανάτας εὐθὺ συνεστεφάνουν. The last word probably conceals a sexual double entendre, as Floridi, Stratone, p.146 rightly argues (see also Höschle, Verrückt, p.111; Lapini, “Osservazioni” p.303).

23 AP V 15 = 4 Page, II, 5-6: πού πλάσται, πού δ’ εἰσί λιθοξόοι; ἔπρεπε τοίῃ / μορφῇ νηὸν ἔχειν ὡς μακάρω ξοάν. With the exception of Gutzwiller, Poetic Garlands, p.284, analyzing its function within the Meleagrian sequence of AP V 134-149. From this point of view see also Booth, “Amazing grace”, p.533-536; Höschle, “Meleager and Heliodora”, p.111-113, and Die blütenspeisende Muse, p.204-206.

24 See Lieberg, Puella divina, p.194-199. At p.30 he also mentions Meleager’s epigram, albeit very briefly.
The speaking voice describes an unbelievable marvel that remains unknown for the first eleven lines. Only at l. 12 (probably 13 or the like in the original text, since one or more lines must have fallen before it) we learn that the marvel was a charming woman's hair, and one line later it becomes clear that the traditional epic invocation μνήσειας, 'remind me of', is addressed not to the Muse(s), as one would expect, but rather to the woman herself (σε, l. 13). This is surprising – and quite unparalleled – in Greek: the replacement of the Muse with the poet's girlfriend is, on the contrary, a well established theme in Latin love elegy. About Menophilus we know nothing, but it is likely that he lived in the Imperial age. Ll. 6-7 may have to do with Q. S. VII 539-540 καὶ ἀμφασίην.
THE VOCABULARY OF DOMINATION IN GREEK LOVE EPIGRAM

ἀλεγεινὴν / κεῦθον ὑπὸ κραδίῃ and XIII 32-33 ὡν ἀπὸ νόσφιν / ὕπνος ἄδην πεπότητο, and if Quintus is the imitator he might be a terminus ante quem. It is also tempting to connect our fragment with a metrical epitaph from Rome (GVI 721 = IGUR 1274), dated to the 2nd century AD:

Εὐφρανθεὶς συνεχῶς, γελάσας παίξας τε τρυφήσα, και ψυχὴν ἱλαρῶς πάντων τέρμῃς ἐν ἀοιδής, οὐδὲν λυπήσας, οὐ λοίδορα ῥήματα πέμψας, ἀλλὰ φίλος Μουσῶν, Βρομίου Παφίν te βιώσαι, ἐξ Αἰαίς ἔλθων Σταλῆ χοβοι ἐνθαδε κέιμαι 5 ἐν φθιμένοις νέος ὡν, τούνομα Μηνόφιλος.

I always made merry, laughed, joked, and revelled, and cheerfully delighted everyone’s soul with my poetry. I did not harm anyone, nor did I address abusive words, but lived dear to the Muses, to Bacchus, and to the Paphian. Coming from Asia, here in the land of Italy I lie, young among the deceased. Menophilus was my name.

Here is another poet named Menophilus, coming from the East, a friend of Aphrodite and a specialist in light verses. That he might be the same as the author of SH 558 remains very speculative, though a Roman setting would account for the latter’s exploitation of a theme from Latin elegy. Did Menophilus of Damascus know Propertius and Ovid? Or did he draw on a lost Hellenistic model? (It must be said that the old habit of postulating an Alexandrian source for every remarkable feature in the Augustan elegists is now far less infuriating than it was some decades ago.) Be this as it may, Menophilus’ address to his lady as his Muse adds something to the history of the domina-motif in Greek poetry – a motif that will recur, centuries later, in the epigrams of Paul the Silentiary. It is nonetheless a poorly documented history. We would like to know more about its origins and the earlier stages of its development.

I do think that an analysis of homoerotic epigram may shed some light on the question. The influence of homoerotic tradition – in both epigram and other genres, especially lyric poetry: Ibycus’ Polycrates (PMGF S151), at the same time a powerful aristocrat and a youth of marvellous beauty, easily comes to mind – has been largely underestimated from this point of view, though Wilfried Stroh had the merit of pointing out that the pederastic poems in the Greek Anthology exploit the themes of divinization and domination far more than their heterosexual counterparts do. This already holds true for the third century BC. A telling instance is Dioscorides, AP XII 169 (HE 1503-6 = 12 Galán Vioque):

Εξέφυγον, Θεόδωρε, τὸ σὸν βάρος· ἀλλ’ ὅσον εἶπα ἐξέφυγον τὸν ἐμὸν δαίμον πικρότατον πικρότερός με κατέσχεν, Ἀριστοκράτει δὲ λατρεύω μυρία δεσπόσυνον καὶ τρίτον ἐκδέχομαι.

30 Li. 2-4 probably mean that he used to write sympotic and/or erotic poetry, not iambic invectives (I am grateful to Alessandro Barchiesi for his useful suggestions on this point). Gangloff, “Les poètes”, p. 353-354, discusses the epigram rightly rejecting Franz’s old view of Menophilus as a comic actor.

31 It is hoped that a further paper of mine, entirely devoted to this tantalizing fragment, will be published in the near future.

32 Stroh, Die römische Liebeslegie, p. 220-221.
I escaped from your weight, Theodorus, but no sooner had I said “I have escaped from my most cruel tormenting spirit” than a crueller one seized on me, and slaving for Aristocrates in countless ways, I am awaiting even a third master.

11

The loved boy – formerly Theodorus, now Aristocrates and then a third one still to come – is a ‘master’ (δεσπόσυνος), and the lover ‘is enslaved’ (λατρεύων) to him. But λατρεύω and cognate words also apply to worshipping the gods33. This conjures up with τὸν ἐμὸν δαίμονα at l. 2: “as often just a synonym of τύχη […]. But it is possible to think of Theodorus embodying the δαίμων”34. Dioscorides, in other words, is playing with the language of human and divine power: the boy is at the same time his lover’s master, fate, and god. It is hard to find anything similar in heterosexual epigrams of the same period. On the contrary, god-like eromenoi are frequent in Hellenistic poetry35. Rhianus extols the ‘divine grace’ of one Philocles36, and Alcaeus of Messene calls Peithenor a ‘divine boy’37; the anonymous author of AP XII 140 = HE 3712-7 even makes his παῖς another Zeus, brandishing the thunderbolt and ruling over other gods:

Τὸν καλὸν ώς ἰδόμαν Ἀρχέστρατον, οὐ μὰ τὸν Ἑρμᾶν, οὐ καλὸν αὐτὸν ἔφαν, οὐ γὰρ ἄγαν ἔδοκει.

When I saw Archestratus the fair I said, so help me Hermes I did, that he was not fair; for he seemed not passing fair to me. I had but spoken the word and Nemesis seized me, and at once I lay in the flames and Zeus, in the guise of a boy, rained his lightning on me. Shall I beseech the boy or the goddess for mercy? But to me the boy is greater than the goddess. Let Nemesis go her way.

12

Meleager treads the same path in AP XII 122 = HE 4456-7: ὡς παρ᾿ Ὀλύμπου / Ζεὺς νέος οἶδεν ὁ παῖς μακρὰ κεραυνοβολεῖ. And in AP XII 110 = HE 4550-3 he produces an even more elaborate praise of another eromenos of his:

Τὸν καλὸν ὡς ἰδόμαν Ἀρχέστρατον, οὐ μὰ τὸν Ἑρμᾶν, οὐ καλὸν αὐτὸν ἔφαν, οὐ γὰρ ἄγαν ἔδοκει.

οὐδὲ Διὸς πτήξας πῦρ τὸ κεραυνοβόλον; ἂν δεν ὑπέστη / οὐδὲ Διὸς πτήξας πῦρ τὸ κεραυνοβόλον; ὥς γὰρ διὰ τὸν ἂν ἔδοκεν σοὶ καλὸς θεός; Θήρων; ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν παῖς θεοῦ μοι ἔστιν ὁ παῖς κρέσσων· χαιρέτω ἅ Νέμεσις38.

When I saw Archestratus the fair I said, so help me Hermes I did, that he was not fair; for he seemed not passing fair to me. I had but spoken the word and Nemesis seized me, and at once I lay in the flames and Zeus, in the guise of a boy, rained his lightning on me. Shall I beseech the boy or the goddess for mercy? But to me the boy is greater than the goddess. Let Nemesis go her way.

33 As Stroh, Die römische Liebeslegie, p. 220, rightly notes; see also Di Castri, “Tra sfoggio erudito”, p. 52; Galán Vioque, Dioscorides, p. 199-200. Lyne, “Servitium amoris”, p. 120, and Murgatroyd, “Servitium amoris”, p. 592, just quote the epigram among other instances of love as slavery, without dwelling on its ‘religious’ overtones.

34 Thus Gow & Page, HE, II p. 242.

35 As Morelli, L’epigramma, p. 157-159 aptly remarks, stressing the importance of such models for the development of Latin epigram.

36 Rhian. AP XII 93, 5-6 = HE 3212-3: τῇ δὲ Φιλοκλῆ χρύσεον ῥέθος, ὃς τὸ καθ᾿ ὕψος / οὐ μέγας, οὐρανίη δ᾿ ἀμφιτέθηλε χάρις. The mention of gold also evokes the life of gods.


38 Morelli, L’epigramma, p. 155-156, provides an insightful analysis of the poem.

39 Gow & Page, HE, II p. 567-568 are probably right in assuming that it is Meleager who imitates AP XII 140; see also Ludwig, “Die Kunst”, p. 318-319. On the literary motif of Zeus-like eromenoi, see Morelli, L’epigramma, p. 216. In Meleager’s text I accept both παρ’ (Page) for the transmitted γάρ and νέος (Reiske) for νέον. See also Mel. AP XII 141, 3-4 = HE 4512-3 soi καλὸς οὐκ ἔφαν Θήρων; οὐδὲ Διὸς πτήξας πῦρ τὸ κεραυνοβόλον; “So you did not find Theron beautiful. And you stood your ground all by yourself without even a tremor against Zeus’ thunderbolt, didn’t you?” (on the meaning of the latter sentence see Gow & Page, HE, II p. 658-659; Gärtner, “Textkritischen (II)”, p. 204 would emend αὐτὸς into ὀρθός). The vengeance of Zeus acts through Theron’s beauty and is implicitly identified with it.
"Hēstraiwei glukū kállōs iōdou philagōs ἀμμαίι βάλλει:
da kaeravnompakian paidei anediecen "Eropi,
χαίρε Πόθων ἀκίνα φέρων θανατισι, Μύϊσκε,
kai lámptos ei γα πυρασζ ἐμοι φίλος."

It lightened sweet beauty; see how he flashes flame from his eyes. Has Love produced a boy armed with the bolt of heaven? Hail! Myiscus, you who bring to the mortals the light of the Desires, and may you shine on earth, a torch befriending me.

13 At l. 2, Eros himself shows that the Myiscus is (or appears to be) endowed with Zeus' thunderbolt. In the following line, the boy "brings to the mortals the light... of Desire". I wondered whether he has become something of a Prometheus (a witty change after the Jovian imagery of the first couplet): yet ἀκτίς is better used of sunshine than of fire, and it is more likely that the allusion is to the Sun – which Myiscus is explicitly compared to in AP XII 59 = HE 4528-9 ἄβροις, ναι τὸν Ἐρωτα, τρέφει Τύρος ἀλλὰ Μυΐσκος ἀσβέστας ἐκλάμφας ἀντέρας ἰχθύος. The same holds true for l. 4, where "may you shine on earth" appears to convey the idea of a source of light (god, sun, or star) descended among men: Meleager might even have had in mind [Plat.] AP VII 670 = FGE 586-7 ἀσπι τρεῖν μὲν ἐλαμάτες ἐν ἱόζοις Ἑφώς / νῦν δὲ δὴ θανῶν λάμπης ἐν φθιμένοις Ἑσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις. Myiscus, whose seductive power Meleager celebrates in many an epigram, turns out to display the prerogatives of both Zeus and Helios/Apollo. Pretty well for a "Little Mouse" (Μυΐσκος).

14 Another epigram by Meleager is worth quoting here. In AP XII 158 = HE 4496-4503, the poet is still more explicit in declaring his submission to a divine boy:

Σοί με Πόθων δέσποινα θεή πόρε, σοί με, Θεόκλεις, ἁβροπέδιλος Ἐρως γυμνὸν ὑπεστόρεσεν ἀλύτοισι χαλινοῖς, ἱμείρω δὲ τυχεῖν ἀκλινέος φιλίας, ἀλλὰ σὺ τὸν στέργοντ᾿ ἀπαναίνεαι, οὐδέ σε θέλγει οὐ χρόνο, οὐ ξυνῆς σύμβολα σωφροσύνης.

40 "One of M.'s more original and imaginative epigrams" (Gow & Page, HE, II p. 662).
41 Mel. AP XII 63, 6 = HE 4489, τοῦ δὲ Πόθοις τυφόμενον γλυκὰ πῦρ, is quite another matter. On erotic ἀκτῖνες, from Pind. fr. 123, 3-4 Maehler onwards, see Giannuzzi, Stratone, p. 253-254.
42 Pederastic revisitation, as scholars duly note, of a well-known Sapphic image (fr. 34 and 96, 6-9 Voigt): see Floridi, Stratone, p. 176-178, quoting previous literature.
43 On the erotic use of πυρσός, see Sternbach, Appendix, p. 256. Aubreton-Buffière-Ingoin, Anthologie, p. 113 n. 6, propose a different interpretation: "ce feu qui brille, qu'il soit un signal, tel ceux qui indiquent l'approche d'amis ou d'ennemis (Thuc., II, 94, 1; III, 80, 2)". This is suggestive, albeit finding little support in the context.
44 Imitated – as scholars know only too well: see e.g. Kaibel, Epigrammata, p. 231; Page, Further Greek Epigrams, p. 161 – in an anonymous epitaph of Imperial age from Rome, GVI 585 = IGUR 1256, v. 4: νῦν δὴν δινί δι υπὸ γῆν Ἐσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις. Was its author influenced by Meleager's λάμποις ἐπὶ γάες as well?
45 AP XII 23; 59; 65; 70; 101; 106; 144; 154; 159; 167 = HE 4524-49, 4554-71.
46 The nickname may have erotic overtones. Taillardat, "Μυϊκος", has considered the possibility that its use in a number of 4th-century pederastic inscriptions from Thasos be related to the ancient belief that mice were λαγνίστατοι (Ael. NA XII 10); and Calame, I Greci, p. 186 n. 35, wonders whether this has to do with Meleager's eromenos.
47 A quite unclear phrase: see Gow & Page, HE, II p. 657. Graefe, Meleagri epigrammata, p. 10 and 63, proposed to emend into either ξυνῆς σύμβολας ὁμοφροσύνης or συνετῆς σύμβολας σωφροσύνης (the former is now revived by Gärtner, "Textkritisches (II)", p. 203-204, apparently unaware of Graefe; it makes ξυνῆς quite redundant, though the conjecture may find some support in Alcae. Mess. AP XII 6, 6 = HE 53, quoted above).

48 L’épigramme dans tous ses états : épigraphiques, littéraires, historiques
The goddess, queen of the Desires, gave me to you, Theocles; Love, the soft-sandalied, laid me low for you to tread on, all unarmed, a stranger in a strange land, having tamed me by his bit that grips fast. But now I long to win a steadfast friendship. But you refuse him who loves you, and neither time softens you nor the tokens we have of our mutual continence (?). Have mercy on me, Lord, have mercy! For Destiny ordained you a god; with you rest for me the issues of life and death.

The first three lines depict the lover as both a slave (γυμνὸν ὑπεστόρεσεν / ξεῖνον ἐπὶ ξείνης)48 and a tamed horse (δαμάσας ... χαλινοῖς). The last couplet shifts from human to divine sphere, from the language of servitude to that of liturgy. Theocles is not just δεσπότης but ἄναξ49, since destiny ordained him a deity50 (note the witty juxtaposition of the ambiguous δαίμων and the unambiguous θεός51); and the poet implores him ‘to be favourable’, declaring that the divine youth can determine either his life or his death52. ‘Master and god’ – it is hard to imagine a higher praise of the loved boy.

Pederastic epigram was the perfect garden to grow such plants. Homoerotic love had boys playing a far less subordinate role than that of women53; this easily accounts for the frequent divinization of eromenoi – or better said, for their being depicted not just as young men of extraordinary, divine beauty54, but as mighty gods ruling over their lovers. In the Imperial age (probably in the Flavian period55) Strato of Sardis, reviving and renewing the tradition of homosexual epigram in a quite light-hearted way, does not miss the opportunity of exploiting this topic. In AP XII 223 = 66 Floridi he declares that he used to contemplate beautiful boys just like the statue of a god56, while in AP XII 246 =
88 F. a charming youth may become his ‘master’ (δεσπόσυνος); divinized boy and submissive lover appear together in AP XII 196 = 37 F.:  

石油化工ς σημαθήμας ἤχος, θεόμορφε Λυκίνε,  
μάλλον δ’ ἀκτίνας, δέσποτα, πυροβόλους.  
ἀντωπός βλέπαι βαίον χρόνον οὐ δύναμαι σοι,  
οὕτως ἀστράπτεις ὄμμασιν ἀμφοτέροις.  

Your eyes are sparks, Lycinus, divinely fair; or rather, my master, they are rays that shoot forth flame. Even for a little moment I cannot look at you face to face, so bright is the lightning from both.

17 Like Theocles in Meleager (AP XII 158, quoted above), Lycinus is both god and master: δεσπότης, though frequently used in addressing deities, nonetheless declares the lover’s submission. There were strong cultural and sociological reasons for the development of such an idea in homoerotic epigram; yet by the time of Strato, whose Μοῦσα Παιδική was a summary – and often a witty revisitation – of themes and motifs related to the love for boys, the divine power of the eromenos was a well established literary topic. It is likely that the late Hellenistic and early Imperial occurrences of puellae divinae (Meleager in AP V 137; possibly Menophilus’ poem) were in fact influenced by it.

18 Strato was the last remarkable writer of Greek homosexual poetry. After him, it rapidly declined, and it is far from surprising that heterosexual literature appropriated – to some extent at least – its ideas and imagery. The young male δεσπότης thus becomes a female δέσποινα. A first step towards this can be found, even before Strato’s age, in Rufin, AP V 73 = 27 Page:

Δαιμόνες, οὐκ ἔδειν ὅτι λούεται <ἡ> Κυθέρεια  
χεροί καταυχενίους λυσαμένη πλοκάμους,  
ιλήκοις, δέσποινα, καὶ ὄμμασιν ἡμετέροισι  
μήποτε μηνίσῃς θεῖον ἰδοῦσι τύπον.  

νῦν ἔγνων· Ῥοδόκλεια, καὶ οὐ Κύπρις· εἶτα τὸ κάλλος  
tοῦτο πόθεν; σύ, δοκῶ, τὴν θεὸν ἐκδέδυκας.  

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57 Ll. 1-2: ζεῦγος ἀδελφεῖων με φιλεῖ οὐκ οἶδα, τίν’ αὐτῶν / δεσπόσυνον κρίνω· τοὺς δύο γὰρ φιλέω. Floridi, Stratone, p. 379 rightly observes that choosing one’s ‘master’ between two boys testifies to Strato’s free revisitation of traditional topics.  
58 For a thorough analysis of the epigram see Floridi, Stratone, p. 237-241; Giannuzzi, Stratone, p. 251-255.  
59 See above, n. 49. On the use of δεσπότης, see especially Dickey, Greek Forms, p. 95-98; Ead., “Κύριε”, p. 3-5.  
61 Greek poetry predictably continued to dwell on pederastic love time and again, whether narrating mythical tales (e.g. Euphorbus and Melanippus in the Orphic Lithica, vv. 436-448, down to the story of Dionysus and Ampelus in Nonnus, D. XI-XII), or describing Anacreon’s erotic frenzy (as often in the Anacreontica), or celebrating Hadrian’s love for Antinous (see Pancrates, GDRK 15, 3, the anonymous poets of PLit. Lond. 36, P.Oxy. 1085 and 4352, and the other texts listed by Rea, “Hexameter Verses”, p. 2-3; I am not sure that a mention of Antinous can be detected in P.Oxy. 3723 = SSH 1187). All these are traditional themes, sometimes revisited with either encomiastic or aetiological aims. Poems mainly devoted to the love for boys, courting them and extolling their beauty, apparently were out of fashion.  
Yet ἵληκοι, δέσποται at l. 3 – be it reminiscent of ἱλήκοι, ἰδανικεῖς, ἤνθις in Mel. AP XII 158, 7 (quoted above) or not – is prima facie due to the poet’s statement that he has seen Aphrodite herself: only a couplet later he realizes that the bathing beauty is just Rhodoclea. That she deserves to be called δέσποτα is surely implied, but not overtly asserted. More explicit occurrences of δέσποτα and δεσπότις are to be found in novel and erotic epistolography, in the sixth century AD, when Agathias and his circle revive erotic epigram, Paul the Silentiary proves very fond of this motif. The woman he is in love with he calls δέσποτα and δεσπότης, in two poems declaring her complete sway on him.

This has been assumed to directly translate the Latin domina, and thus demonstrate that Paul knew and imitated the Augustan elegists: such a theory has been refuted on good grounds by several scholars, including Yardley and De Stefani, the latter aptly pointing out that he was rather influenced by the tradition of homoerotic epigram. Let us add that Paul goes further: his ladies are not ‘just’

63 Later, Paul. Sil. AP V 301, 5 = 78, 5 Viansino ἱλήκοι, κούρη, and Agath. V 299, 10 = 75, 10 V. ἵληκοι (both in an erotic context).

64 Another relevant epigram by Rufinus is AP V 22 = 8 Page (often quoted by scholars dwelling on servitium amoris). Here the poet declares his complete – and willing – submission to his mistress, yet without any hint at divinization: that her name is Bou'mis may perhaps evoke the well-known Homeric epithet of Hera (II. I 551 etc.), but has its raison d’être, as Page remarks, in the word play between the ‘ox-eyed’ woman and her lover as ‘bull coming on his own accord to be yoked by Eros’ (ταῦτον ὑποζεύξας ... αὐτόμολον).

65 See Charit. III 3, 7 ἱπποκομοῦσαι σοι, δέσποτα, τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς, Ach. Tat. II 4, 4 δέσποταν τι καινὸν καὶ φιλὰρα τρόχημον, ἸΙ. 6, 1-2 δέσποτα, πέτρακα με τῆς σου θεοῦ ὠστρικόν καὶ τὸν Ἰακύπτεα τὴν Ὠρφόλη, V 20, 5 ὡ δέσποταν λεικτήτις, VIII 17, 3 δέσποτα, ... οὐλόν όν καὶ καλουσίς ἀπὸ τούτως τῆς ἡμέρας νόμιζε. On such vocatives, see Dickey, Greek Forms, p. 99 and 273. Not that the homosexual use of δεσπότης totally disappear: see Ach. Tat. I 14, 1 ἐγὼ μου τὸν δεσπότην ἀπόλοιλέκα. Ἀρισταίος, II 2 ἄχρις ἂν ὁ δεσπότης ἐφοιτηθῶσιν ἐλέους. ... ἐρωτικός σοι διατελέσω θεράπων (already pointed out by Yardley, “Paulus Silentiarius”, p. 240). Drago, Aristoneto, p. 63-65 sensibly discusses the passage. The pervasive influence of rhetoric on Greek and Latin literature of the Imperial age surely gave a further impulse to that, as well as the frequent overlapping of erotic and encomiastic themes from Ovid onwards (I am grateful to Rita Pierini for her useful remarks on this topic). See Rosati, “Dominus/domina” (and also “Luxury and Love”, on the re-definition of power in Flavian poetry); most recently Degl’Innocenti Pierini, “Per amore di Basillissa”.

67 Paul. Sil. AP V 230, 7-8 = 47, 7-8 Viansino καὶ νῦν ὁ τρισάποτμος ἀπὸ τριχὸς ἠρέτημα, / δεσπότης ἑν’ ἔροις, πυκνὰ μεθελκόμενος, and AP V 248, 7 = 53, 7 V. μή, λύτορα, δεσπότα, τόσον μή λάμβανε ποινήν. It is worth noting that in papyri from the 5th century AD, as Eleanor Dickey has shown, the vocative δεσπότα is always addressed to important officials or other men whom the writer is treating with high deference (Dickey, “Kύρης”, p. 4-5); and δεσπότα is used in Christian epistolography of the Late Antiquity as a title of great respect (Dickey, Greek Forms, p. 99; quoting Dinneen, Titles, p. 76).

68 Thus Viansino, Paolo Silentiario, p. XIV, 86, 98-99. In the last passage, he remarkably writes that δεσπότα “ha nella tradizione erotica un solo esempio”, viz. Ach. Tat. II 6, 1-2 (where the word does not mean “bride”; see Degani, “Paolo Silentiario”, p. 162-163; “Considerazioni”, p. 50 = 678); the other texts quoted above, n. 65, do not speak in favour of his view. Schultz-Vanheyden, Properz, p. 159-169, also believes that Paul was able to read Latin elegy; further bibliography in Yardley, “Paulus Silentiarius”, p. 239 with n. 1-3.


70 De Stefani, “Paolo Sileniario”, p. 106-107, recalling the use of δεσπότας and δεσπότην in Dioscorides and Strato. At p. 106 n. 22 he rightly accepts Cameron’s
déspoina or despóités, but also pótnia, like a queen or a goddess. In AP V 270, 1-2 = 71, 1-2 Viansino he just celebrates a woman’s extraordinary beauty:

Oûte ρόδον στεφάνων ἐπιδεύεται οûte σι πέπλων
οûte λιθοβλήτων, pótnia, κεκρυφάλων.

A rose requires no garlands, and you, queen, no robes or gem-encrusted hairnets.

20 But in AP V 254 = 55 V. he plays a more complex game, using pótnia (l. 8) as a key word:

Ὅμοσα μιμνάζειν σέο τηλόθεν, ἀργέτι κούρη,
ἀλλὰ θεοὺς ἱκέτευε, φίλη, μὴ ταῦτα χαράξαι
ἀδελφοι πότνια νότον υπὲρ σελίδος
τήλες ἐς σάσε χρήσειν ἐμφάνα μοῦ θητῆς με µάστης,
pótnia, κατασμύξῃ καὶ σέο καὶ μακάρων.

I swore to stay away from you, bright maiden, until — oh dear! — the twelfth dawn. But I, the long-enduring, could not endure it; for even tomorrow seemed to me — I swear by yourself — more than twelve months away. But pray to the gods, dear, not to engrave this oath of mine on the surface of the punitive page, and soothe my heart with your charms. Let me not feel the burning sting, either of your whip, O queen, or that of the blessed gods.

21 The phrase ἀργέτι κούρη at l. 1 is not attested elsewhere, though scholars have long acknowledged that its model is ἀργέτις Ἠώς in Nonn. D. V 516 and XVI 124. It is indeed similar to the Latin candida puella, but I think that Paul is more subtle: by transferring to his sweetheart a Nonnian epithet of dawn at l. 1, and then mentioning dawn itself at l. 2 (where ἠριγένεια, a lexical delicacy, replaces the usual ἠριγένεια), he wants to suggest that the girl is a second ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἠώς. He does not explicitly state that she is a deity (cf. l. 5 θεοὺς ἱκέτευε, and l. 8 καὶ σέο καὶ μακάρων); nonetheless it is tempting to read view  (The Greek Anthology, p. 231) that Paul, Sil. AP V 293, 1 = 79, 1 V. imitates the anonymous pederastic poem of App. Anth. IV 71 Coughny.

71 Apoll. Soph. p. 134, 9 Bekker pótnia sten δικάζει και ζήνδος. schol. ‘D’ II. I 357, p. 44 Van Thiel pótnia sten δικαίωμα. Ἴημος ~ schol. Od. I 14a, p. 22, 41 Pontani. In Homer it usually refers to deities (especially Hera), with the exception of the widespread formula pótnia µητήρ. See LSJ, LfgrE, s.v.; for the postclassical period, Fernández-Galiano, Léxico, IV p. 554, and Bulloch, Callimachus, p. 195 n. 3. In Posidipp. 3, 4 Austin-Bastianini pótnia is almost surely a royal lady (see Lelli, “I gioielli”, p. 133; Kuttner, “Cabinet”, p. 147-149; Gutzwiller, “The Literariness”, p. 299; contra, Conca, “Alla ricerca”, p. 22, and Lapini, Capitolii, p. 195-196), and nothing in the context — lacunose as it may be — suggest that it may have erotic overtones.

72 See De Stefani, “Paolo Silenziario”, p. 108 n. 29; the latter Nonnian passage was already quoted (as De Stefani aptly remarks) by Jacobs, Animadversiones, p. 142. Both Bruchmann, Epitheta, p. 119, and Viansino, Paolo Silenziario, p. 103, add Io. Gaz. I 320. De Stefani, “Paolo Silenziario”, p. 108-109 was the first, as far as I know, to point this out.

73 Used by Paul in AP V 228, 6 = 48, 6 V. and V 283, 4 = 75, 4 V. too; apparently unattested elsewhere.

74 Another motif derived from Hellenistic love epigram: see Morelli, L’epigramma, p. 152-154. A similar point in AP V 255, 9-10 = 58, 9-10 V.: κούρη δ’ ἄργυρηθής ἑπιγουνίδος ὁχρ χτώνα / ἔωσεμεν Φοίβης ἐδὸς ἀπεκλάστο.
πότνα, in the final line, as a further hint to such an identification. The same holds true, in my view, for AP V 286 = 59 V.:

Consider with me, Cleophantis, what joy it is when the storm of love descends with fury on two people equally, to toss them. What war, or extremity of fear, or what shame can divide them as they entwine their limbs? May I have upon my limbs the fetters that the Lemnian anvil and all the cunning of Hephaestus forged – let me only wrap your body, my sweet, in my arms, and be willingly enchanted upon your joints! Then, for all I care, let a stranger see me, or my own countryman, or a traveller, my queen – or a clergyman or even my wife.

The poet wishes he and Cleophantis were bound up in Hephaestus' unbreakable chains, as happened to Ares and Aphrodite in a well-known Homeric episode (Od. VIII 267-366). I think that the use of πότνα in the final line is no more fortuitous than in AP V 254, 8 (quoted above): there the unnamed woman was a second Dawn, here Cleophantis is a second Aphrodite – πότνια Κύπρις and the like are not infrequent in Greek poetry, especially in epigrams. It is also worth noting that several Late Antique authors had embarked upon an allegorical, and sometimes moralizing, reading of the love story of Ares and Aphrodite: in light of this, playing the (imaginary) role of the two gods was even less indecent – though it surely was from the point of view of the priest (ἀρητήρ) of l. 10, whose funny mention just after πότα adds a further point to the epigram.

Note that Paul imitates here an epigram by Maccius/Maecius (AP V 133 = GPh 2494ff.) featuring in the last line the vocative πότνα addressed to Aphrodite. The Homeric ὦ πόποι was interpreted as ὦ θεοί by some ancient grammarians (see Apion fr. 108 Neitzel and the other passages gathered by the editor); but I would not dare to think that in Paul's epigram l. 2 ὦ πόποι ~ l. 4 ναὶ μὰ σέ is another parallel between the girl and the gods.

As all commentators but Viansino duly record (Waltz & Guillon, Anthologie, p. 125 n. 2, note the play on ἄρης at l. 3 – be it written Ἄρης or not). Paul more specifically alludes to ll. 340-342 of the Homeric passage, where Hermes declares that he would be glad to take Ares' place: δεσμοὶ μὲν τρίσσοι ἀπείρονες ἀμφὶς ἔχοιεν, / ὑμεῖς δ᾿ εἰσορόωτε θεοὶ πᾶσαι τε θέαιναι, / αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν εὕδοιμι παρὰ χρυσέῃ Ἀφροδίτῃ (Lucian, Dial. deor. 21, 2, had already reworked these lines).

Possibly Galateia? See AP V 256 = 56 V.

Cf. Sapph. fr. 1, 4 Voigt (πότνα): E. Phaeth. 229-232 Diggle = fr. 781, 16-19 Kannicht (τὸν ἵρωτον πόποιν, τὸν παρθένον / γαμήλιαν Ἀφροδίταν / πότνα, σοὶ τὸν θεόν νυμφεῖ’ αἰώνι / Κύπρι θεῶν καλλύτα); Ar. Lys. 833-834 (ὡ πόποιν Κύπρου καὶ Κυθήρων / μεδέουσ᾿), etc.; in epigram, Theoc.(?) AP VI 340, 5 = HE 3382; Leon. Tar. VI 293, 1 = HE 2301 and possibly VI 300, 6 = HE 2188; Macc. V. 133, 6 = GPh 2499; anon. IX 601, 3 = FGE 1440; lul. Aeg. VI 19, 4 (further passages in Bruchmann, Epitheta, p. 68; Call. Del. 312 is doubtful: see Mineur, Callimachus, p. 237-238 and 242).

Agosti, “Due note” p. 38-51 (with further literature) provides an excellent discussion of the topic.
With Paul the Silentiary, our story comes to an end. Like the beautiful boys of Hellenistic and early Imperial pederastic epigram (Dioscorides, Meleager, Strato), his women enjoy both divine status and a dominant role: Cleophonitis and others are at the same time deities and mistresses. Needless to say, this is just a literary game. Writing in a Christian (and proto-Byzantine) world, Paul surely did not aim at championing a true ideology of almighty love, such as that of the Roman elegists. But this holds true for Meleager too, and even more for Strato, who constantly updates the topics of homoerotic passion to his own light-hearted, hedonistic perspective. That Paul knew Latin is, in itself, quite likely; whether he read Propertius and Ovid I am not sure, but I am confident that, as far as the praise of the beloved woman is concerned, his main source of inspiration was the tradition of Greek epigram — especially pederastic. There he could find a full exploitation of the ‘god-and-master’ motif that he adapted to his own celebration of a number of puellae divinae. The poets of Agathias’ circle, or at least some of them, fiercely (and predictably) blamed homosexual love; yet they owed to its literary exploitation much more than they would have confessed.

81 I will not venture into Byzantine poetry from the 7th century onwards – at least, not for now. Let me just say that Nicetas Eugenianus, using μοῖρα in his verse novel (Dros. et Char. III 263, 268, 273, 278, 283, 288, the refrain of Barbition’s first hexameter song: παίζε Βαρβιτίωνα, εὐχροε πότνια Μυρτώ), probably had Paul’s epigrams in mind. Note that two blatant imitations of 6th century poems immediately precede Barbition’s song (II. 243-250 are almost a paraphrase of Paul. Sil. AP V 259 = 77 V.; II. 251-254 rework Maced. AP V 224-225 = 2-3 Madden, maybe with an eye to Paul. Sil. AP V 291, 5 = 65, 5 V. too; see Viansino, Paolo Silenziario, p. 124; Conca, Nicetas Eugenianus, p. 87-88; Madden, Macedonius, p. 118). 82 On the knowledge of Latin in the Greek world of the Late Antiquity, see Rochette, Le latin: De Stefani, “Paolo Silenziario”, p. 101-104 (quoting earlier literature), and now especially Cameron, “Old and New Rome”.

83 De Stefani, “Paolo Silenziario”, p. 110-111, is inclined to think that he did; other scholars, including Cameron, Porphyrius, p. 88 n. 1, and Degani, “Paolo Silenziario”, p. 164 (also in ‘Considerazioni’, p. 52 = 680), were more sceptical. On the far more optimistic views of Viansino, Schulz-Vanheyden and others, see above, n. 67. Mary Whitby, “Paul the Silentiary”, made a strong case for Paul’s knowledge of Claudian’s Latin poetry. 84 Paul’s debt to Greek epigram of the late Hellenistic and Imperial ages is rightly stressed by Corbato, “La poesia”, p. 238 = 335; De Stefani, “Paolo Silenziario”, p. 106. Morelli, “Sul papirio”, p. 418 n. 2 also argues that Paul and the other poets of Agathias’ circle derived their erotic themes from Imperial epigram, not from elegy – be it Greek or Latin. 85 On this one point I do not entirely agree with my friend and colleague Claudio De Stefani, “Paolo Silenziario”, p. 107 n. 24 (see also p. 109 n. 30). He is surely right in stating that Paul followed in the footsteps of earlier erotic poetry on a formal ground, not on an ideological one; but this applies, in my view, to divinization as well, by Paul’s time nothing but a widely attested literary motif – just like ancient mythology, to which he and his fellow poets often recur.

86 See Agath. AP V 278, X 68 = 52-53 Viansino; V 302, 8 = 54, 8 V.; Eratosth. Schol. V 277 (with Mattsson, Untersuchungen, p. 57-58, and Schulte, Paralipomena, p. 40). Women preferred to boys appear here and there in late Hellenistic and early Imperial epigram (Mel. AP V 208 = 4046-9; XII 41 = HE 4504-7; Marc. Arg. V 116 = GPh 1345-50, with Sens, “One thing”, p. 384-390; Rufin. V 19 = 6 Page; see Floridi, Stratone, p. 139-140), but it is only in the Christian world of Agathias’ Cycle that pederastic love becomes a true sin.

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