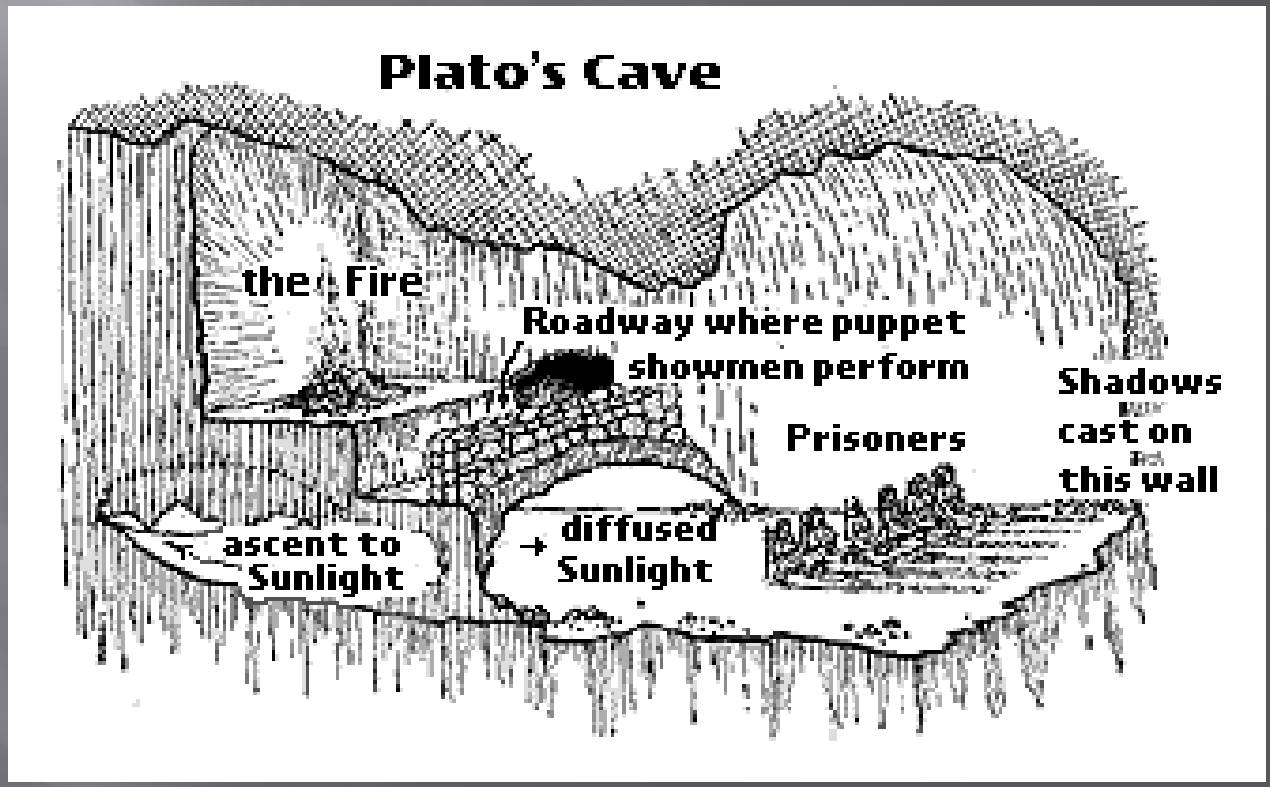
Plato's famous 'allegory of the cave' tells us that there's another version of the world we're writing about: bigger, better and brighter than the one we believe to be real.

This is where the Muses' messages come from…



Plato started the Academy of Athens, his original ‘academia’.
All they had was pen and papyrus, wax tablet and stylus
the odd globe.
All they did was thinking, reading, dreaming, writing, talking
in this venue built on the site of an ancient shrine
to the goddess of wisdom - and war.

Socrates taught Plato who taught Aristotle; and if we look in a certain light there is an unbroken line from their teaching and learning to what we do in Creative Writing classes today, the oldest workshops in the book:
thinking, reading, dreaming, writing, talking
(you could put these in a different order) …

Plato's philosophy was told in stories.
His philosophy was written as scripts.

Terpsichore passes on his tips, tricks and techniques today…

And Aristotle sets out the six parts of a perfect play which we can still work with as writers today:

Theme (Dianoia)
Plot (Mythos)
Characterisation (Ethos)
Dialogue (Lexis)
Sound and Light
(Melos and Opsis)

Terpsichore will now waltz you through a series of Creative Writing classes with workshop exercises you can try at home.

Each of her eight sisters will inspire a themed activity which you could turn into a story, poem or play.

Calliope says:

Create a World in Fifty Words; write a mythical microfiction to the exact wordcount to increase your descriptive power
and tighten your editing skills.

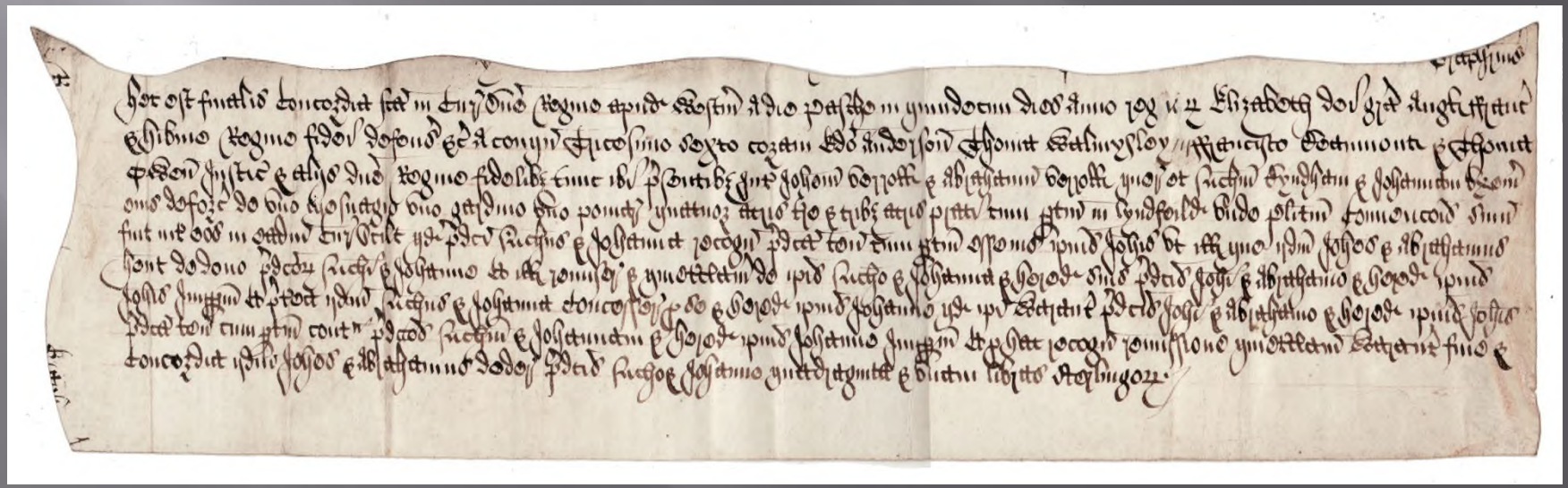
Create your own ‘God or Goddess’ – use timeless characterisation, inspired by archetypal psychology, to invent a ‘deity’; some supernatural assistance for a problem you may actually have
personified as an Olympic or Hindu or Norse (etc.) god.

Meet and greet them, in this piece of writing. What would you say to them? What would they give you?

Clio says: If you were an historical character who would you be?
They don't have to be famous: they just have to be dead.
Do some background research to find images, biographical details and their own writing/music/art/court transcript/shopping lists/suicide notes, etc.
Online is fine. But libraries have an inspiring vibe.

Bring your historical character back to life in a short story. Remember to 'show, not tell' all the facts you now know. Focus on one key moment in that person's life, and try putting it in a vivid present tense.

A seasoning of foreign, slang or outdated words can enhance the historical flavour; but don't overdo the sprinkling, I prithee.



Erato's best writing exercise; pick one of the characters and describe sex from their point of view, using all five senses -

A prim librarian

A young prince

A bullied schoolgirl

A retired judge

A single mother

A famous explorer

Sex looks like: **Gold-embossed leather covers marked 'Reference Only'**

Sex sounds like: **Silence!**

Sex smells like: **Ink on pages that nobody has read yet**

Sex tastes like: **Dust on untouched shelves**

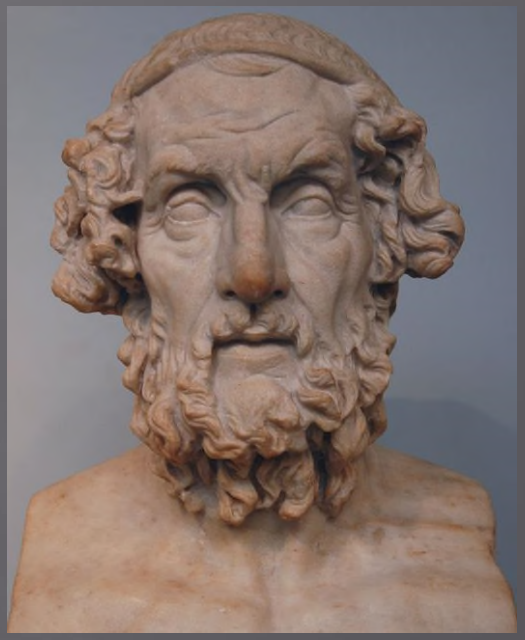
Sex feels like: **The breeze of a thousand books opening**

Thalia’s Writing Workshop

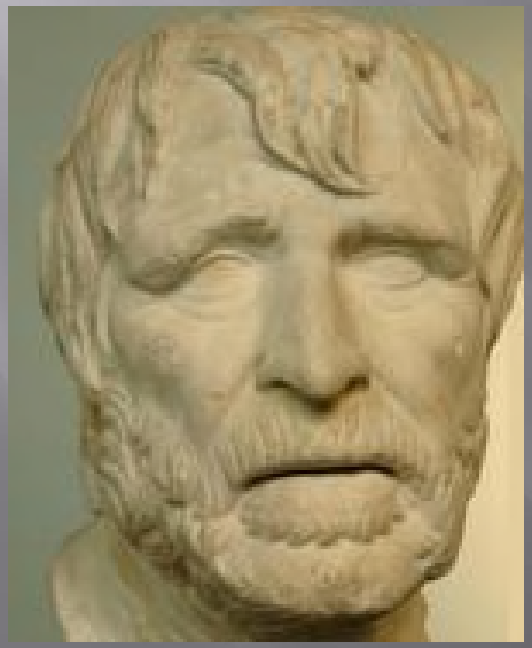
Warm-up with these questions:
What makes you laugh but shouldn’t?
What should make you laugh but doesn’t?

Next, think of 1. something you find funny
2. something you find scary
3. something you find sad
Now write the sad thing as if it were scary;
the scary thing as if it were funny;
the funny thing as if it were sad.

This will improve your comic writing
(serious face)



The comedy exercise works for tragedy, too;
and in this way (though not every way)
they're twin muses.
So, think of 1. something you find funny
2. something you find scary
3. something you find sad
Now write the sad thing as if it were scary;
the scary thing as if it were funny;
the funny thing as if it were sad.



For Melpomene, you could also
write the story of the saddest thing you ever heard:
then cut out all the adjectives, except one.

Urania's Writing exercise is to
imagine the spot you're sitting
one hundred years in the future;
then a thousand years.
Or you could write a scene in
which you meet yourself in
twenty or fifty years time.
Only one of the characters,
younger or older than you,
knows who the other is: but
'show, don't tell' this.

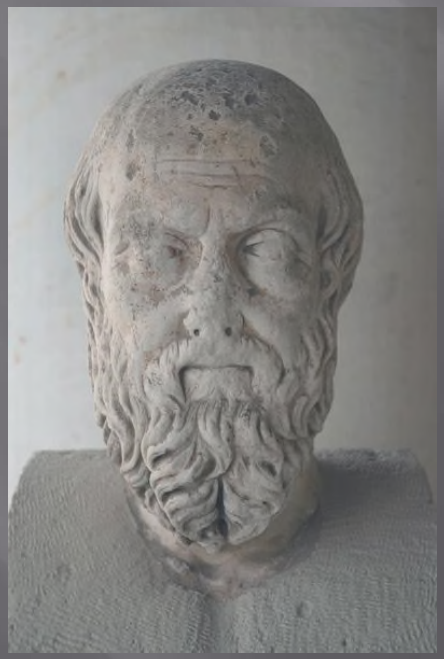
Practice writing in past, present and future tense, to properly honour Urania.

For Euterpe you must study rhythm;
the heartbeat of iambic pentameter
the marching of trochee
the gallop of dactyls

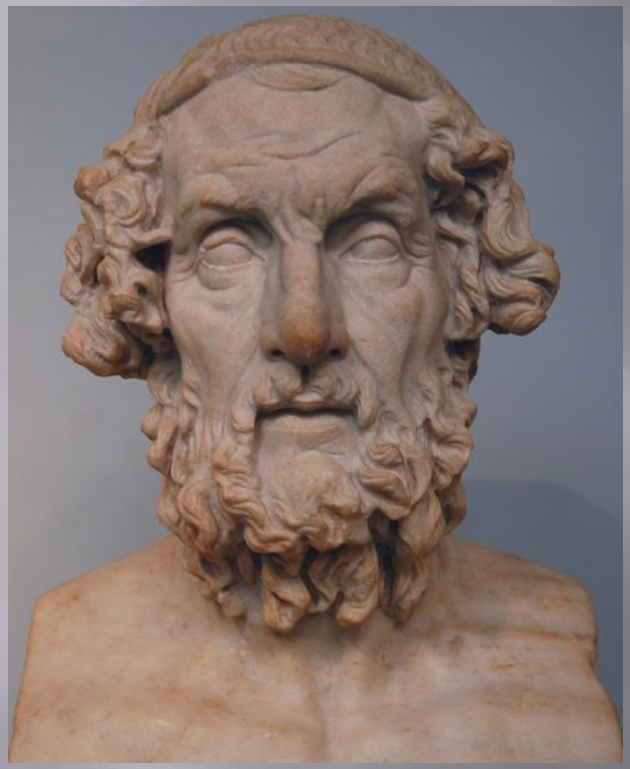
But the best teacher on this topic,
I think, is Stephen Fry
in The Ode Less Travelled

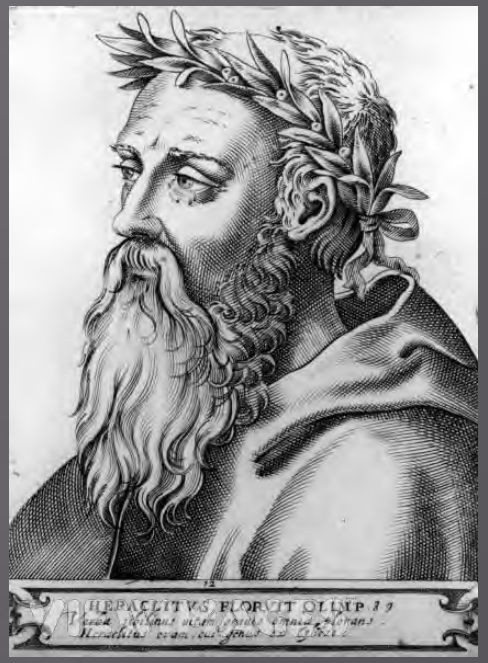
Polyhymnia, empty handed, brings the idea of spiritual purpose:
for her, you should write /sing/dance
to express your religious beliefs.

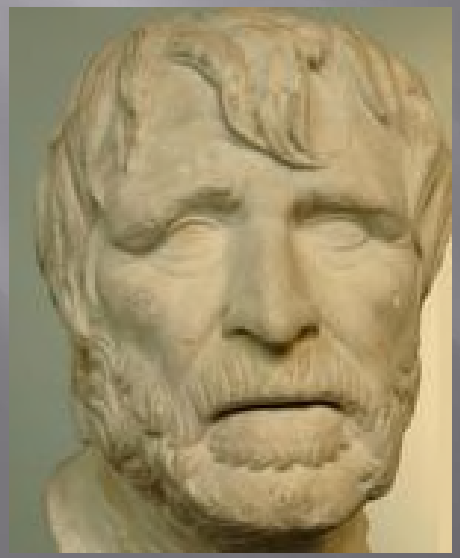
But use the technique of Chekov:
'Don't tell me the moon is full,
show me its reflection in a piece of broken glass.'



Here ends the lesson,
taught by Terpsichore
the muse of dance, seated.
You could try it at home!







Homer, Hesiod, Horace, Heraclitus, Herodotus – Co-incidence? I think so…