

Suppose it's Sulpicia:
A reading of the *Corpus Sulpicianum*

by

Novella Nicchitta
BA, University of Victoria, 2018

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Dr. Cedric Littlewood
Department of Greek and Roman Studies
Supervisor

Dr. Laurel Bowman
Department of Greek and Roman Studies
Departmental Member

Abstract

In this study, I have analyzed the poems from the *Corpus Sulpicianum* (3.8–3.18) as the creation of a single author, Sulpicia. My argument in favour of the uniformity of the cycle is based on the consistency of the authorial persona, poetic concerns, and author-specific blending of some elegiac tropes. Through a metaliterary analysis of the poems, an authorial identity emerges based on the trope of the *docta puella*. Unlike the *doctae puellae* of other Roman elegists who are constructed predominantly as recipients of male-authored poetry, Sulpicia through her *doctrina* enhances her persona as a creatrix of poetry. In the opening poems 3.8 and 3.13, for example, Sulpicia constructs her body as part of her literary program, while also developing her persona of elegiac lover. I also show how Sulpicia's literary concerns arise in her preoccupation with literary *fama*, for which Sulpicia introduces an image that reflects a creative and maternal dimension, and which diverges from the predominant elegiac tradition. In most of the poems of the remaining cycle (3.9, 3.10, 3.11, and 3.12), not only does Sulpicia represent her persona consistently as a *docta poeta*, but she also includes *amor mutuus* and *servitium aequum* as part of her other poetic *materia*. From this perspective, I argue, Sulpicia again differs drastically from the rest of elegiac tradition, by considering the reciprocity of feelings to be the base of her valuable poetic discourse. The absence of mutuality, in fact, is also reflected in the exhaustion of both her body and her literary corpus in 3.16 and 3.17.

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Vocabulary List

Latin	English
Aetas	age, period
Agon	Contest
Amator,-res	lover(s)
Amor mutuus	mutual love
Arma	Weapons
Ars	Art
Brevitas	Brevity
Carmen, carmina	song(s)
Concumbere	to lie together, lie with, cohabit
Cultus,-a,-um	Learned
Decenter	appropriately
Decorum	appropriateness
Deterior,-res	worse
Dignitas	dignity
Dignus,-a,-um	worthy
Diva	divine
Doctus,-a,-um	learned
Dominus,-a	a master, mistress
Duritia	harshness
Durus,-a,-um	hard
Excusatio	excuse
Fama	a report, rumor, saying, talk, tradition
Felicitas	happiness
Foedus	bond
Forma	beauty
Formosa	beautiful
Genethliacon,-a	celebratory birthday poem
Iuvenis	youth
Manus	a hand
Materia	material, topic
Militia	military service
Miserus,-a,-um	wretched
Mollita	softness
Mominatio	naming
Nudare	to undress

Obelus	a critical mark
Obsequium,-a	services
Paraclausithyron	lament at the door motif
Peccare	to sin
Pes/pedes	foot/feet
Poeta	poet
Praeda	pray
Praeceptor	preceptor
Pudicitia	shame
Pudor	sense of shame
Puella	girl
Recentior(res)	more recent
Recusatio	refusal
Scortum	prostitute
Scriptus,-a,-um	written
Servus	slave
Soteria	a thanksgiving for a god in the hope of celebrating a fast recovery
Sphragis	revealing of authorial identity (lit: seal)
Tabella	wax tablet
Teneritas	softness, tenderness
Tristis,-e	sad
Univira	woman who has had only one husband in her lifetime
Variatio	a difference, variation
Venator	hunter
Ventrix	huntress
Votum,-a	vow(s)

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Introduction

My interest in Sulpicia began with a project for a graduate seminar on Latin literature, which then turned into my participation in the University of Victoria's Ideafest (*Misogyny: Hidden in Plain Sight*). There, I presented a short talk on how a scholarly tradition of sexist approaches to Sulpicia has overshadowed some metapoetic aspects of her poetry. As my interest in her poems grew, my exploration naturally turned into a thesis proposal. In November 2019, the admission committee for *Feminism and Classics 2020* also accepted a section of this thesis to be presented as a conference panel, which would have taken place in May of 2020. Sadly, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this event has been tentatively postponed to May 2022.

The poems about and by Sulpicia are present in the *Corpus Tibullianum*, the third book of elegies originally attributed to Tibullus. Within the collection, alongside the elegies of the Sulpician cycle there are six poems of the elegiac poet Lygdamus (3.1–3.6), the panegyric of Messalla (3.7), and two poems of pseudo-Tibullus (3.19–3.20). Historically, scholars have separated the cycle into two different groups. The first one (3.8–3.12) has been attributed to an anonymous poet, although two of the poems (3.9 and 3.11) are in the persona of Sulpicia; the second group (3.13–3.18) is considered to be authored by Sulpicia, as claimed in one of the poems (3.16). As I explain later in this introduction, I consider the whole cycle of Sulpicia to be composed by the poetess (3.8–3.18). This thesis, therefore, focuses on Sulpicia's extant poetic corpus, and studies how the poetess engages with and disengages from various tropes of the elegiac genre.

Apart from the range of poems considered "authentic," another point of divergence in my approach, with respect to many of Sulpicia's literary critics, is the way in which erotic desire is interpreted in her cycle. While scholars have adopted a metaliterary approach in analyzing Sulpicia's programmatic poem 3.13, the same line of inquiry has been overshadowed for the remaining poems, with scholarship focusing more on the social and personal dynamics between the two lovers. Sulpicia does indeed discuss her affections, but she employs the discourse of love to discuss poetic and literary concerns — not unlike the other elegiac poets. Moreover, Sulpicia presents herself consistently as a poetess as much as an elegiac lover. In my interpretation of her poetic voice, I apply a metaliterary reading whenever possible, showing how her discussions of love are often vectors to explore her metapoetic concerns even outside her programmatic compositions.

In the second part of this introduction, I present a selective literature review that outlines for the reader how the academic debate and scholars' methodological approaches established the *communis opinio* of two different authors within the cycle. Then, I turn to the historical figure of Sulpicia as it emerged from prosopography. Lastly, I explain my approach in dealing with intertextual analysis and literary allusions, due to the impossibility of dating Sulpicia's poems with any certainty.

The first chapter following the introduction familiarizes the reader with the history of the manuscript tradition, while explaining the arguments for the establishment of the text used in this work. In contrast, the second part of the chapter discusses some controversial lines in which my choice diverges from the majority of the published editions; it also explains when the selection of one word over another is relevant in providing information on authorship and/or gender dynamics.

In chapter two, I explore each poem of the cycle in detail. I start with the programmatic poems 3.8 and 3.13, showing how Sulpicia presents herself as a poetic agent in relation to literary tradition. I then move to the analysis of 3.14 and 3.15 in metaliterary terms, in which the separation

from the city— and her lover — have an impact on the poetess’ poetics. The following three poems of the cycle, 3.10, 3.11, and 3.12, are centered around Sulpicia’s prominent erotic *materia: amor mutuus* and reciprocated *servitium amoris*. From this perspective, I show how the two tropes of *amor mutuus* and *servitium* as *materia* are radically different from the remaining elegiac tradition, favouring a conception of elegiac love that is not based on strife and struggle between lovers, but rather on harmony in the elegiac couple as valuable and inspirational poetic *materia*. I then move to 3.9, in which Sulpicia explores both the topic of *amor mutuus* through the erotic encounter with her lover, and her anxieties over infidelity as a threat to the couple and to her poetics. The discussion then leads to the poems, which instead focus on the lack of *amor mutuus* and its poetic implications for Sulpicia. Lastly, I close by offering a summarizing reading of 3.18 as a closing poem.

In the final chapter, I weave together the themes which emerged in the analysis of the poems. First, I clarify the roles of the lovers in Sulpicia’s poetry, showing how Cerinthus’ lack of specific characteristics contrasts with the prominence of the poetess. I also explore the relationship between the *corpus* of the poetess and her *corpora*. I show how Sulpicia’s own body and the body of her production are intertwined and how the poetess represents her authorial identity through the image of the *docta puella*. Then, I further explore Sulpicia’s concerns and presentation of her poetic *fama*, demonstrating what is unique in Sulpicia’s representation of her literary *fama* in the context of Latin love elegy, and how this particularity fits her poetic agenda of *amor mutuus*. The thesis is followed by an appendix of texts and my own translations.

The Division of the Corpus and the Existence of Two Different Poets

As Skoie’s monograph on Sulpicia’s reception has brilliantly demonstrated, scholars have had very divergent opinions on the quality of the poems in the Sulpician cycle. For so long as earlier commentators considered Sulpicia and Amicus as Tibullan personae, their poetry was positively evaluated and unproblematically attributed to a single author.¹ The more Sulpicia’s authorial identity emerged against that of Tibullus and a masculine way of writing, the more her poetry progressively became unpolished and distastefully feminine.² Starting with Gruppe (1838), the division of the cycle into two parts was strongly supported in light of an alleged recognition of two different aesthetics within the cycle.³ An unknown male author, by the fictional names of *Amicus* or *Auctor*, must have written poems (3.8–3.12), while a female dilettante was the authoress of the epigrams 3.13–3.18. In an unabashed causal relationship, the later poems of the cycle (3.13–3.18), which present more convoluted lines, were attributed to a woman because of their syntactic complexity. Although 3.9 and 3.11 were written in Sulpicia’s persona, these two poems could not have been produced by a woman because of their intrinsic elegance. Alongside the stylistic divergences between the initial poems of the cycle (3.8–3.12), the difference in length between the short elegiac epigrams and the longer composition of the first group has also been at the base of their attribution to two different authors. Against these purely subjective and non-resolutive

¹ On Scalinger’s comments (1577), Dousa’s comments (1582), and later also Dissen’s comments (1835), see M. Skoie, *Reading Sulpicia: Commentaries 1475–1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 89, 177.

² See Heyne’s (1755) comment on the lack of Tibullan polished and touch in M. Skoie, *Reading Sulpicia: Commentaries 1475 – 1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 131.

³ See particularly Gruppe, 1838, and the scholars who followed this interpretation in the 1800s and beginning of 1900s. See Skoie, *Reading Sulpicia*, 195–196. Gruppe, moreover, attributed 3.13 to Amicus given the larger size of the composition.

arguments in favour of different authorship, Parker has provocatively noted that both *brevitas* and *variatio* in writing has never been a concern with the identification of Catullus' authorship, while the same characteristics—*brevitas* and *variatio*—have indeed brought into question the possible authorship of Sulpicia in her cycle.⁴

In a valuable attempt to defend Sulpicia as a poetess, Santirocco (1979) and Lowe (1988) argued in favour of the sophistication of Sulpicia's poetic aesthetics. Although still considering Sulpicia as "unallusive and without mythological adornment," Santirocco first analyzed the structure of the poems (3.13–18) showing how her technique was built on framing devices, shifting tones, stock elegiac images, metrical devices, and the use of neologism to create an intentional impression of spontaneity.⁵ Building on Santirocco's analysis, Lowe highlighted that the convoluted grammatical structures often present an inner elegance of symmetric oppositions, which are purposely created to express a complex inner state.⁶ Albeit the accusations of amatorial feminine writing needed to be deconstructed, the result of such an analysis has been the maintenance of the arbitrary division of the corpus enforced on the base of the perceived divergence in use of allusion between Amicus and Sulpicia.⁷ Division of the corpus (3.8–3.12; 3.13–3.18) was also reinforced by Hinds' contribution to the debate. Finding some connection between the two cycles, he concluded that the epigrams written by Sulpicia presented almost a challenge to other poets to ventriloquize her and write her own love story. Amicus, therefore, perfected and unpacked the images present in Sulpicia's corpus, embellishing it with post-Ovidian allusions.⁸ However, methodologically, Hinds systematically analyzed only the poems of Amicus, giving no parallel and adequate attention to the poems of Sulpicia.

From the early 1990s until the early 2000s, scholars started to uncover the world of literary allusion within Sulpicia's verses (3.13–3.18), showing her engagement with Sappho, Homer, Catullus, Virgil, Horace, Propertius, and Ovid.⁹ However, very few scholars still consider

⁴ H. Parker, "Catullus and the 'Amicus Catulli': The Text of a Learned Talk." *The Classical World* 100, no. 1 (2006): 17–29.

⁵ M. Santirocco, "Sulpicia Reconsidered," *The Classical Journal* 74, no. 3 (1979): 235–237.

⁶ N. Lowe, "Sulpicia's Syntax," *Classical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1988): 198.

⁷ See also C. Merriam, "Sulpicia and the Art of Literary Allusion: [Tibullus] 3.13," in *Women Poets in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. E. Greene (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 158–159 for a survey of more scholars and commentators who more recently dismissed Sulpicia's allusive art.

⁸ E. Bréguet, *Le Roman de Sulpicia Elégies IV 2–12 du «Corpus Tibullianum»* (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1946). Bréguet proposed the idea that Amicus could have been a young Ovid writing based on a statistical argument starting from the similar suggestion of R. Radford, "Tibullus and Ovid: The Authorship of the Sulpicia and Cornutus Elegies in the Tibullan Corpus," *The American Journal of Philology* 44, no. 1 (1923): 1–26.

⁹ For the connection of Sulpicia to Virgil, see A. Keith, "Tandem venit amor: A Roman Woman Speaks of Love," in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. J. Hallett and M. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 295–310; for Sulpicia, Propertius, and Sappho, see B. Flaschenriem, "Sulpicia and the Rhetoric of Disclosure," *Classical Philology* 94, no. 1 (1999): 36–54; for Ovid and Sulpicia, see K. Milnor, "Sulpicia's (Corpo) reality: Elegy, Authorship, and the Body in {Tibullus} 3.13," *Classical Antiquity* 21, no. 2 (2002): 259–282; see Merriam, "Sulpicia and the Art of Literary Allusion," 158–168, for connection with Sappho and Homer; see J. Fabre-Serris, "Sulpicia: An/other Female Voice in Ovid's Heroides. A New Reading of Heroides 4 and 15," *Helios* 36, no. 2 (2009): 149–173, for connections with Ovid; see J. Hallett, "Sulpicia and the Valerii: Family Ties and Poetic Unity," in *Noctes atticae: 34 articles on Graeco-Roman antiquity and its Nachleben*, ed. B. Amden, P. Jensen, T. Nielsen, and C. Tortzen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press 2002), 141–149, for connections with Catullus and Ovid, although she considers the whole cycle (3.8–3.18).

Sulpicia's broader sample of poems. The first important break in this academic paradigm came in 1994, when 3.9 and 3.11 were proposed as poems authored by Sulpicia. Other than in intratextual parallels within the corpus, the argument was based on a comparative analysis of poetic impersonation, noting how there is always a formal distance between the poet and the speaker in cases of generic female speeches (epistolary form, narrative, sepulchral framework; dead figures, heroines).¹⁰

Hallett, who remains the most prominent scholar in the field of Sulpician studies, is the only advocate for Sulpicia's authorship of all of the poems in the cycle.¹¹ Starting from the assumption that the cycle (3.8–3.18) dates prior to 19 BCE,¹² Hallett argues that allusion to the earlier texts of Horace, Virgil, and Catullus in the whole corpus suggests a single authorial identity.¹³ The same conclusion is reached through the (presumed) allusions of later compositions by Ovid and Livy to Sulpicia's full cycle (3.8–3.18).¹⁴ Moreover, the frequency and prominence of Catullan intertextuality would suggest Sulpicia's authorship as well due to the same familiar ties between Catullus and Sulpicia's (alleged) mother.¹⁵ Her research, therefore, concentrates on authorial identity, focusing on intertextuality, but it also significantly engages with sociocultural and historical concerns regarding the poetess. Although Hallett's work is influential, her conclusions rely on precarious dating assumptions, dubious prosopographic evidence, and often questionable claims of allusions.¹⁶ In the case of Livy, for example, allusion is proclaimed on the base of the appearance of specific words (*scortum*, *nudare*, *peccare*, *fama*, *concubere*, *pudicitia/pudor*) which are expected to arise in discourses on the morality and sexuality of women, regardless of any possible allusion.

¹⁰ H. Parker, "Sulpicia, the Auctor de Sulpicia, and the Authorship of 3.9 and 3.11 of the Corpus Tibullianum," *Helios* 21, no. 1 (1994): 44–47. Fabre-Serris has also endorsed this suggestion by reading a different moral representation of Sulpicia in 3.8, 3.10, and 3.12: Sulpicia is less provocative and more in line with the Roman *mores*. See particularly J. Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, and Authority, from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 36–44; J. Fabre-Serris, "Intratextuality and Intertextuality in the Corpus Tibullianum (3.8–18)," in *Intratextuality and Latin Literature*, ed. S. Harrison, S. Frangoulidis, and T. Papanghelis (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 67–79.

¹¹ L. Herrmann, "Reconstruction du livret de Sulpicia," *Latomus* 9, no. 1 (1950): 35–47. Herrmann is another scholar who considers the whole poem as Sulpician, but his theory is based on the supposed identification of the right order of the poem, which, under his reorganization, constitutes a single composition. Similarly, see E. Hauser, "Optima tu proprii nominis auctor: The semantics of female authorship in ancient Rome, from Sulpicia to Proba," *EuGeStA* 6 (2016): 151–186. Hauser's follows Hallett's direction.

¹² On this assumption, see also H. Tränkle, *Texte und Kommentare Eine altertumswissenschaftliche Reihe*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 301. Tränkle also considers poem 3.13–3.18 as clearly composed around 20 BCE due to some linguistic peculiarity.

¹³ Hallett, "Sulpicia and the Valerii," 141–149; J. Hallett, "Sulpicia and her resistant Intertextuality," in *Jeux de voix: enonciation, intertextualité, et intentionnalité dans la littérature antique*, ed. D. Mal-Maeder, A. Burnier, and L. Núñez (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 141–155.

¹⁴ Hallett, "Sulpicia and her resistant Intertextuality," 141–155; J. Hallett, "Ovid's Sappho and Roman Women Love Poets," *Dictynna* 6 (2009): 1–11.

¹⁵ Hallett, "Sulpicia and the Valerii," 142.

¹⁶ See, for example, Hallett's arguments on Sulpicia's allusion to Catullus in J. Hallett, "The Eleven Elegies of the Augustan Poet Sulpicia," vol. 1 in *Women Writing Latin from Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Europe*, ed. L. Churchill (London: Routledge, 2002), 45–67.

Besides length, style, and allusion, the last rationale that currently supports the division of the cycle is the use of the third person discourse and the lack of emotional engagement.¹⁷ While in the elegiac tradition the voice and feelings of the *amator* are at the core of the poetic discourse, in poems 3.8, 3.10, and 3.12, the poetic voice is completely detached from the object of attention.¹⁸ The emotional distance is reflected in the absence of any first-person voice regarding the poet/*amator*'s impression of the object of attention: the poetess. As a consequence of these third person, almost pictorial representations of Sulpicia, scholars have also excluded the possibility of her authorship in light of her moralized representation as an objectified woman. This representation seems radically different from Sulpicia's presentation in the remaining sections of the cycle (3.13–3.18), where she appears unashamed and provocative. If impersonality and apathy are somehow unusual in elegy, poets writing in the third person are not. Self-references in the second person are often present in the vocative forms, while the poets perform a pseudo monologue with themselves.¹⁹ Outside of elegy, Catullus again offers a comparison, and scholars have noted the appearance of various alternate voices in his poetic writing, all of which refer to some aspect of his own self.²⁰ However, the artificial construction of speaking in the third person is revealed in the poems at some point by the employment of first person possessive adjectives or verbs later employed in first person. In this perspective, the poems of the Sulpician cycle are more enigmatic and problematic since they never reveal to whom the poetic voice belongs. Since the poems consistently depict Sulpicia as a poetess, it is worth noticing that there is a female poetic precedent who describes herself in the third person and also presents herself as a poetess. In fr.106, Sappho talks about her style from a distant perspective, referring to herself in the third person as “the Lesbian singer.” Although Sappho's poetic corpus is very fragmentary, there are also other instances in which the poetess refers to herself in the third person, albeit with the same first-person hints that are also present in the work of the male Roman poets.²¹

Responding to the scholarly trend that considers Sulpicia to be objectified and denied agency in the first part of the cycle, I show how poems 3.8–3.12 also offer a highly subversive representation of the Roman poetess, who is instead characterized by her agency as a lover and as an authoress. Although the nature of poems 3.8–3.12 does not resolve the enigma of who the speaker is, I suggest that excluding Sulpicia's authorship of 3.8–3.12 on the basis of a perceived male eye risks missing the subversive aspects that these poems offer. While my primary grounds for considering the cycle as a whole and under single authorship are primarily exegetical, I also have some other considerations that support my choice, although they are by no means conclusive.

On a stylometric level, Sulpicia's choice of rhetorical figures in 3.8–3.12 is consistent with the remaining poems. Anaphora, rhetorical questions, and hyperbaton of the final line are persistent in the structure of the poems. In both groups of the cycle (3.8–3.12 and 3.13–3.18), the final lines tend to present a persistent hyperbaton in their composition, with a possessive (or demonstrative) adjective separated from its noun of reference. The sample is too small to provide decisive analysis, but within the constraints of the remaining works, the employment of this figure appears in 80 percent of Sulpicia's closing lines, half of which employ the possessive adjective

¹⁷ In particular, on 3.8, 3.10, and 3.12, see Parker, “Sulpicia, the auctor de Sulpicia,” 39–62; Fabre-Serris, “Intratextuality and Intertextuality,” 67–79.

¹⁸ Parker, “Sulpicia, the auctor de Sulpicia,” 44.

¹⁹ Cf. for example: Prop., 1.9.83, 2.8.17, 3.3.17, 4.1b.71; Ovid *Amores* 2.1.2; *Remedia* 71, 72.

²⁰ See E. Greene, “The Catullan Ego: Fragmentation and the Erotic Self,” *The American Journal of Philology* 116, no. 1 (1995): 77–93 and particularly poems 8, 72, and 76.

²¹ Cf. fr.65, 133.

construct (here considering 3.8–3.18). A similar trend for the closing use of hyperbaton is present in Tibullus' first book, but with no particular pattern on separating the possessive adjective.

Within the corpus attributed to Amicus, 3.9 is the first poem of the cycle that presents Sulpicia's own persona, and it seems heavily intertextually related to other contemporary works. Due to the close linguistic parallels with various texts by Ovid, scholars have taken different approaches in establishing authorship. Feminist literary critics understand the similarity of these poems as evidence of Ovidian allusion to Sulpicia, considering it not implausible that a more famous poet borrowed from a less prominent poetess.²² With the exact same argument, but inverted genders, Hinds has claimed that the poet must be post-Ovidian.²³ The circularity (and inconclusiveness) of these arguments is rooted in the impossibility of relative dating, but the presence of similar phrasings should not necessarily be interpreted as one author looking at and borrowing from another. I consider the presence of parallel expressions less problematic in light of the similar topic.²⁴ If the presence of intertextual allusion with Ovid has undermined Sulpicia's authorship, there are also elements that link 3.9 with another of Sulpicia's poems. While the evidence presented here in favour of Sulpician authorship is of course not conclusive, I list some other parallels with 3.13, both in content and form, while acknowledging that the same arguments could be used to argue in favour of imitating Sulpicia's writing and poetic persona.

The first element of similarity with Sulpicia's poetic style is the presence of a series of rhetorical questions (7–10), that constitute a poetic trend in Sulpicia's poetry.²⁵ Not only does Sulpicia choose this form of expression frequently, but she often employs it as a way to engage in self-reflection: she ironically wonders about the difference between public and private prayer; she questions the appropriate place to be for a girl; she ponders the benefit of overcoming her illness (3.11.20, 3.14.4–4, 3.17.6). The long introspective series of questions in 3.9 is interrupted abruptly with an adversative conjunction (*sed*; "but") that introduces images of desire expressed with an impersonal construction (*ut liceat...vagari* 11; "so that it is allowed to roam"). A similar structure is employed in 3.13, where Sulpicia chooses the same conjunction (*sed*) followed by another impersonal construction (*peccasse iuvat*; "it pleases to sin") in order to proclaim and present her intention to publish her composition. In both cases, Sulpicia skilfully employs these constructs to artificially smooth the provocative content of the verses and of her desire. This attempt to cover her agency deliberately contrasts with the relevance assumed by her persona in her poetic body; as a matter of fact, in several of her poems, she enhances her agency by occupying the very beginning of the line *ipsa ego* (12–13; "I myself"), *demam* (14; "I will remove").

Sulpicia Beyond Her Corpus

²² Fabre-Serris, "Sulpicia: An/other Female Voice," 161; Hallett, "Sulpicia and her resistant Intertextuality," 152; J. Hallett, "Scenarios of Sulpiciae: Moral discourses and immoral verses," *EuGeStA* 1 (2011): 79-97; J. Hallett, "Spectacle in the Eleven Elegies of Sulpicia: To Marcus Colyer, M.D., and Joseph Pasternak, M.D.," *Helios* 45, no. 2 (2018): 195–205. Fabre-Serris, however, mostly considers intertextuality with *Heroides*. Hallett reads the relationship between Ovid and Sulpicia in *Metamorphoses* 10 but also in reference to other Ovidian and Sulpician poems (mostly *Amores* 3.14 and Sulpicia 3.13).

²³ S. Hinds, "The Poetess and the Reader: Further Steps Towards Sulpicia," *Hermathena* 143 (1987): 37.

²⁴ D. West and T. Woodman, (ed.). *Creative imitation and Latin literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980): 195 To this scenario the two editors add two other hypotheses for the accidental sharing of words, phrases, or thought: the presence of a common source or the composition of poems of the same type.

²⁵ Parker, "Sulpicia, the auctor de Sulpicia," 48–49.

Alongside the texts authored by Sulpicia in the *Corpus Tibullianum*, some scholars also add a funerary inscription found in 1929 to her oeuvre. The text describes, in fact, “Sulpicia’s reader” or a “reader for Sulpicia.”²⁶

Sulpiciae cineres lectricis cerne viator
 Quoi servile datum nomen erat Petale
 Ter denos numero quattuor plus vixerat annos
 Natumque in terris Aglaon ediderat
 Omnia naturae bona viderat arte vigebat
 Splendebat forma, creverat ingenio
 Invida fors vita longinquom degere tempus
 Noluit hanc fatis defuit ipse colus.

O Passerby, look at the ashes of Sulpicia the
 reader/the reader of Sulpicia,
 who had the slave–name of Petale.
 She lived for 34 years,
 and she gave birth to a son, Aglaos
 (‘glorious’);
 She saw all the good things of nature, and was
 strong in her art;
 she was splendid in her beauty, and
 distinguished in talent.
 Fortune, envious of her life, did not allow that
 she should live for a long life:
 The distaff of the Parcae abandoned her
 destiny.

The ambiguity of the genitive case in the first line (*Sulpiciae cineres lectricis*) does not allow us to conclude whether Petale was a slave-reader for a mistress by the name of Sulpicia, or if Petale was just a reader of Sulpicia’s poems. The inclusion of the inscription to the Sulpician corpus is based on the elegiac meter of the lines and similar puns,²⁷ allusions to poetry,²⁸ and also on the impersonal tone of the dedication.²⁹ Interestingly, Hauser points out that the typology of the inscription—a funerary epitaph—is further evidence of its composition by Sulpicia (or, I should say, by a woman) due to the connection between female writing, epigrams, and funerary public lamentation.³⁰ However interesting and intriguing the evidence of this inscription is, I chose not to

²⁶ For the recovery of the inscription, see J. Carcopino, “Épitaphe en vers de la lectrice Petale,” *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* (1929): 84–6; the scholars who include this among the Sulpician corpus are Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, and Authority, from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, 36–44; J. Hallett, “Sulpicia, Absent Roman Fathers in the Writings of Their Daughters: Cornelia and Sulpicia,” in *Growing Up Fatherless in Antiquity*, ed. S Huebner and D. Ratzan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 175–192; Hauser, “Optima tu proprii nominis auctor,” 151–186.

²⁷ See Hallett, “Sulpicia, Absent Roman Fathers,” 188. However, Hallett does not explain what these references actually are, besides a (questionable) mention of the line “Sulpicia’s daughter of Servius/a slave” in 3.16. See later discussion. Slightly more analytically, Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, and Authority, from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, 43. Stevenson notes the late Republican expressions that would have chronologically matched with Sulpicia’s elegiac timeframe, but the use of this term does not disappear in the imperial epigraphic funerary tradition, and therefore it is not conclusive for certain chronology.

²⁸ Hallett, “Sulpicia, Absent Roman Fathers,” 188. Hallett buries in a footnote (25) the interesting possible allusion “to an epigram in the Greek Anthology (Anth. Pal. 7.12.4), which represents the Hellenistic female poet Erinna as sent to Hades by the Moira (fate), the ‘mistress of the distaff,’ and draws on metaphoric connections between weaving by Fates and mortal women and poetry.”

²⁹ Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, and Authority, from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, 43.

³⁰ Hauser, “Optima tu proprii nominis auctor,” 159. Similarly, on the same topic Hallett, “Sulpicia, Absent Roman Fathers,” 198. On the topic of female writing and funerary epigrams see Anyte’s production in E.

include it in the Sulpician corpus in light of the following considerations. First, the evidence that the inscription is authored by Sulpicia of the inscription is inconclusive, and it leaves the role of “a Sulpicia” unclear. Second, the evidence in terms of linguistic/metrical similarity is weak at best. Hallett calls it “Sulpicia’s signature,” but it would be so for every other elegist, all of whom employ the elegiac meter.³¹ Moreover, Sulpicia’s meter respects the tendency, as the other elegists do, of closing the pentameter with a disyllabic word (with the sole exception of her name in 3.16),³² while the same does not hold for the inscription. Third, the typology of information that we can derive from this material evidence is very conventionally epigraphic: it presents names, years, filiation of the deceased, as well as her social status, and it is addressed to the passerby. The praise for her beauty and her virtuosity are also conventional to the epigraphic tradition of indicating the qualities and the values of the deceased. Although elegy absorbs epigraphic language in its funerary mode,³³ this inscription does not engage with the specific elegiac concerns or tropes that are the object of interest of this work.

Sulpicia

The establishment of Sulpicia as an authoress took two separate steps: recognizing her as a poetess and identifying her as a historical figure. Once the assumption of the existence of a poetess was established almost unanimously,³⁴ attempts started to identify her figure historically. Sulpicia’s authorship offered no external evidence of existence other than her own poems, since no other ancient text made reference to her name or poetic composition.³⁵ However, despite the lack of literary evidence, prosopography managed to reconstruct a possible historical figure through Sulpicia’s own words and through epigraphic evidence.³⁶

In 1871, Haupt first identified Sulpicia as the daughter of Valeria, the exemplary *univira* (Jerome, *In Jovinianum* 1.46) who married into the family of Servius Sulpicius Rufus consul in 51 BCE, Cicero’s friend and a renowned jurist.³⁷ Recently, Lyne has further argued that she must have been the granddaughter of Servius Sulpicius Rufus (cons. 51 BCE) and Postumia, by being

Greene, “Playing with Tradition: Gender and Innovation in the Epigrams of Anyte,” in *Women Poetes in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. E. Greene (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 139–157.

³¹ Hallett, “Sulpicia, Absent Roman Fathers,” 188.

³² Santirocco, “Sulpicia Reconsidered,” 235–236.

³³ For the influence of funerary inscription on elegy, see J. Yardley, “Roman Elegy and Funerary Epigram,” *Echos du monde classique: Classical views* 15, no. 2 (1996): 267–273; T. Ramsby, *Textual Permanence: Roman Elegists and the Epigraphic Tradition* (London: Duckworth, 2007).

³⁴ Only a minority of scholars have been negationists of Sulpicia’s identity or existence. Against Sulpicia’s authorship, see: T. Habinek, *The Politics of Latin Literature: Writing, Identity and Empire in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 122–136; N. Holzberg, “Four Poets and a Poetess or a Portrait of the Poet as a Young Man? Thoughts on Book 3 of the Corpus Tibullianum,” *The Classical Journal* 94, no. 2 (1999): 169–191; T. Hubbard, “The Invention of Sulpicia,” *The Classical Journal* 100, no. 2 (2005): 177–194.

³⁵ Following an 18th century mislead, scholars wrongly believed that Sulpicia from the 1st century BCE was the same cited as that by Martial in 10. 35, 38, who was instead writing under Domitian (1st century CE). See Skoie, *Reading Sulpicia*, 127.

³⁶ Sulpicia’s case is not unprecedented in Latin poetry. The life of Juvenal, for example, has been “reconstructed,” extrapolating from his own poems and, even in this case, attempts have been made to inform Juvenal’s biography through an inscription that names “a” Juvenal (CIL 10.05382). However, the difference between Juvenal’s and Sulpicia’s cases is that there might be evidence of his existence outside of his own poems, since a contemporary of his (the poet Martial) might refer to him in his epigrams.

³⁷ M. Haupt, “Varia,” *Hermes* 5 (1871): 32–34.

the daughter of their son, the homonymous Servius Sulpicius Rufus, and Valeria, sister of Messalla.³⁸ This conjecture is based on Sulpicia's connection to Messalla's household (as poem 3.14 might imply) and on her declaration to be the daughter of Servius (poem 3.16). It has been suggested, therefore, that upon Servius Sulpicius Rufus' death, Sulpicia passed into the household of her closest male relative, Messalla, the brother of Sulpicia's mother Valeria. This relationship justifies Messalla's authoritative decision to bring Sulpicia to the countryside of Arretium, as she seems to suggest in 3.14.³⁹ Sulpicia's belonging to Rome's upper class would have certainly granted her easier access to education and her belonging to Messalla's family might have favoured contact and interaction with the poets to whom Messalla was connected (he was the patron of Tibullus, and connected to Horace and Ovid).⁴⁰

Epigraphic evidence has also been adduced to prove Sulpicia's historical existence. Alongside the aforementioned inscription, Fatucchi aimed to reconstruct the existence of Sulpicia's family in Arretium on the grounds of Sulpicia's mention of its countryside in 3.14.⁴¹ Although the research showed no results in confirming Sulpicia's (or her lover's) existence, the pattern of names recovered in this location suggests the presence of the same *gens* and naming in the area. This evidence on epigraphic findings, which also included the same name of Sulpicia's

³⁸ R. Lyne, *Collected Papers on Latin Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 344–345, particularly notes 8 and 9; similarly, Hinds, “The Poetess and the Reader,” 45; N. Lowe, “Sulpicia's Syntax,” *Classical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1988): 196; Parker, “Sulpicia, the auctor de Sulpicia,” 55, note 2; R. Piastri, “I carmi di Sulpicia e il repertorio topico dell'elegia,” *Quaderni del Dipartimento di filologia, linguistica e tradizione classica* (1998): 154, note 55; R. Piastri, “Il Ciclo di Sulpicia,” *Bollettino di Studi Latini* 28 (1998): 115; Holzberg, “Four Poets and a Poetess,” 175; Hubbard “The Invention of Sulpicia,” 178; P. Paolucci, “Sulpicia e l'antitesi Sulpicia and the Antithesis,” *Myrtia* 28 (2013): 132. Contrary to the awkwardness of the age computation: Hallett, “Sulpicia and the Valerii,” 142; J. Hallett, “Sulpicia and Her Fama: An Intertextual Approach to Recovering Her Latin Literary Image,” *Classical World* 100, no. 1 (2006): 38–39; Hallett, “Sulpicia, Absent Roman Fathers,” 178; J. Hallett, “Sulpicia and her resistant Intertextuality,” 143–144; Hallett, “Scenarios of Sulpiciae: moral discourses and immoral verses,” 84 – particularly note 17) assumes Sulpicia to be the daughter of Servius Sulpicius Rufus (consul of 51) who considers incorrectly Servius Sulpicius Rufus married to Valeria (who is in fact his daughter-in-law). Unfortunately, some other scholars follow this wrong interpretation. See C. Merriam, “Some Notes on the Sulpicia Elegies,” *Latomus* 49, no. 1 (1990): 95–98; A. Keith, “Critical Trends in Interpreting Sulpicia,” *The Classical World* 100, no. 1 (2006): 3. Keith often refers to Haupt as the source, while he explicitly states: *neque magno opere dubitandum esse videtur quis ille fuerit Ser. Sulpicius. non fuit Ser. Sulpicius Rufus [...] clarus ille iuris peritus: nam uxorem eius fuisse Postumiam constat.* See Haupt, “Varia,” 34.

³⁹ On the role of the maternal uncle, see J. Hallett, *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). However, early classicists have also noted that the relationship between the two could be sexual in nature, owing to the presence of the verb *abducit*, going so far as suggesting a possible affection between the two. See Skoie, *Reading Sulpicia*, 85–86, commenting on Scaliger's early interpretation.

⁴⁰ Of course, there must have been a gender difference in access opportunities to the world of writing and even more of publication. However, there is evidence of approximately one hundred women writers from antiquity whose existence has been transmitted to us through sources, but only half of them have survived the male history of transmission — and mostly in fragmentary form. Within this sample and elegy, there is also evidence of female poetic writing in elegy Ovid, *Tristia*, 3.7. See for a quick reference E. Greene, *Women Poets in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 192–197. Furthermore, for relationships within the circle of Messalla, see C. Davies, “Poetry in the ‘Circle’ of Messalla,” *Greece & Rome* 20, no. 1 (1973): 25–35.

⁴¹ A. Fatucchi, “Le ferie aretine di Sulpicia (nota topografica).” “*Orpheus*” rivista di Umanità classica e cristiana 13, no. 1–2 (1976): 145–160.

lover, has further fueled scholarly ink on the nature of the relationship between Sulpicia and her lover Cerinthus.

Initially, on the basis of an incorrect etymological association, scholars established the identity of Cerinthus with Tibullus' Cornutus in poem 2.5.⁴² Scholars went so far as to claim the existence of an immediate marital and conjugal relationship between Cerinthus and Sulpicia in an attempt to scale back (even by their modern standard) the agency of a Roman upper-class girl.⁴³ This conjecture is not based on any evidence from Sulpicia's words, and it ignores the role of elegiac lovers in metaliterary terms, focusing excessively on the "reality" of the relationships that are instead fictionally constructed.

Although prosopography on Sulpicia has been beneficial in the process of solidifying the identity of the poetess over a female persona of a male poet, it also shifted the focus of the attention from the poems to the historic figure of the poetess, moving the debate from a literary to a pseudo-historical ground. Particularly damaging in this perspective has been the desperate attempt to identify the figure of Cerinthus, and to infer narratives on the relationship between the two, an effort generating conjectures hardly based on the poems.⁴⁴ While it is reasonable to expect an element of reality from elegiac poems, the reader of the genre should be aware that this reality is also constructed and fictionalized. I should clarify therefore to what extent I value the presumed biographical reconstruction of Sulpicia. In line with what the poets Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid do in their compositions, Sulpicia presents herself as the speaker. Acknowledging the difference between the poet (real self) and the speaker (fictionalized self), I consider Sulpicia's persona as "real" as that of the other elegists: the fictional realism that elegy employs is based on the recognition of the historical figure of the poet. In this perspective, I consider her reference to "a" Servius as a plausible *sphragis*.⁴⁵ Like other contemporary poets, Sulpicia stresses not so much her biological filiation, but the social importance of her status. Similarly, Ovid gives the reader some social background in relation to his choice of being an elegiac poet.⁴⁶ These literary devices are oriented towards constructing a perception of reality rather than revealing actual biographical information. I interpret the connection with Messalla from the same perspective. Whether Messalla was her maternal uncle or not, Sulpicia stresses her connection to him. Not only are invocations to patrons very common in Roman contemporary literature,⁴⁷ they are also a literary stratagem to

⁴² See Hubbard, "The Invention of Sulpicia," 183–184.

⁴³ M. Skoie, "Sulpicia Americana: A Reading of Sulpicia in the Commentary by K. F. Smith (1913)," *Arethusa* 33, no. 2 (2000): 302, especially note 45.

⁴⁴ See Skoie, *Reading Sulpicia*, 200–249, and note 114, for the scholarship on the identification with Cornutus from Tibullus 2.2 and the marriage resolution. Hubbard is the latest advocate of a marital reading between the two that provides evidence (unconvincing, to me,) based on some parallelism between the text and Virgilian allusions to marriage, but the author does not believe in Sulpicia as an elegist advocating for Tibullus' authorship. Hubbard "The invention of Sulpicia," 177–194.

⁴⁵ L. Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary on the Elegies of the Appendix Tibulliana: Pseudepigrapha Latina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 246. Fulkerson notes the role of Cerinthus' father on 3.9 as particularly unelegiac.

⁴⁶ Ovid, *Amores* 1.3.7, and particularly *Tristia* 4.10, where the figure of the father is also of a particular prominence as anti-elegiac.

⁴⁷ As I describe for 3.14 (p. 45ff), the poem can be read as the longing of a literary circle, and addressing the figure of a patron, even if a familiar one, is absolutely pertinent.

enhance the “reality” of the poem through the presence of actual historical figures.⁴⁸ Therefore, I accept the prosopographic reconstruction of Sulpicia as an upper-class, elegiac poetess writing at the beginning of the Principate with some involvement in Messalla’s circle and community. I consider any of the more detailed reconstructions of her life and kinship as an unnecessary exercise in creating a “biofiction” of the life of an ancient poetess, not dissimilar to what ancient commentators were doing in antiquity.⁴⁹

Dating and Intertextuality

In dealing with elegiac poems, it is often complex to establish a certain date of composition owing to the lack of historical references within the poems. It is generally agreed that Tibullus and Propertius were contemporaries and younger poets with respect to Gallus, the father of the Augustan elegy (circa 70–26 BCE). Both poets’ births fall within the range of 49 and 47 BCE, composing at their peak in the 20s BCE. Tibullus’ poetic creations were limited by an early death in 19 BCE, and Propertius followed a few years after. Given the close chronology, it is considerably difficult, if not impossible, to quantify and qualify the type of influence that one had over the other. Among the elegists, Ovid is the youngest (born around 43 BCE), and lived into the reign of Tiberius (18 CE). Most of his works were also composed in the late 20s BCE, frequently alluding to Gallus, Propertius, and Tibullus, and acknowledging their poetic roles in the elegiac genre.

In addition to the biographical complications, elegy as a genre plays on standardized tropes and recurrent shared vocabulary, creating further complexity in the establishment of which author influenced which. Roman has interestingly argued for a chronology in regard to Propertius’ and Tibullus’ publication of their first and second books of elegy.⁵⁰ Their first books display a generic discomfort with, and divergence from, the traditional male Roman values of the Roman man. Therefore, they were probably published around the battle of Actium, before the figure of Augustus became the one of absolute reference. The second books (as well as Ovidian literature) present more marked forms of deviance from the values and the literature that Augustus promoted, and therefore probably correspond to Augustus’ beginning of the Principate. Lastly, Propertius’ third and fourth books show a more dominant figure of the Princeps and a conformity to his literary quests, chronologically locating themselves deeper in the Principate.

If dating is intricate in single-authored books, issues on dating are present even more so in a multi-authored volume that collects poems by people otherwise unknown from antiquity, as is the case for the *Corpus Tibullianum*. While it claims an Augustan dating (due to two references to the patron Messalla in 3.7 and 3.14), the volume also presents some features that could suggest a much later date, going well into the 1st century CE. For example, some scholars suggest a later dating of the whole cycle due to the employment of words that appear most frequently in the Flavian era and less in the Augustan one.⁵¹ Fulkerson, however, points out that not only are these

⁴⁸ See in particular B. Gold, “Patronage and the Elegists: Social Reality or Literary Construction?” in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. B. Gold (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012): 311ff.

⁴⁹ On the term biofiction, see N. Goldschmidt, “Introduction,” in *Afterlives of the Roman Poets Biofiction and the Reception of Latin Poetry* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁵⁰ L. Roman, *Poetic Autonomy in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 165–201.

⁵¹ Holzberg, “Four Poets and a Poetess,” 169–191; Hubbard “The invention of Sulpicia,” 177–194; R. Maltby, “The Unity of Corpus Tibullianum Book 3: Some Stylistic and Metrical Considerations,” *Papers of the*

instances minor, arguments in favour of a later dating are undermined by the overall limited amount of literature that survived from antiquity.⁵²

As Fulkerson and indeed most contemporary scholars do, I consider the Sulpician cycle to belong to the Augustan period, as the poets in the corpus claim to be. Unlike Hallett and Fabre-Serris (who consider the work of Sulpicia as a precursor to some Ovidian poems and thus Sulpicia's art as inspirational to Ovid's composition), I abstain from proposing a specific chronology for the cycle in relation to the literary references present in the poems, since dating is so uncertain. From this perspective, I deal with intertextual allusion by considering the works of Tibullus, Propertius, Sulpicia, and the first phase of Ovid as broadly contemporary,⁵³ all part of a genre that had, more or less, some standard motifs and shared vocabulary only treated with some degree of variation. Instead, the parallels that I draw with the double letters of the *Heroides* (that probably pertain to the exilic period) are less problematic due to the resemblance of the phrasing and a similarity in themes of the elegiac genre. Similarly, when I approach parallels with the Ovidian exilic *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*, I am considering Sulpicia's voice within an already established trope of representing authorship rather than offering intertextual parallels with the Ovidian narratives.

Langford Latin Seminar. Vol., in *Health and Sickness in Ancient Rome Greek and Roman Poetry and Historiography*, ed. F. Cairns and M. Griffin (Cambridge: Cairns, 2010): 331–336.

⁵² Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 35–37.

⁵³ The first phase of Ovidian poetry dates from the mid–20s BCE to 2 CE and it involves, among others, the following works: *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedia*, *Heroides* (single letters). See R. Tarrant, “Ovid and ancient literary history,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. P. Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 13–14. Those are relevant here for intertextual references and commonality with Sulpicia's cycle.

Chapter 1: The Study of the Text

This chapter briefly familiarizes the reader with the history of the transmission of the works of Tibullus, through which Sulpicia survived from antiquity. The survey of the sources examined in the establishment of the text includes both the most relevant medieval fragments and complete manuscripts. As the *apparatus criticus* and the history of transmission are generally present in commentaries on the *Corpus Tibullianum* considering it as a whole, there is often a lack of focus on the transmission of Sulpicia specifically. Whenever I discuss the presence or absence of Sulpicia from a source, I am referring to the whole cycle of the eleven poems of Sulpicia. I clearly specify when the poems commonly attributed to Amicus are included in the transmitted text, while those by Sulpicia are not.

While the academic debate on Sulpicia has flourished more recently in scholarly journals and book chapters, scholars focused less on textual criticism, which remained the prerogative of commentaries and edited texts on Tibullus.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, some specific lines in Sulpicia require close attention. After an overview of my methodology in approaching the poems, I present a few implications of my reading, explicitly addressing some generally controversial lines that pertain to Sulpicia's poetic identity. I also focus on lines where my editorial choices diverge from the version usually published. The final section discusses the problem of the ordering of the poems, showing how scholars suggested different sequences to favour the love narrative present in the poems of Sulpicia.

The Manuscript Tradition of Sulpicia

Since the poems of Sulpicia have been transmitted through the *Corpus Tibullianum* (hereafter *CT*), the diffusion of Sulpicia's texts after the classical period strictly follows that of Tibullus. The first mention of Tibullus' manuscripts dates back to the 8th century, in a library catalogue that reports two Tibullan books.⁵⁵ Although this entry does not include the *CT*, otherwise known as Tibullus' third book, the omission might be the result of a transcribing error; alternatively, the exclusion could have been a matter of attribution, with the *CT* already being recognized as non-Tibullan.⁵⁶

The original Carolingian text of the 8th century, (hereafter **O**), or a copy of it, must have migrated to a private collection in Loire and later to Orléans, where it left traces until the 12th century. A mention of all three books is present in the 12th century catalogue of Lobbes which are most likely connected to the 8th century copy.⁵⁷ The *Florilegium Gallicum* (now preserved in four French manuscripts) is probably derived from it,⁵⁸ but it does not contain any of Sulpicia's poems. Also probably derived from **O**, the Sorbonne medieval manuscript of Fournival has a few selections from the Tibullan works. Although the third book of Tibullus is represented with poems

⁵⁴ For example, see R. Piastri, "Il Ciclo di Sulpicia," 123–129. Piastri cites only commentaries when she briefly summarizes the textual criticism on Sulpicia; similarly, see N. Lowe, "Sulpicia's Syntax," *Classical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1988): 201) and M. Santirocco, "Sulpicia Reconsidered," *The Classical Journal* 74, no. 3 (1979): 231.

⁵⁵ L. Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983): 421.

⁵⁶ Reynolds.

⁵⁷ Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, 422, note 10.

⁵⁸ B. Ullman, "Tibullus in the mediaeval florilegia," *Classical Philology* 23, no. 2 (1928): 128–17.

3.4 and 3.6,⁵⁹ even this collection does not include the works of Sulpicia. The poems written by and about Sulpicia do not survive even in the two other medieval florilegia in which Tibullus is well represented (clm 6292 – Freising – and Marc. Z. L. 497 – Venice – respectively 11th and 12th century). However, the *Excerpta Frisingensia* (clm 6292) have some minor fragments of poems 3.8 and 3.9.⁶⁰

Of the extant material prior to the 15th century, the poems of Sulpicia were only present in *Fragmentum Cuiacianum* (hereafter **F**), which contained the last poems of the third book of Tibullus, from 3.4.65 to the end. Its derivation from a tradition independent from **O** makes it a valuable resource in the reconstruction of lacunae or corrupted passages, offering different alternatives for some lines. Unfortunately, it has survived to us only indirectly through Scalinger's readings in the 16th century.⁶¹

After the Middle Ages, a few complete Humanistic manuscripts, all of which seem to derive from **O**, constitute the core for Tibullus and Sulpicia's transmission. The oldest and most relevant codices were only found in 1876: the *Codex Ambrosianus R 26 sup.* from Milan, which dates to around 1375 (hereafter **A**); and the *Vaticanus lat. 3270* from the end of the 14th century (hereafter **V**).

Given the limited number of manuscripts on Tibullus that have survived from the 14th century, some later codices from the first half of the 15th century are relevant, especially considering their derivation from the same transmission of **A**. Among the most significant are: the *Paris Lat. 7989* originally from Florence (**P**), dating to 1423; the *Codex Vaticanus Ottob. Lat. 1202* dating to 1426 (hereafter **D**); and the later *Codex Guelferbytanus 82.6 Aug.* dating from 1425 (hereafter **G**).⁶² Among these codices, **G** was initially considered even superior to **A**. However, later works recognized the presence of several problematic interpolations, and concluded that it is instead of secondary importance compared to the earlier manuscripts.⁶³ Nevertheless, **G** is interestingly concerned with the identification and clarification of the female speaking voice in the poems. As attested by the second-hand notations, **G** often specifies masculine and feminine pronouns in some potentially ambiguous passages of Sulpicia.

From the last decades of the 1400s, the spread of Tibullan works became pervasive, and nearly 100 Renaissance manuscripts are attested.⁶⁴ Among the first *recentiores*, *Berianus D 11–6–51* (hereafter **B**) is significant in value, albeit of a later date (mid-15th century). Calonghi proves that it belongs to the same transmission path as **A** and **V**, also showing **B**'s independence from them.⁶⁵ Furthermore, **B** is free from most of the interpolations of **V**, due to the copyist's close attention to the original and his limited amount of intervention in the text.⁶⁶ The *Codex Bodmer 163* (hereafter **H**), from Brussels, which dates to the second half of the 15th century, has been included as an example due to its high quality digital accessibility. The *Brexianus* (hereafter **Br**) is subsequent to the first printed editions of Tibullus (1472), but is also derived from a manuscript

⁵⁹ Reynold, *Texts and Transmission*, 422, note 10).

⁶⁰ E. Newton, "Tibullus in Two Grammatical Florilegia of the Middle Ages," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* (1962): 254–260. 3.8.3–4, 3.9.10 (*hamatis*).

⁶¹ H. Dixon, "The discovery and disappearance of the Fragmentvm Cviacianvm of Tibullus," *Revue d'histoire des textes* 1 (2006): 37–38; Reynold, *Texts and Transmission*, 424. The independence from **O** is connected to fragments of 3.4, which are omitted in the other Italian traditions.

⁶² G. Luck, *Tibullus* (Tuebner: Bibl. Teubneriana, 1988): 27–36.

⁶³ M. Ponchont, *Tibulle et les auteurs du Corpus Tibullianum* (Paris: Les Belles-lettres, 1967), 26.

⁶⁴ M. Skoie, *Reading Sulpicia: Commentaries 1475 – 1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 29.

⁶⁵ F. Calonghi, *Il codice Beriano di Tibullo*, (Torino: Libreria Fratelli Bocca, 1917), 5–7.

⁶⁶ Calonghi, *Il codice Beriano*, 6.

connected to **A** and **V**.⁶⁷ Thus, the discoveries of **A**, **V**, and **B** are particularly valuable since they allowed the studies of Tibullan texts to rely on different sources than the heavily interpolated codices of the high Italian Renaissance.

The Text

In establishing the text of 3.8–3.18, I mostly maintain the (second) edition of Ponchont in 1967, with minor variations in the text. In line with the editorial principles of Ponchont in the establishment of his text, I considered *recentiores* variations as *deteriores*, trying to use a text as close to **O** as possible. My evaluations are therefore mainly based on indirect readings of the manuscripts, for which I rely especially on Calonghi's detailed studies and comparative tables on **B**, **Br**, and **A**. I have, however, directly accessed a few manuscripts in digital form or through facsimile (**clm 6292**, **V**, **D**, **G,H**, **P**).⁶⁸ My intervention in the text is thus limited to some relevant lines when the presence of one word over another might have implications for the overall power and understanding of Sulpicia's poetic voice. However, I diverge from Ponchont's approach in that I consider **B** a relevant source of the caliber of **A** and in fact, I follow Calonghi's suggestions on **B**'s importance owing to its conformity to their common ancestor, **O**.

Although with different degrees of mistakes, all of the earlier manuscripts are affected by scribes. Examples of such inattention are the recurrent mistakes on diphthongs and verse/poem repetitions, which directly affect the transmission of Sulpicia.⁶⁹ Therefore, it is not feasible to rely solely on the earlier tradition due to the significant presence of errors, interpolation, and unfruitful lessons. The criterion of selection is the adherence to **A**, **V**, and **B** whenever the text allows it, followed by the information derived from **F**. Lastly, I opt for the tradition of the 15th-century manuscript surveyed above or on scholarly conjectures. It is worthwhile to closely examine some crucial passages in the text with respect to the alternative traditions of transmission. For the sake of clarity, I include extracts of the text of each poem and my translations before commenting on particular textual problems.

The cycle of poems begins with 3.8, which includes a disputed reading with implications for the authorship of the poem.

3.8

Hanc vos, Pierides, festis cantate kalendis,
et testudinea Phoebe superbe lyra.
Hoc sollemne sacrum multos haec sumet in annos:
dignior est vestro nulla puella choro.

(Recite about her on the day of the Sacral Kalends,
o Muses and superb Apollo, with your tortoise–

⁶⁷ Calonghi, *Il codice Beriano*, 41–50.

⁶⁸ Florilegium poeticum Frisingense – BSB Clm 6292 starting at 39 (<http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/0005/bsb00050927/images/index.html?id=00050927&groesser=&fip=193.174.98.30&no=&seite=237>); Vaticanus lat. 3270 starting at 33r (https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.3270); Paris lat. 7989 (<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b520004584/f52.double>); Codex Vaticanus Ottob. Lat. 1202 starting at 49 (https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Ott.lat.1202); Codex Bodmer 163 starting at 54v (<https://www.e-codices.ch/en/fmb/cb-0163/59v/0/Sequence-1285>); G in facsimile in the Special collection of the William C. Mearns Centre for Learning – McPherson Library.

⁶⁹ See in particular Calonghi, *Il codice Beriano*, 41–50.

shell lyre, she will claim this solemn song for many
years: there is no girl more worthy of your circle.)

The very last line of the poem reads either *dignior est vestro* (or *nostro*) *nulla puella choro* (“no other girl is more worthy of your (or our) chorus”). While scholars have mostly discussed the merits of *choro* over the more common *t(h)oro* (“bed”) in the manuscripts,⁷⁰ it is its possessive adjective that offers a potential focus on the speaker. Reading *nostro* over *vestro* would suggest the possibility of Sulpicia’s authorship. Although writing in the third person at the beginning of the poem, she might have concluded her verses by including herself in the poetic circle of the Muses, mirroring the Catullan tradition of a multiplicity of voices. Catullus’ poetry is frequently characterized by a series of alternate voices that converge in a unique poem.⁷¹ The poet often discusses himself in the third person, or he directly dialogues with his various selves. Diverging from the textual tradition of Sulpicia, Catullus also employs other markers of speech that clarify the relationship between the author and the poetic voices that emerge in the poem, ultimately leaving no doubt about authorship. Alternatively, the poetic persona of 3.8 might have referred to a literary group he or she was part of, and to which Sulpicia’s belonging also seemed suitable, but this interpretation seems inconsistent given the absence of the speaker’s persona throughout the poem. Furthermore, *vestro* also recalls the earlier invocation to the Muses strengthened by the vocative pronoun *vos* (“you”), referring to the Muses as the addressees in the last section of the poem. Since the entry *nostro* seems to appear only in **G**² and **D**, and the transmission of *vestro* is elsewhere more strongly attested, editors normally prefer the entry *vestro*. Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that **G** consistently includes *nostro* as an alternative, with its scribe’s tendency to clarify and identify the (female) poetic voices. Although most likely incorrect, it might offer further grounds for a possible interpretation of 3.8 as belonging to Sulpicia.

Poem 3.9, in fact, is in the poetic persona of Sulpicia, who is involved in an erotic hunt with her lover.

3.9

Quis furor est? Quae mens, densos indagine colles
 claudentem teneras laedere uelle manus?
Quidve iuvat furtim latebras intrare ferarum
 candidaque hamatis crura notare rubis? 10

(What madness is this? What folly wants to tear your
gentle hands as you trap the packed hills with your
hunting net? What good is in secretly entering the dens
of the beasts and bruising the white limbs with thorny
brambles?)

⁷⁰ Piastri, “Il Ciclo di Sulpicia,” 126. Piastri discusses the debate on the conjecture *festo ... toro* in Cartault’s edition (1909).

⁷¹ For a discussion of the different voices in Catullus, see E. Greene, “The Catullan Ego: Fragmentation and the Erotic Self,” *The American Journal of Philology* 116, no. 1 (1995): 77–93. Greene focuses on the sexual and gendered implication of Catullus’ multiple selves; or L. Kronenberg, “Me, myself, and I: Multiple (Literary) Personalities in Catullus 35,” *Classical World* 107, no. 3 (2014): 367–381. Kronenberg offers a meta-poetic interpretation of Catullus’ poem 35, where Catullus dialogues with his own pseudonym—Caecilius—as a love poet.

(Finally, love has come, such a love that it would be more shameful for my reputation to have covered it with decency, rather than to have revealed it to someone).

The problem that has interested critics the most is already present in the first line (*Tandem venit amor, qualem texisse pudori/pudore*).⁷³ Tränkle has noted that the reading of *pudori* rather than *pudore* affects the grammatical interpretation of the poem: the presence of the predicative dative (*pudori*) with the subject of *fama* replaces the predicative role of *fama* if *texisse* and *nudare* are instead subject infinitives.⁷⁴ The ablative appears as *secundae manus*, as a correction on the dative in **A**, and *Pudore* also appears in the later tradition of **B** and **H**, with **B** being of higher hierarchical importance for the transmission of the text. Although the choice of the dative is most popular among edited texts, I opted for the entry offered by **A**², **V**² and **B** (*pudore*), due to the high number of errors corrected in the manuscript in relation to the two vowels and given the consistency in the practice of correction. Furthermore, grammatically, I conceive it as an ablative of cause (“having covered it due to *pudor*”) or as an ablative of instrument (“having covered it through *pudor*”).

I diverge from the most recent versions of edited texts, instead, in the establishment of the problematic lines 6 and 8, both of which have great impact in the interpretation of Sulpicia’s poetic voice.

3.13

Exsolvit promissa Venus: mea gaudia narret, 5
dicetur si quis non habuisse suam.

(Venus has maintained her promises: if someone will be said not to have had his own, may he recite my pleasures.)

In lines 5 and 6 (*mea gaudia narret dicetur si quis non habuisse suam/sua/suum*), I purposely choose the more problematic option of *suam* (“her own”), diverging from the current text as established, which presents *sua* (“her”). *Suam* not only appears in the earlier versions of the text, but it also persists in some of the *recentiores* (see for example **H**). Also, the parallel tradition of *sua* in **F** and **G**² is supported by Salinger in the 16th century.⁷⁵ An alternate, but less likely, reading is *suum* (“his own”); however, this only appears in **G**, referring either to *amor* or to a male lover. The interpretation of *suum* as a narrower reference to a male lover also explains the clarifying hand annotation on the female identity of the poet on the margins. As a matter of fact, **G** includes a note on the word *quis* (“someone”), stating that the pronoun needs to be interpreted as a feminine singular. In this case, the reading presented in **G** clearly understands the poetic persona to be female, their voice directed and limited to a female audience able to ventriloquize Sulpicia’s words in absence of a personal male lover (*suum*). Given the attention that **G** gives the

⁷³ Piastri, “Il Ciclo di Sulpicia,” 126–127.

⁷⁴ Skoie, *Reading Sulpicia*, 248.

⁷⁵ Skoie, 58.

gender of the poetic persona, and considering the appearance of *suum* as an isolated example in the transmitted tradition, such a reading is probably an interpolation on the original text.

The exact opposite interpretation occurs in the presence of the word *suam*: Sulpicia is directing her voice to a male audience, left without their female lover (*suam*). The accusative feminine entry (*suam*) would imply a strong imposition of Sulpicia's own voice on the male panorama of elegiac poets, offering her own erotic and poetic experience to men. That is to say, Sulpicia as a poetess can ventriloquize the experience of both male and female lovers. While this certainly pushes the boundaries of gender and of sexual social norms, it has a parallel in the genre, as we shall see in the parallel with Perilla in Ovid's *Tristia* 3.7.⁷⁶ Moreover, such an expression of "equality" of experiences is consistent with Sulpicia's own poetic discourse, in which love between the *puella* and the *iuvenis* is frequently encouraged as equal and reciprocal (3.11, 3.12, 3.16) and where the authoress is represented in her full agency.

In a more problematic way, the reconstruction of line 8 reveals a compromised transmission (*ne legat id nemo* vs *me legat ut nemo*).

3.13

Non ego signatis quicquam mandare tabellis,
me legat ut nemo quam meus ante, uelim

(I would never want to entrust anything to sealed
tablets, with the result that nobody reads me before my
man).

On the one hand, most of the older manuscripts present *venio* ("I come") as a variant of *nemo* ("nobody"), which is instead present in the *recentiores*. Such variations need to be interpreted exclusively as mistakes, given the graphic similarities between v, n, and m.⁷⁷ At the same time, the older manuscripts include *me*, rather than the double negation *ne*, both of which could have been the result of the same copying mistake due to the similarity of the consonants. One of the earliest appearances of variant *ne... nemo*, however, is "not unproblematic," as it is indicated by a cross on the margin of the line added by a second hand. It also presents an erratic writing format that is inconsistent with the layout of the rest of the poem. The inclusion of *me* emphasizes the identity between the body of the poetess and her literary production, a connection that is also present in preceding and following sections of the poem (3.13.5, 3.13.9). The reading of *me*, however, could have been the result of a later interpretation of the line, owing to the similarity with Propertius 1.7.13 and Ovid 2.15.5. Such a hypothesis is also supported by the history of Tibullus' reception: studies on this author flourished as a result of a growing interest in Ovidian poetry, for which he constituted a model. Still, in line 8, the variant of *id* ("it") is associated both with *venio* and *me* in most of the older manuscripts. Instead, *ut* appears in F, offering the possible solution of *me legat ut nemo*.⁷⁸ The presence of the *ut* and subjunctive implies a result clause, apparently contrasting with the strength of the purpose of sealing tablets. However, this could have

⁷⁶ On Perilla and Sulpicia's voices see p. 29–30, 42–43

⁷⁷ Calonghi, *Il codice Beriano*, 60.

⁷⁸ This is the version presented by Postgate in the Oxford Latin Text of 1915. See Milnor, "Sulpicia's (Corpo) reality," 275, note 58.

been the result of Sulpicia's own wish, which is introduced with the potential subjunctive: "I would not wish to entrust anything to sealed tablets, (resulting in the fact) that no one reads me before my lover."

In the elegiac tradition, poems within a cycle are often related to each other and, although they exist as separate entities, they are strongly related to and dependent on each other. Propertius' cycle, for example, offers several instances in which poems are often indistinguishable between two different artistic works or a single one.⁷⁹ Without raising textual problems, Ovid's *Amores* 1.1 and 1.2 offer a clearer example in which two close poems are related but separate: in the first poem, Ovid presents his persona as forced into elegiac composition by Cupid, while previously tending towards an Epic composition; in the second poem, he reverts the Epic tones into elegy by presenting himself as a *praeda* of triumphant Venus and Cupid. Conventionally, with this composing practice of elegy, the two Sulpician poems (3.14 and 3.15) are considered the only "truly problematic" in her cycle and strictly connected with each other: the first constitutes a *genethliaca*; the second connects with the topic of the former.

3.14

Neu tempestivae saepe, propinque, viae.
Hic animum sensusque meos abducta relinquo
arbitrio, quam vis non sinit esse, meo.

(O relative, trips are often not well timed. Having been abducted, I leave here my intelligence and my sensibility out of my own choice, I who your force does not allow to be (here).)

Attention has focused on the vocative *propinque* ("relative") which inconveniently and unconventionally does not offer clarification on the family relation.⁸⁰ The last line of 3.14 is also worthy of notice owing to its composition. The anastrophe *arbitrio... meo* encloses an incidental clause that reads in the manuscripts *quamvis non sinis esse*. Most of the manuscripts present *quamvis* ("although") in a ligature and the indicative (*sinis* "you don't allow"), which has some precedents in poetry both in Virgil and in Ovid.⁸¹ However, Statius proposed an alternative reading with a powerful relative pronoun and noun (*arbitrio, quam vis sinit esse, meo*) that seems to provide more closure in the verses. Although the manuscript transmission is uniform, Statius' emendation has been included here.

Poem 3.15, instead, received attention for the alternative *suo/tuo* ("her own/ your"), raising doubts about whose birthday was celebrated.

3.15

Scis iter ex animo sublatum triste puellae?
Natali Romae iam licet esse suo.

⁷⁹ E. Courtney, "Three poems of Propertius," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 16 (1969): 70–87. See Courtney on Propertius' book 4th. See also later discussion on Propertius 1.8.

⁸⁰ For a summary of the academic debate, see Piastri, "Il Ciclo di Sulpicia," 124–125. Piastri concludes that the problems are overcome with a literary translation anyway.

⁸¹ Virgil, *Aeneid* 5.542: *quamvis solus auem caelo deiecit ab alto*; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.782: *quamvis tamen oderat illam*. Precedents are also in Horace.

Omnibus ille dies nobis natalis agatur,
qui nec opinanti nunc tibi forte venit.

(Do you know that the burden of leaving was removed from the mind of your girl? Now it is possible to be in Rome for her birthday. May that birthday be celebrated by all of us, that day which now comes to you unexpectedly as it happens.)

In this choice, I follow the tradition of the *recentiores*: *tuo*, which is the most common alternative among earlier manuscripts (**A, B, Br, F, D, G, P**), whereas *suo* appears more commonly during the Renaissance (see **H**). If the two poems are closely related, Sulpicia's initial question connects with the earlier "abduction" experienced in the previous poem. In that case, the choice of *tuo* would be meaningless, since the poem was written for the occasion of her birthday.⁸² The third line was also marked with an *obelus*, due to the presence and the significance of *omnibus* ("by all") in a context of two lovers only.⁸³ However, the manuscript tradition seems clear even on this line reading: *omnibus ille dies nobis natalis agatur* ("May that birthday be celebrated by all of us"). Codices are consistent in the entry of *omnibus*, thus leaving the problem solely at an interpretative level. In my interpretation of the two poems, I explain why this line might in fact not be problematic at all.

As in the case of poems 3.14 and 3.15, the last two poems of the cycle (3.17 and 3.18) are significantly connected to each other. Starting as early as **A** and **V**, some codices report 3.17 and 3.18 in full twice in their manuscripts. The first entry of the poem(s) follows 3.6, while the second one follows 3.16. However, the scribe in **B** notices the mistakes and reports only the first three lines of the poem, while the complete version of the poem closes the cycle of Sulpicia. Moreover, all manuscripts display 3.17 and 3.18 as a unique component under the same title, while contemporary editors prefer to treat them disjointly as two unrelated poems. The two poems have been separated due to their subjects, with the first (part of the) poem addressing the state of Sulpicia's health and the second (part of the) poem hinting at an emotional encounter between the two lovers.

Given the nature of the poems of Sulpicia, often described as brief love story, which would be based on her epigrams, scholars have made several attempts to reconstruct the "real" events behind the poetic composition.⁸⁴ As a result, various editors supported a rearrangement of the order of the poems. Frequently, the purpose behind the new order was promoting a more moralistic interpretation of the cycle.⁸⁵ The sequence presented to the reader would therefore vary in relation to the hermeneutic reception of the poems. Smith, for example, suggests a different series for the

⁸² For a discussion of the indicators of Sulpicia's birthday, see Piastri, "Il Ciclo di Sulpicia," 125. Furthermore, many modern editors choose the conjecture *meo*. See, for example, Santirocco, "Sulpicia Reconsidered," 229-239; J. Hallett, "The Eleven Elegies," 45-67.

⁸³ G. Luck, *Tibullus* (Teubner: Bibl. Teubneriana, 1988): 104.

⁸⁴ R. Piastri, "I carmi di Sulpicia e il repertorio tipico dell'elegia," 137-170. Piastri always describes them as love notes, or "bigliettini."

⁸⁵ Lowe, "Sulpicia's Syntax," 194-203.

whole cycle, based on a psychological approach to young love, but without effectively rearranging his edition of the text.⁸⁶ Later on Herrmann, considering single authorship, not only suggested a different organization, but also completely reordered the elegiac couplets, reassembling them to provide a “logical” reconstruction of the story around a couple of “real” events (the lovers’ birthdays and illnesses).⁸⁷ Building on Smith’s milder suggestion, Creekmore revised all eleven of the poems about and by Sulpicia, in an attempt to mirror the succession of events in Sulpicia and Cerinthus’ love story.⁸⁸ More recently, Merriam has proposed a new order for the poems based on an arrangement through which “covered” information leaves places to have “unveiled” awareness of feelings.⁸⁹ On a different trend and, considering only the cycle strictly attributed to Sulpicia, Santirocco has noticed that the apparent *variatio* is the ordering principle of the manuscript, which actually reveals a logical order, based on an alternation of “responsibility and response” in challenging the poetess’ love.⁹⁰ Similarly, Parker points out that the assemblage of the poems might have been the result of a topic-based ancient anthology.⁹¹ In establishing the text and its order, I follow once again the manuscript tradition suggesting no other order than the one in the manuscripts. However, it is clear that the poems are meant to be interpreted and understood in relation to each other, opening to intratextual analysis.

⁸⁶ On Smith’s arrangement in accordance with a possible reconstruction of Sulpicia’s personal love, see Skoie, *Reading Sulpicia*, 239.

⁸⁷ Skoie, 304.

⁸⁸ H. Creekmore, *The Erotic Elegies of Albius Tibullus with the poems of Sulpicia arranged as a sequence called NO HARM TO LOVERS* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), 107–125.

⁸⁹ C. Merriam, “Some Notes on the Sulpicia Elegies,” *Latomus* 49, no. 1 (1990): 96.

⁹⁰ Santirocco, “Sulpicia Reconsidered,” *The Classical Journal* 74, no. 3 (1979): 225.

⁹¹ Parker, “Sulpicia, the auctor de Sulpicia,” 41–42.

Chapter 2: Sulpicia's Poems

In this section of the thesis I analyze each poem of the cycle both thematically and individually. I start with the programmatic poems 3.8 and 3.13, showing how Sulpicia relates to her literary predecessors and how she represents herself as a poetess in the genre of elegy. While this approach is in line with the interpretation of the elegiac *puella* as a textual *puella*, I show how this representation in Sulpicia is free from the passivity and objectivization of the female body in elegy, but on the contrary, the trope of the *docta puella* is reworked to enhance authorship and agency. In 3.13, Sulpicia instead focuses on her intergenerational poetic reputation, employing epic images of maternity and erotic language. The celebration of love in this poem also anticipates Sulpicia's *materia* in the majority of her poetry (3.10, 3.11, 3.12, 3.16, 3.17). In interpreting these poems, I show how the presence or absence of *amor mutuus* is a central *materia* in Sulpicia's poetry and a point of divergence from the elegiac tradition. I then move to poems 3.9, 3.14, and 3.15, showing how the tropes of erotic hunting, faithfulness, separation, and literary patronage are reworked by Sulpicia, expressing her condition of female lover and elegiac writer. This chapter naturally concludes with the last of Sulpicia's poems, 3.18, showing how it constitutes a conclusion in what remains of her corpus, presenting again the theme of *amor mutuus* as her poetic *materia*.

Sulpicia's Elegiac Corpus in 3.8

The first poem of the cycle depicts a physical description of Sulpicia that scholars have often interpreted as an homage to the poetess as an objectified elegiac *puella* adorned with oriental luxury.⁹² This representation of Sulpicia as a visual object scrutinized by the eye of a third unidentified poet has also been interpreted by Hinds as a response to Sulpicia's famous programmatic poem 3.13: the poetess publicly offers herself as poetic *materia* for others, an offer to which Amicus responds in 3.8.⁹³ This almost statuary and static exegesis of the description of Sulpicia has also favoured the *communis opinio* of different authorship based on the moralizing attitude of Amicus in contrast with Sulpicia's deceptively outspoken poetic voice and agency.⁹⁴

I argue, instead, that parallels between 3.13 and 3.8 exist in terms of provocative agency and programmatic interpretations. As a consequence, throughout my analysis I also highlight elements of consistency between 3.8 and the other poems of the cycle, especially 3.13, supporting the assumption of single authorship and rejecting the hypothesis of a radical difference in the poetic voices within the cycle. My analysis of the poem centers around a metaphorical interpretation of Sulpicia's corporeal description, in which the various arrangements of her body programmatically represent her poetic expression within the elegiac tradition.

⁹² Holzberg, "Four Poets and a Poetess or a Portrait of the Poet as a Young Man?," 183; J. Fabre-Serris, "Intratextuality and Intertextuality in the Corpus Tibullianum (3.8–18)," 68–73; W. Batstone, "Sulpicia and the Speech of Men," 103–107.

⁹³ S. Hinds, "The Poetess and the Reader," 42–3.

⁹⁴ L. Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary on the Elegies of the Appendix Tibulliana: Pseudepigrapha Latina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 9; Fabre-Serris, "Intratextuality and Intertextuality," 70–72. These authors present Amicus as an author who regularizes/moralizes Sulpicia's poetry. For Hallett, by contrast, Sulpicia is representing herself as a visual spectacle with agency, differently from the passive and immobile representation of the *puella* in male elegy. See J. Hallett, "Spectacle in the Eleven Elegies of Sulpicia: To Marcus Colyer, M.D., and Joseph Pasternak, M.D.," *Helios* 45, no. 2 (2018): 195–205.

First, I explore how the female body in elegiac poetry stands for a literary corpus, and how Sulpicia's image fits with, and diverges from, the (male) tradition. Her representation does not align with the identity of the female-object, but rather it portrays a poetess-subject. Second, I take issue with a moralized depiction of Sulpicia, showing how Sulpicia's persona is not in conformity with social expectations thanks to her *decorum*, but rather it is built around a system of contrasting symmetries that shapes Sulpicia as an elegiac agent and speaker. The poem progressively reveals Sulpicia's agency by building up a scheme of oppositions: on a micro-level, the verses first oppose each other within the distiches; then, on a macro-level, the initial representation of the poetess contrasts with the final image of Sulpicia in a crescendo of transgressions, through which Sulpicia depicts her *doctrina*. The poetess is "*culta*": adorned with and/or learned about foreign literary heritage. Although the language and symbolism evoke social appropriateness, Sulpicia's body and demeanour align her with the self-publicizing elegiac lover.

The Body of the Text and the Body of the Woman in Elegy

One of the lines of interpretation of Roman elegy focuses on the love of the poet and his mistress, which appear as biographically real owing to the first person voice, and the realism that poems seem to present.⁹⁵ Such hermeneutics are oriented towards the reconstruction of the romantic events of the poetic personae, thereby almost identifying the speaker with the poet themselves. This exegetical trend was significantly challenged in 1983 by Veyne, who proved this perceived realism and the first person voice of the poems to be constructed and artificial characteristics of the genre.⁹⁶ Wyke and McNamee's later analysis has expanded this hermeneutic approach, showing how the role and representation of the body of the Propertian beloved present specific references to literary production and its aesthetics.⁹⁷ This motif derives, in fact, from a Callimachean convention that represents the aesthetic of Hellenistic texts in terms of the slimness of the Muse.⁹⁸

The connection between the female body and the literary corpus is realized through different associations in elegy. First, the adjectives that describe the elegiac mistress are the same that define the genre. *Teneritas* and *mollitia* are not only female-specific characteristics of the mistress, but they also describe the elegiac works of the poets. In Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid, for example, the foreign, decorative adornments of the *puellae* allude to the Greek literary origin of elegy. Second, the mistress is variously described in relation to various poetic traditions: Wyke has noted the existence of different and not reconcilable "Cynthias" within the whole Propertian corpus, and each one of them separately dialogues with the poetic tradition of

⁹⁵ This section does not claim to be an exhaustive survey of the hermeneutic approaches to Roman elegy, but rather, it serves as a direction on the main metaliterary interpretations of the *docta puella* and her erotic relationship with the *amator*.

⁹⁶ P. Veyne, *Roman Erotic Elegy: Love, Poetry and the West* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988). In Veyne's reading, Catullus would not therefore enter the analysis.

⁹⁷ M. Wyke, "Written Women: Propertius' Scripta Puella," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 77, (1987): 47–61; K. McNamee, "Propertius, Poetry, Love," in *Woman's Power, Man's Game*, ed. J. King (Wauconda: Bolchazy-Carducci Publisher, 1993), 215–248.

⁹⁸ See Aetia fr. 1.12.

Gallus, Horace, Virgil, and Tibullus.⁹⁹ In line with this way of representing women, 3.8 reveals how Sulpicia is “decorated” as an elegiac mistress, associating her body with elegiac texts. While I leave the description of Sulpicia’s “textuality” to the two subsequent sections, I show here two elements in which Sulpicia’s depiction diverges from the male tradition: her representation is freed from the control of a male poet, and her agency is highlighted through the position and employment of her own name.

One of the implications of representing women as texts is the complete control that their poet has in terms of shaping and moulding his *scripta puella*, restoring the gender roles only apparently inverted by a passive *amator* tamed by an active *domina*.¹⁰⁰ The poem, in fact, lacks the presence of a male counterpart necessary to replay the gender dynamics: even if Mars could be interpreted as an amorous counterpart in 3.8,¹⁰¹ his virility and literary *arma* are dismissed in line 2 and his epic-poetic space is replaced and rephrased by Sulpicia’s various bodies. Her control over the text is reflected in her dominance and protagonism over the whole composition. Sulpicia’s body is also symbolically displayed at the origin of her poetics: she occupies the beginning of various lines both in 3.8 and in some of her other poems. In line 5, her eyes (*illius ex oculis*; “from her eyes”) open the verse and subvert the sexual gender dynamics, presenting Sulpicia as an active pursuer. In line 7, she is characterized by propriety (*illam*; “her”) in both movement and action. In line 15 she is the only worthy female (*sola puellarum digna* “her only worthy among girls”). In the last lines of the poem (line 21), she is *materia* of the Muses’ and Apollo’s voices (*hanc.... cantate*; “sing her”) or the Muses sing her as a poetic body. A similar trend is also present in the rest of Sulpicia’s corpus, where her authorship is less questioned, and in which she reserves herself the privileged position at the opening of a verse. She employs this strategy twice in poem 3.9. The emphasis on her persona is further strengthened by the anaphora of the pronoun (*ipsa*; “herself”) in verses 12 and 13. Again in the third-person, poem 3.12 employs the demonstrative pronoun *illa* (“that”) twice at the beginning of the verse stressing Sulpicia’s agency (lines 3.12.5 and 3.12.16). In the controversial line 3.13.8, Sulpicia begins with *me*, strengthening the identity of the poetess and the literary composition, constituting a Propertian allusion.¹⁰²

The prominent position of Sulpicia in the cycle and in the poem is also mirrored by the initial word of the poem: her own name. As a clear allusion to the opening of the *Monobiblos* in Propertius, the initial word “Cynthia” marks, from the very beginning, the entangled relationship between Cynthia’s (re)presentation and her essence as poetic material.¹⁰³ As literary theory has shown, the role of Cynthia and the other mistresses’ pseudonyms is to allude to the act of poetic inspiration,¹⁰⁴ intentionally blurring the elegiac mistress and the poetic text in which they are

⁹⁹ M. Wyke, “Mistress and Metaphor in Augustan Elegy,” in *Latin Erotic Elegy: An Anthology and Reader*, ed. P. Allen Miller (London: Routledge, 2002), 392–4.

¹⁰⁰ Wyke, “Taking the Woman’s Part: Engendering Roman Love Elegy,” *Ramus* 23, no. 1-2 (1994): 110–128.

¹⁰¹ Hinds, “The Poetess and the Reader,” 32.

¹⁰² See also discussion p. 22

¹⁰³ Hinds, “The Poetess and the Reader,” 30. Hinds notes the parallel with Cynthia and stresses how Sulpicia is just an elegiac *puella*, with no emphasis on her writing identity. Hallett, instead, emphasizes not only the position but also its role as nominative in the syntactical analysis. Hallett, “Spectacle in the Eleven Elegies of Sulpicia,” 196.

¹⁰⁴ Wyke, “Mistress and Metaphor,” 390. Wyke points out how Corinna and Nemesis are not transmitted as substitute names for “real” *puellae*, contributing to the fictionality of the elegiac mistress and her dynamics with the *amator*.

protagonists. While Sulpicia’s poetry employs a pseudonym in addressing her lover Cerinthus,¹⁰⁵ in 3.8 her own identity is made explicit through the use of her own name. If Sulpicia were not the author herself, the lack of pseudonym would have affected her in a multiplicity of ways. First, her reputation as a Roman woman would have been compromised by relegating her to a status lower than the other elegiac *puellae*, whose identities, if real at all, were shielded by the use of pseudonyms. Second, since the first word of a cycle is associated with the whole poetic cycle of the author, the name ‘Sulpicia’ would constitute an appropriation of Sulpicia’s authorial identity.¹⁰⁶ On the contrary, if the poem were authored by Sulpicia, the use of her own name would appear as a poetic claim and association with her own body of production.

Elegiac Decor

After the nominal introduction of the poetess, a description of her body occupies the vast majority of the poem and shapes Sulpicia as subject-speaker. In the opening lines, Sulpicia’s conformity to *decor* is what characterizes her aesthetics, and its importance is emphasized through the use of the words *Decor* and *decet* (8–9). While her description evokes the respectability of an upper-class Roman woman, the very same words also emphasize Sulpicia-as-Elegy. As in the personification of Elegy in Ovid’s 3.1, *decor* characterizes her beauty: *forma decens, vestis tenuissima, vultus amantis, / et pedibus vitium causa decoris erat* (“[Elegy’s] appearance was beautiful, her clothing most soft, her face was loving, even the defect of her feet was reason of beauty”). What appears, therefore, as a social and moralized characteristic of Sulpicia’s body is in fact also a metaliterary construction of Sulpicia’s body and her elegiac status.

Her active role in the poem is underlined in the two following parenthetical clauses, both of which recall her poetic agency.

Illam, quidquid agit, quoquo vestigia movit,
 componit furtim subsequiturque Decor;
 seu solvit crines, fuis decet esse capillis:
 seu compsit, comptis est ueneranda comis. 10

(In whatever she performs, and wherever she steps her feet, Elegance composes her. If she unties her hair, although unkempt, she still is appropriate; if she arranges it, she should be revered.)

In the first clause, Hallett has recently pointed out that the expression *quidquid agit* (“whatever she performs”) evokes Sulpicia’s performative agency as a poetess, perhaps in a recitation scenario; Paolucci has instead interpreted this passage as a reference to the “levità e grazia formale della sua poesia” (“the softness and stylistic elegance of her own poetry”).¹⁰⁷ A very similar parenthetical is also employed by Ovid in *Tristia* 3.7.5 (*quidquid aget*; “whatever she

¹⁰⁵ See discussion p. 47.

¹⁰⁶ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 224.

¹⁰⁷ Hallett, “Spectacle in the Eleven Elegies,” 200–201; P. Paolucci, “Sulpicia e l’antitesi Sulpicia and the Antithesis,” 134. Paolucci, however, does not consider the poem as authored by Sulpicia.

is doing”) to describe the activity of the poetess Perilla at the arrival of Ovid’s epistle. While this sentence does not per se imply any poetic creation, it immediately follows a fictional description of the poetess in a learned environment *inter libros Pieridasque suas* (“among her books and her Muses” 3.7.4).

Even the second parenthetical clause legitimizes both a metaliterary interpretation and her poetic agency, which Fulkerson has timidly considered as a reference to Sulpicia’s own writing (as footsteps to follow).¹⁰⁸ However, a parallel trope could also exist along with the trope of movement of the *puella*’s feet, which stands as a metaphor for the rhythmic alternation of the hexameter and pentameter in the elegiac distich. Such an interpretation is strictly based on the anatomic relationship between the elegiac mistress and the elegiac text.¹⁰⁹ The rhythmic and/or unbalanced movement of the mistress’ feet recalls the uneven metric of the elegiac feet both in Ovid and Propertius.¹¹⁰ Although this trope is much more defined in Propertian and Ovidian metaphor (where feet are a clear reference to the alternation and unbalancing of the meter) the noun *vestigia* in 3.8 should not be interpreted as foot print, but rather as a metonymy for feet. This interpretation is also validated by the verb employed (*movit*; “she moved”) indicating a dynamism in Sulpicia that is incompatible with the static nature of a footprint.¹¹¹ This suggestion is strengthened by an intertextual allusion to Catullus’ 68.b.70, in which *diva* Lesbia appears *candida*, similarly to Sulpicia, with a soft elegiac foot (*molli pede*).¹¹²

The presence of the verb *componere* (“to compose”) in line 7 merges again the various arrangements of her body with her poetic activity. The word stresses and encompasses the act of working on the (literary) aesthetics of her body. As Keith pointed out for Ovid, such a word connotes the “Alexandrian aesthetic principle of refinement and elegance.”¹¹³ In Sulpicia’s 3.8, the act of being arranged as a text is initially stressed by the presence of the verb *componit* in line 7, and through an assonant echo in the verbs *compsit* and *comptis* (“arranged”) in the subsequent line (10). The context in which ‘*compsit*’ appears and the description of Sulpicia’s styling and learned status (*culta*, 1) is reminiscent of the description of Lygdamus 3.1, in which his poetry book is anthropomorphized. The book is described as adorned (*comptum...opus* “an adorned work,” 14) and learned (*cultum...libellum*, 17). Some of the characteristics of the the book are reminiscent of the embellishment of the human body, and of the description Sulpicia’s body/corpus. In Lygdamus, the book has hair to trim (*pumex et canas tondeat ante comas* “and may the pumice stone trim the white hair first,” 10) which are the small fibers of the papyri,

¹⁰⁸ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 229. Fulkerson, however, considers them as footsteps that would direct her to her lover.

¹⁰⁹ See Wyke, “Written Women,” 56, for Propertius; for Ovid see in particular A. Keith, “Corpus Eroticum: Elegiac Poetics and Elegiac Puellae in Ovid’s Amores,” *The Classical World* 88, no. 1 (1994): 34.

¹¹⁰ Wyke, “Written Women,” 47–61; Keith, “Corpus Eroticum,” 34.

¹¹¹ This sentence also supports Hallett and Fabre-Serris’ approach to Ovidian intertextuality with Sulpicia’s compositions, although the two authors do not include it in their repertoire of intertextual references. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid employs the same adverb (*furtim*) and a cognate verb (*sequitur*) and the same noun (*vestigia*) in the episode of Echo and Narcissus in book 3 line 371, although Ovid considers it clearly as footprints. See their works: J. Hallett, “Sulpicia and her resistant Intertextuality,” 141–155; Fabre-Serris, “Sulpicia: An/other Female Voice in Ovid’s Heroides,” 149–173.

¹¹² Hallett, “Sulpicia and the Valerii: Family Ties and Poetic Unity,” 146; Hallett, “The Eleven Elegies of the Augustan Poet Sulpicia,” Vol. 1, in *Women Writing Latin from Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Europe*, ed. L. Churchill (London: Routledge, 2002), 49.

¹¹³ Keith, “Corpus Eroticum,” 28.

described as “snowy white” (*niveum*) to indicate the preciousness of some types of papyri (9).¹¹⁴ Similarly, Sulpicia adorns her hair (*comptis...comis*, 9) and is described as adorned in a white garment (*nivea...veste*, 10).

Componere also occurs frequently in Sulpicia’s other poems, and a comparative approach to its use confirms its systematic metaliterary employment. First, in 3.13, Milnor notes how the verb connects the opening and closing lines of the poem, where the physicality of the poetess is inseparable from the physicality of her poetic production, as is indeed the case in 3.8.¹¹⁵ Flascheriem has suggested another interpretation of the verb *componere* in 3.13 with reference to Sulpicia’s *vultus*, whose implications offer a key to the reading of 3.8. She considers the sentence *vultus componere famae taedet* (“I am tired of making my face presentable for reputation”) as a programmatic rejection of one literary role (more acceptable) in favour of another (provocative) role within the poem.¹¹⁶ Flascheriem’s interpretation of Sulpicia’s struggle between poetic revelation and concealment of desire also fits a similar opposition in 3.8.

As a matter of fact, the literary role that Sulpicia might be referring to in 3.13 is Sulpicia’s personal *componere* in 3.8, in which she clearly impersonates an elegiac *docta puella*. The central structure of 3.8 also presents various descriptions of Sulpicia, which are apparently contrasting. The presence of conflicting oppositions in the first part of the poem starts in line 1, constituting a ring composition with the very last line. If Hinds’ interpretative approach is correct, the initial reference to the kalends of March alludes to the *Matronalia* and thus indirectly qualifies Sulpicia as a respectable woman, a status that is usually not ascribed to the elegiac *puella*.¹¹⁷ However, in the closing line she is instead unequivocally a *docta puella* (3.8.24).¹¹⁸ In the first couplet (5–6), Sulpicia also emerges as an active agent, far distant from the convention of *pudor* that her social status as a woman required, and her eroticism is provocatively described through her penetrating eyes. Since glancing is a provocative act in Roman sexual dynamics, Sulpicia is symbolically assuming the dominant role in the sexual act, but without a male counterpart as *amator*.¹¹⁹ The following section (7–8) stresses her *decor*, but it also reveals poetic agency as explained above in the movement of her feet and in her performativity. In the distich 9–10, the first verse presents Sulpicia’s provocative sexuality through her loose and unkempt hair, while employing the same vocabulary of appropriateness (*decet*). The second line, instead, presents her with a hair style suitable for her social status. In the last couplet Sulpicia is also described in terms of opposing visual colours: she is dressed first in purple clothing and then in white. In this case, the adjective *Tyria* must be interpreted as a metonymy for the purple colour rather than an indication of foreign origins as in the second section. As a matter of fact, the structure of the verse, with the emphatic

¹¹⁴ F. Navarro Antolín, *Lygdamus. Corpus Tibullianum III.1-6* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 116; Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 85. On the human resemblance of books see also Ovid, *Tristia* 1.1, in particular verses 11–12 for its uncombed hair with epic overtones.

¹¹⁵ Milnor, “Sulpicia’s (Corpo) reality,” 275. Milnor considers 3.8 and 3.13 inversely related to each other: 3.8 presents Sulpicia as dressed, while 3.13 emphasizes nudity.

¹¹⁶ B. Flaschenriem, “Sulpicia and the Rhetoric of Disclosure,” 44.

¹¹⁷ S. Hinds, “The Poetess and the Reader,” 33. This would probably also classify Sulpicia as a wedded woman, a condition that Sulpicia never presents or reveals to the reader, and therefore it remains an interpretative conjecture.

¹¹⁸ Milnor, “Sulpicia’s (Corpo) Reality,” 270.

¹¹⁹ The opening lines of Propertius 1.1 are again a further intertextual reference to the construction of Cynthia, who maintains a position of sexual dominance over the poet-*amator*.

anaphora (*urit* “she burns”) at the opening of the line, suggests to the reader the presence of two opposite conditions, both of which result in Sulpicia’s glowing with desirability. The meaning of *Tyria* is therefore informed by the pleonasm *nivea candida veste* (“bright, in a snowy dress”). The contrast manifests itself in the construction of the distichs, which are systemically in opposition to each other, or with an internal contrast (9 vs 10; 11 vs 12). Their opposition anticipates Sulpicia’s fully transgressive side in the second half of the poem.

Illam, quidquid agit, quoquo vestigia movit,
 componit furtim subsequiturque Decor;
 seu solvit crines, fuis decet esse capillis:
 seu compsit, comptis est ueneranda comis. 10
 Vrit, seu Tyria uoluit procedere palla:
 urit, seu nivea candida veste venit.
 Talis in aeterno felix Vertumnus Olympo
 mille habet ornatus, mille decenter habet.
 Sola puellarum digna est cui mollia caris 15
 vellera det sucis bis madefacta Tyros,
 possideatque, metit quidquid bene olentibus arvis
 cultor odoratae dives Arabs segetis,
 et quascumque niger rubro de litore gemmas
 proximus Eois colligit Indus aquis. 20

In whatever she performs, and wherever she
 steps her feet, Elegance composes her.
 If she unties her hair, although unkempt, she
 still is appropriate.
 If she ties her hair up, she should be revered.
 She sparks passion, whenever she appears in
 Tyrian dress.
 She sparks passion, whenever she appears in
 Ivory dress.
 Just like Vertumnus in the eternal sky,
 She has a thousand, and all appropriate,
 adornments.
 Among the girls, she is the only one worthy of
 receiving soft fleece, twice dipped in the
 precious dyes from Tyros;
 And she might have whatever the rich Arab
 harvester of the scented lands reaps in his
 sweet-smelling fields;
 And whatever gem the dark Indian in the
 Eastern waters collects from the red-Persian
 shores.

The first part of the poem (7–12) represents Sulpicia as partially in line with the expected behaviour of a Roman *femina* (but still displaying her agency); the second section (15–20) depicts her unambiguously and provocatively adorned according to Eastern wealth and foreign poetic tradition. These two images of Sulpicia pivot around the introduction of Vertumnus (13-14), the Olympian god of change, transformation, and inversion of gender roles. His appearance offers further intertextual material in metaliterary perspective: it recalls Propertius 4.8, in which the god is the main protagonist offering a programmatic voice for the subsequent female personae protagonists of book 4, while assuring the reader that the poet’s voice is “still retaining artistic” value.¹²⁰ In Propertius, emphasis is given to the maintenance of his *fama*; similarly, in Sulpicia, the preoccupation with her reputation—or perhaps, reception—is stressed by the adverb *decenter*. Milnor has also pointed out that “the image of Vertumnus in the first amicus poem may stand not for the idea that poets and poetry may be masked as someone or something else, but rather for the ways in which poetry actually constitutes identity,”¹²¹ a consideration which would strengthen the representation of Sulpicia in 3.8 not as an object-poem but as a subject-poetess.

¹²⁰ Wyke, “Taking the Woman’s Part,” 122.

¹²¹ Milnor, “Sulpicia’s (Corpo) reality,” 270. Milnor, however, does not consider 3.8 as authored by Sulpicia.

Subversive Sulpicia

As the word *componere* reflects a connection between the composition of a text and that of the female body, so does the word *culta* in line two. The line “*Sulpicia est tibi culta tuis, Mars magne, kalendis*” can be interpreted in two ways, both of which reflect on Sulpicia’s presentation as a poetess. Sulpicia could have been passively set up and embellished in her appearance as a votive object for the great Mars, hence interpreting and translating the sentence as “Sulpicia has been adorned for you, Great Mars, on the occasion of your Kalends.”¹²² Alternatively, a dative of possession structure is possible, where *culta* is the qualificative adjective ‘learned’ that identifies Sulpicia as a woman in the genre of Latin elegy (“O great Mars, on your Kalends you have erudite Sulpicia for you”).¹²³

This type of ambiguity, achieved through equally possible grammatical structures, is characteristic of Sulpicia’s own poetic voice. As a matter of fact, scholars have noticed Sulpicia’s preference for employing the passive voice whenever she is referring to herself in the cycle (3.13–18).¹²⁴ The presence of a similar structure in 3.8 is not only stylistically consistent with other poems, but it also proposes again the hermeneutic trend of ambiguously concealing and revealing intentions in 3.13 and 3.18,¹²⁵ smoothing the provocative warning to Mars to come and see her offering at the risk of his epic vigour.

Moreover, the employment of the word *culta* immediately associates Sulpicia with the elegiac genre and its tradition. Sulpicia’s adjective *culta* parallels the second poem of the *Monobiblos*, where Propertius praises the simple adornment of women over the luxurious embellishment of elegiac mistresses. Propertius, in fact, also describes the *puella* as *culta...sat* (“learned enough” 1.2.26) when adorned with the poems of Phoebus and the lyre of Calliope. As in Propertius, Apollo, his lyre, and the Muses appear in 3.8, where Sulpicia is also claimed to be the only *puella* worthy of the Muses’ chorus, displacing Sappho’s acclaimed role as the “tenth muse” as by Hellenistic tradition.¹²⁶

The metapoetic interpretation of the adjective *culta* as *docta* also characterizes the many adornments of lines 15–20.¹²⁷ On one hand, the luxurious adornments represent the preferred choice of the elegiac *puella*, yet on the other, they evoke the foreign provenance of the literary genre within which Sulpicia is active.¹²⁸ *Mollia*, the adjective employed in describing her Tyrian fleece, recalls the softness (*mollitia*) that represents the nature of the elegiac genre in opposition

¹²² Another interpretation that involves a passive construction was offered by Hinds, where Sulpicia would have been worshipped by Mars herself. Hinds, “The Poetess and the Reader,” 34.

¹²³ Although the adjective *cultus* is less frequently used than *doctus*, it is often employed with the same meaning. With specific reference to the elegiac composition, Ovid defines the poet Tibullus as *cultus* in *Amores* 1.15.28 and 3.9.56 (both in the vocative *culte Tibulle*) and Lygdamus in [Tib] 3.1.17 uses the adjective *cultum* to describe his elegiac *labellum*. The second structure is also mirrored in 3.12.2, where Juno has *tota* Sulpicia.

¹²⁴ Hallett, “Spectacle in the Eleven Elegies,” 198.

¹²⁵ Flaschenriem, “Sulpicia and the Rhetoric,” 36–54; Milnor, “Sulpicia’s (Corpo) reality,” 265ff.

¹²⁶ A. Gosetti-Murrayjohn, “Sappho as the Tenth Muse in Hellenistic Epigram,” *Arethusa* 39, no. 1 (2006): 23–5. Gosetti-Murrayjohn describes how the literary tradition of Sappho is concerned with her sexuality in the Roman context (see Ovid and Seneca), while it transcends eroticism in the Hellenistic epigrams.

¹²⁷ On the relationship between the body and its adornment as a metaphor for the literary stylistic in Ovid’s *Amores*, see Keith, “Corpus Eroticum,” 27–40.

¹²⁸ L. Bowditch, “Roman Love Elegy and the Eros of Empire,” in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. B. Gold (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell), 127.

to the *dura materia* of the Epic tradition. The choice of such a term is implicitly juxtaposed to *violens Mars* (“violent Mars”), the deification of harsh epic deeds, that risk being subjugated in Sulpicia’s sight (*caveto/ ne tibi merenti turpiter arma cadant*; “be careful so that you don’t shamefully drop your weapons while you admire her”). The poetess purposely tries to fascinate and stimulate Mars through her eyes, communicating a sense of pervasive elegance, through the alternation of different stimuli (touch, smell, and sight). The Phoenician Tyros gives precious dyed purple clothing; Sulpicia also possesses whatever essence the Arab farmer produces for her, and whatever gems are collected from Persian shores.

The association between luxurious adornments, the *puella*, and the adjective *culta* is also present in Propertius’ and Tibullus’ poetry but, unlike 3.8, the elegiac mistresses are presented as greedy for material preciousness.¹²⁹ The *amatores* often complain about the attraction that oriental wealth has for their *puella*, considering it a sign of her disengagement with the poetic gift of the poor elegiac poet. These moral complaints about wealth are a parodic revival of a *topos* in New Comedy, repurposed as a poetic claim on the part of the *amator* towards the genre of elegy.¹³⁰ The (fictional) poverty of the actor is the result of his choice in not pursuing the more lucrative road of Epic, as is the case of Propertius, in favour of chasing his elegiac mistress.¹³¹ Moreover, as in comedy, the greediness of the mistress is also connected to her status of courtesan, whose social standing is inferior to that of the *amator(es)*. The gift therefore serves the double purpose of marking the subaltern and the economic need of the *puella*, while also representing the erotic relationship and the sexual exchange between the two parties.

The difference between 3.8 and the conventional greedy *puella* should therefore be explained in social and poetic terms. The absence of moralization in 3.8 reflects Sulpicia’s proud status of aristocratic woman, which is hinted at in 3.8 in reference to the *Matronalia*. It also appears more unequivocally in 3.16 when she presents herself in the context of the social reputation and *fama* of her family name.¹³² She does not fit the representation of the *docta puella* as a lower status courtesan. The acquisition of jewelry, rather than the pressing requests for wealth, associates Sulpicia with the economic power of her family.¹³³ Similarly, her status appears in the employment of the noun *palla* to describe her clothing (line 11), a garment that is reserved for upper class Roman women.¹³⁴ Diverging from the needy *docta puella*, and more similar to Sappho, the preciousness of purple clothing is a signifier of social status.¹³⁵ Sulpicia is also not directly involved in a submissive sexual exchange with the *amator*, and whenever she does refer to their sexual pleasure she often describes it as mutual, unconventionally treating the two parts as equals.¹³⁶

¹²⁹ Bowditch, “Roman Love Elegy,” 125–8. Bowditch notes that Tibullus’ persona in 2.3 initially defines eastern wealth as *praeda* and then progressively renounces his ideal *paupertas* in order to satisfy his greedy Nemesis.

¹³⁰ See S. James, *Learned Girls and Male Persuasion: Gender and Reading in Roman Love Elegy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 71–107.

¹³¹ See Propertius 3.2.

¹³² See further discussion on 3.16 p. 69.

¹³³ J. Hallett, “Sulpicia and Her Fama,” 40–41. Hallett considers her description as a sign to enhance her status with respect to Cerinthus, reading intertextuality with Horace’s high-class prostitute Cerinthus (*Sat.* 1.2.80–82).

¹³⁴ A. Keith, “Sartorial Elegance and Poetic Finesse in the Sulpician Corpus,” in *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, ed. J. Edmondson and A. Keith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 2008), 199–200.

¹³⁵ Cf. Sappho’s fr.54, 92, 98a, 101.

¹³⁶ See later discussion on 3.12 (p. 52ff.), 3.13 (p. 35ff.), and 3.16 (p. 69 ff.).

The exploitative dynamics of Roman conquests, which are present in male elegiac discourse, are not part of Sulpicia's poetry. The East reveres the poetess with offerings that go beyond the symbolic value of "war booty" in the elegiac (and epic) motif. In her own "conquering" of the East, Sulpicia is subverting the masculine norm she has left behind Mars' *arma* on the second line, and she allows no space or active agency for any male character—whether it be a human or a god—whose presence is necessary in order to re-establish conventional gender roles between the binary category of Roman/foreigner and male/woman. The presence of the *Arab cultor* plays further with Sulpicia's image as a woman worthy to be praised: a *cultor* is not only the harvester who provides her with gifts but, also, he who reveres her.

Sulpicia's representation in 3.8 is therefore centered around her image of a poetic agent in line with a poetic program. She is an elegiac poetess and as such she is dressed in the vocabulary which characterizes it (*componere, culta*). But as a poetess, she also represents herself in line with the tradition that characterized both Latin and Greek elegy by alluding to the eastern provenance of the genre that she appears to successfully master. She also sets up her poetic voice in relation to the literary tradition of Sappho, whom she substitutes by becoming the tenth Roman Muse, and to the tradition of Catullus and Propertius through intertextual allusions. References are centered on Propertius' construction of his poetic *puella* and her aesthetic values. Although Sulpicia's (poetic) self is preoccupied with appearances of *Romanitas* and *Decorum*, it also reveals a marked and provocative agency that is disruptive of traditional gender norms. While elegies break traditional gender norms by presenting the *puella* as *domina* over the male poet *amator*, Sulpicia is both the *amator* and the *puella*, in a position of control over her composition.

Poetic Belonging, Erotic, and Maternity in 3.13

Poem 3.13 is frequently recognized as representing Sulpicia's poetic program since it anticipates *amor* as *materia* of her following epigrams. The poetess even anticipates the form of composition that the reader is to expect: the brief compositions of the remaining cycle (3.14–3.18) would find space in the open tablets that Sulpicia describes in 3.13.8. In this section of the thesis, and in line with some feminist interpretations of Sulpicia, I consider the erotic dimension in Sulpicia's 3.13 as an instrumental and complementary aspect of the poetic dimension: the love at stake is the one for poetry, and Cerinthus' role is solely to facilitate it.¹³⁷ In particular, I show how Sulpicia begins with a self-presentation as a poetess in the panorama of elegiac poetry by allusions to established literary *topoi*. In the context of elegiac poetry, this choice differs from the rest of the elegiac programmatic compositions, which explicitly name the poetic predecessors of the genre as well as alluding to them. Through allusions, I claim that the persistent references to Gallus frame her poetry in the genre of elegy in reference to an abstract and metapoetic conception of love and

¹³⁷ Fabre-Serris, "Sulpicia: An/other Female Voice in Ovid's *Heroides*," 149–173. Fabre-Serris, "La réception d'Empédocle dans la poésie latine: Virgile (Buc. 6), Lucrèce, Gallus et les poètes élégiaques," *Dictynna* 11 (2014): 1–24; Fabre-Serris, "Intratextuality and Intertextuality," 67–79; Flaschenriem, "Sulpicia and the Rhetoric," 36–54; Keith "Tandem venit amor," 295–310; C. Merriam, "Sulpicia: Just Another Roman Poet," *The Classical World* 100, no. 1 (2006): 11–15; Milnor, "Sulpicia's (Corpo) reality," 259–282; Paolucci, "Sulpicia e l'antitesi Sulpicia," 129–140; L. Percy, "Erasing Cerinthus: Sulpicia and Her Audience," *The Classical World* 100, no. 1 (2006): 31–36; D. Roessel, "The Significance of the Name Cerinthus in the Poems of Sulpicia," *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974–2014)* 120, (1990): 243–250; Wyke, "Taking the Woman's Part," 110–128. The authors focused on the programmatic aspects of 3.13 and the hermeneutics of the poem beyond the dynamics of love.

signal her place in poetic discourse; a second line of allusion points at Sulpicia's relationship with the divinity and her poetic concerns, which align her with Sappho's lyric poetry and female literary tradition. The advantage of interpreting Sulpicia's love as a poetic love permits me to resolve a perceived "inconsistency" in the poem: the strong contrast between the private dimension of the couple's love and the later revelation to the public of Sulpicia's poetic love compositions.¹³⁸ Lastly, I present Sulpicia's combination of epic and elegy in the use of maternal and erotic images to express her concerns over her literary *fama*.

Sulpicia in the elegiac tradition

For the reader's convenience, I include here the text and the translation of Sulpicia's text, since the following paragraphs involve a close reading of the verses.

3.13

Tandem venit amor, qualem texisse pudore
 quam nudasse alicui sit mihi fama magis.
 Exorata meis illum Cytherea Camenis
 attulit in nostrum deposuitque sinum.
 Exsolvit promissa Venus: mea gaudia narret,
 dicetur si quis non habuisse suam.
 Non ego signatis quicquam mandare tabellis,
 me legat ut nemo quam meus ante, uelim,
 sed peccasse iuvat, vultus componere famae
 taedet: cum digno digna fuisse ferar.

3.13

Finally, love has come, such a love that it would
 be more shameful for my reputation to have
 covered it with decency, rather than to have
 revealed it to someone.
 5 Persuaded by my Muse, Cytherea has taken it
 here and she has entrusted it in my heart.
 Venus has maintained her promises: if someone
 will be said not to have had his own, may he recite
 my pleasures.
 I would never want to entrust anything to sealed
 tablets, with the result that nobody reads me
 before my man.
 But I enjoy having transgressed, I am tired of
 making my face presentable for reputation:
 May I be deemed worthy together with a person
 worthy of me.

In line with the poetic voice of 3.8, from the very beginning the poetess engages with poetic precedents through intertextual parallels that concern elegy as a genre based on erotic discourse. The first distich of the poem (*Tandem venit amor*; "Finally love has come") presents an allusion to Gallus that connects her poem to the "father" of the Augustan elegy.¹³⁹ The arguments in support of a reference or a connection to Gallus are based on the nature of the word association, on the

¹³⁸ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 276.

¹³⁹ On Gallus in Sulpicia, see especially J. Fabre-Serris, "La réception d'Empédocle dans la poésie latine: Virgile (Buc. 6), Lucrèce, Gallus et les poètes élégiaques," 1–24; Fabre-Serris, "Sulpicia, Gallus et les élégiaques: Propositions de lecture de l'épigramme 3.13," *EuGeStA* 7 (2017): 115–139). Gibson defines Gallus as the connection between Catullus "as a precursor" and the other elegists. See R. Gibson, "Gallus: The First Roman Love Elegist," in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. B. Gold (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell): 174.

word order, and lastly on the popularity of the expression.¹⁴⁰ First, in Sulpicia, the verb *venire* anticipates the arrival of Venus in line 5 through the assonance of the first three letters of the verb with the name of the goddess.¹⁴¹ This association reinforces a possible etymological connection between Venus and verbs from *venire*, *vincire*, and *vincere* (“come, bind, and overcome”),¹⁴² present in the Epicurean thought of Lucretius, and then absorbed by Gallus and the other elegists.¹⁴³ Second, the argument for an allusion to Gallus is also connected to the position of the words with the verb that anticipates the noun. *Venit amor* also reminds the reader of *omnia vincit amor* (“love overcomes everything”) in Virgil’s 10th Eclogue (69), a possible expression of Gallan origin, since Gallus and his love are the theme of Virgil’s poem.¹⁴⁴ Third, in studying Gallus’ influence on other poets, scholars conjecture that the spread of the same expression in an analogous context—in this case *amor* with the verb *venire*—suggests a common original source.¹⁴⁵

While Sulpicia’s poem does not engage with the possible reception of the Epicurean idea of love reworked in Gallus and Ovid, the allusion in Sulpicia presents “love” as a central topic in the Roman elegiac tradition within which Sulpicia’s cycle operates (a sick lover: 3.10, 3.17; *genethliaca*: 3.11, 3.12, 3.14, 3.15; love chase: 3.9; *servitium amoris* 3.11: 3.12; separation: 3.16, 3.18; *praeceptor amoris*: 3.13). The strength of alluding to the Roman precursor of the genre, therefore, is particularly pertinent in a programmatic poem, and it resembles what Propertius and Ovid do in their own works by inscribing themselves in the poetic traditions of the other elegists, or other poets. Ovid, for example, explicitly contextualizes his works in relation to Gallus, Propertius, and Tibullus, both in the *Ars Amatoria* and in the *Tristia*.¹⁴⁶ Propertius mentions Gallus and comments on his poetic voice in his second book of elegies in the context of poetic dimension.¹⁴⁷

An allusion to Gallus serves not only as a declaration of belonging to the genre of elegy, but is also employed by Sulpicia as a way to elevate the “reality” of her personal love encounters to a love that is far from being privately personal, and instead is subject to the elegiac poetic rules. A second Gallan allusion that suggests metapoetic interpretations arise from the very first word of the poem, *tandem*, which evokes Gallus’ papyrus from Qasr Ibrim (*tandem fecerunt carmina Musae/ quae possem domina deicere digna mea*; “the Muses have finally made poems that I could consider worthy of my mistress”).¹⁴⁸ Like Gallus, Sulpicia welcomes the arrival of a worthy poetic drive: she reveals her need to go public and claim her status of *digna* by the end of the poem. This

¹⁴⁰ S. Hinds, “Venus, Varro and the Vates: Toward the Limits of Etymologizing Interpretation,” *Dictynna* 3 (2006): 2–6; Fabre-Serris, “Sulpicia: An/other Female Voice,” 149–173, 150.

¹⁴¹ Fabre-Serris, “Sulpicia: An/other Female Voice,” 149–173.

¹⁴² Hinds, “Venus, Varro and the Vates,” 2–6.

¹⁴³ Fabre-Serris “La réception d’Empédocle dans la poésie latine,” 12–15. References to Lucretius’ interpretation of love, for example, are also present in Ovid’s *Ars* 2.460, 474–77, where he describes love and sex as forces capable of elevating humans from the sphere of the animal world and its conflict. See also S. Lilja, *The Roman Elegists’ Attitude Towards Women* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1965), 206–7.

¹⁴⁴ Fabre-Serris, “Sulpicia: An/other Female Voice,” 149.

¹⁴⁵ *Venit amor* also appears in Propertius, 1.7.26, (*venerit amor*) in 2.4.1b/2.3.46; Ovid *Amores* 1.6.13, *Heroides* 4.19; *veniunt... pudor atque amor* in *Heroides* 15.121. See also Fabre-Serris, “La réception d’Empédocle,” 1–24; Hinds, “Venus, Varro and the Vates,” 1–22.

¹⁴⁶ Ovid, *Amores* 1.15.28–30, 3.9.5ff; *Remedia* 759–766; *Ars Amatoria*, 3.333–4; *Tristia* 2.1.447–63–65; 4.10.51–53; 5.1.17–18.

¹⁴⁷ See Propertius 2.34.91 in Wyke, “Written Women,” 47–61.

¹⁴⁸ Fabre-Serris, “Sulpicia: An/other Female Voice,” 149.

reading is further strengthened by the first word after the caesura: the type of love that Sulpicia considers overdue (*tandem*) is also elevated from its materiality through the use of the adjective (*qualem*; “that kind”). *Qualem* qualifies and justifies Sulpicia’s poetic production, and it serves as an *excusatio* for the poetess’ lack of *pudor* and silence: her inability to cover herself due to the arrival of the elegiac love. Therefore, the double allusion to Gallus in the first and last lines of the poem creates a ring structure that frames Sulpicia’s poetic discourse, triggering a series of literary references which not only anticipate the content of the poetry, but also affirm Sulpicia’s role and value as a poetess within a specific cultural environment.¹⁴⁹

Sulpicia’s allusions, however, are not exclusively to Gallus and elegy. By representing herself as a protégée of Venus (in the form of the Greek Cytherea) and by presenting her poetry through the Roman deities of songs (the Camenae), Sulpicia makes a programmatic statement that ascribes her poetry to two poetic traditions: Roman elegy, but also Greek lyric.¹⁵⁰ Both Sappho and Sulpicia employ the epithet of Cytherea,¹⁵¹ and they both stress the close, almost confidential, relationship with divine.¹⁵² In fragment 86, for example, Sappho calls on Cytherea, invoking her protection and asking her to grant her prayer in the name of a past connection between the poetess and the goddess. Noting a parallel with Aphrodite’s role in Sappho’s lyric (fr.1), Percy argutely points out how the word *promissa* (“promises”) in line 5 further informs the initial *tandem* that welcomes love. Its arrival is presented as something due to Sulpicia from the divinity as a result of Sulpicia’s persuasive poetic songs.¹⁵³ Sulpicia’s successful persuasion of the goddess (*exorata meis [...] Cytherea Camenis*; “Persuaded by my Muse, Cytherea”) is accentuated by the use of the emphatic prefix *ex*, valuing the power and the efficacy of Sulpicia’s own poems even more.

Sulpicia continues by claiming her choice to publicize her love:

...qualem texisse pudore
quam nudasse alicui sit mihi fama magis.

(...such [a love] that it would be more
shameful for my reputation to have covered
it with decency, rather than to have revealed
it to someone).

¹⁴⁹ G. Conte, *Memoria dei Poeti e Sistema Letterario* (Torino: Einaudi, 1974), 19–21. Conte magnificently describes the role of allusion as a claim of poetic identity between witnessing “history” and creating it anew through the new meaning that the allusion gains within the new composition. Particularly interesting is also Conte’s category of “*memoria incipitaria*” in the re-evocation of literary traditions of (and in) the incipit of a poem (45–74). Although little poetry from Gallus remains to perform any intertextual study of Gallus’ (vs. Sulpicia’s) programmatic incipits, the presence of Gallan allusion in Sulpicia’s poetry set her in reference to the specific elegiac (metapoetic) discourse.

¹⁵⁰ Flaschenriem, “Sulpicia and the Rhetoric,” 40. It is interesting to notice that a similar trend is not unprecedented in Roman poetry. Conte, *Memoria dei Poeti*, 49–51. Conte describes Virgil performing a similar move in the opening line of his epic by simultaneously alluding to the Greek epic of Homer and the Roman one of Ennius.

¹⁵¹ See Sappho’s fr.86 and 140.

¹⁵² Merriam, “Sulpicia: Just Another Roman Poet,” 12. Merriam stresses the resemblance with fr.1.

¹⁵³ Percy, “Erasing Cerinthus,” 32–33.

Much literary debate has centered around these verses, focusing on the social and gender-specific aspects of *pudor* and *tegere*. These terms associate the lack of female chastity with the *mala fama* that results from her public disclosure of love (*nudare*; “to undress”).¹⁵⁴ Although the sentence inevitably reflects on the problematic aspects of the female speaker in Roman society, scholars have overlooked how the presence of *pudor* and poetic revelation are, in fact, fairly frequent in literature regardless of the gender of the writer. Hardie, instead, has noted such a connection in Ovid and Propertius, proving that the lack of *pudor* represents the lover’s necessary enslavement to his passion for the creation of literary *fama*.¹⁵⁵ As in Sulpicia’s discourse, Ovid’s impersonation of Phaedra reworks a very similar image of a poetic block by *pudor*: the heroine’s virtue is soon overcome by *Amor* and thus she writes.¹⁵⁶ The nature of losing *pudor* for the sake of writing therefore characterizes both male and female poetic discourses, and Sappho’s fr.137 is an important literary precedent to the elegist in connecting *pudor* and poetic revelation.

θέλω τι εἰπῆν, ἀλλά με κωλύει
αἰδώς,
[...] αἰ δ’ ἦχες ἐσθλῶν ἴμερον ἢ καλῶν
καὶ μὴ τι εἰπῆν γλῶσσ’ ἐκύκα κακόν
αἰδώς κέν σε οὐκ εἶχεν ὄμματ’,
ἀλλ’ ἔλεγες περὶ τῷ δικαίῳ.

I want to say something, but shame prevents me
yet if you had a desire for good or beautiful things
and your tongue were not concocting some evil to
say, shame would not hold down your eyes
but rather you would speak about what is just.

(Trans. Anne Carson)

Sappho’s verses are transmitted through Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1367a) as a dialogue between the poetess and the lyric poet Alcaeus, in which αἰδώς (sense of honour/shame, the Greek equivalent for *pudor*) is overcome for the sake of speaking, in light of the desire (ἴμερον 3) for good or beauty (ἐσθλῶν ἢ κάλων 3). The context in which Aristotle reports the dialogue between the two poets pertains to the remembrance of virtue over time, and one can only assume that Sappho’s extract was, in part, not only a discussion of the aesthetics of poetic production, but also on the intergenerational value and reputation of poetry, a topic that plays a significant role in poetic discourse. Sulpicia’s possible allusion or reference to such metapoetic concerns, expressed by the lyric poetess, is not only consistent with the general theme of the poem and its programmatic nature, but it also establishes another connection between Sappho and Sulpicia. The association

¹⁵⁴ Skoie has pointed out the tendency of earlier scholars to interpret *fama* as *mala fama* in Scalinger and Tränkle. M. Skoie, *Reading Sulpicia*, 101, 278–9. H. Tränkle, *Texte und Kommentare Eine altertumswissenschaftliche Reihe* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 303, but also P. Miller, *Latin Erotic Elegy: An Anthology and Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), 160. On the association between the female dimension and *pudor* in these verses, see in particular: Fabre-Serris, “Sulpicia: An/other Female Voice,” 152ff.

¹⁵⁵ P. Hardie, *Ovid’s Poetics of Illusion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 364–5. See Hardie on Propertius 2.24 and Ovid 3.1, more briefly on Sulpicia (369–70).

¹⁵⁶ R. Armstrong, *Cretan Women: Pasiphae, Ariadne, and Phaedra in Latin Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 263. Armstrong also notes the parallels between the impossibility that Ovid faces in writing epic in the *Amores* and the incipit of Phaedra’s letter.

with Sappho not only includes Sulpicia in the panorama of broadly renowned and learned poets, but also to the smaller circle of women speaking of desire who represented themselves as desiring subjects, a topic indeed appropriate for Sulpicia's 3.13.¹⁵⁷

Since Sulpicia's personal undressing is a metaphor for public speaking, her revelation and accessibility to everyone is problematized predominantly at a poetic level.¹⁵⁸ Her writing is worthy of concern not so much because it represents a revelation of her romantic feelings, with their subsequent social implications, but because it constitutes a revelation of her poetic corpus to a community of poets. Her poetic "coming out" (and accessibility to everyone through the reading of her corpus) recalls a common treatment that male poets reserve for their creations, assimilating the spread of the text to the prostitution of the mistress.¹⁵⁹ This resonates with a Callimachean metaliterary image in which popular poetry disgusts him as he favours a more refined and elitist form of poetry, like in a simile, comparing poetry to a lover accessible to others.¹⁶⁰ In elegy, the trope of literary publicity takes the form of a problematic attraction. On one hand "being written" provides everlasting life (see for example Tibullus' 1.4.61–67); on the other, it is a metaphor for the prostitution of the *puella*'s (poetic) body. Propertius, for example, describes Cynthia as having been read excessively in the *forum* (2.24); Ovid cries for the notoriety that Corinna has obtained through his verses (*Amores*, 3.12). The ultimate gift of fame, therefore, has a negative downside: the excessive spread and popularity of the *scripta puella* is equivalent to her accessibility to every other man/reader.¹⁶¹ This metaphor enters Rome's literary tropes beyond the realm of elegy. Using a similar image, Horace addresses and rebukes his book, under the guise of a self-selling slave boy. Just as publication generates potential everlasting *fama* (as the poet refers to in the *Odes*), Epistle 1.20 explores how the other necessary consequence of publication is the prostitution of the work, which is excessively ruined by the constant touch of people's hands.¹⁶² An inevitable consequence of the spread of the elegiac text/mistress is the diminished exclusivity of the poet-*amator*, with detachment from his poetic creation as the conclusion of his poetic game, leaving the poet with the need to find new, exclusive, contributions to the genre.

Unlike the above-mentioned image of literary prostitution, Sulpicia only apparently seems troubled by the revelation (*nudasse*) of her corpus to the public, and her concerns do not regard the exclusivity of her poetry. Her interest is the maintenance of her valuable and reputable poetic

¹⁵⁷ On the interpretation of Sappho as a learned poetess capable of alluding to and exploiting the Homeric literary tradition to express female agency and female desire, see: P. duBois, "Sappho and Helen," *Arethusa* 11, no. 1 (1978): 89–99. Although not part of the object of my study, duBois' reading is also intriguing because of its analysis of the Greek cultural context (and the variation of its cultural contexts) that determined more space for women speaking about desire and representing themselves as desiring subjects. From this perspective, there could be an element of contact between Sappho as a desiring agent that breaks with the representation of women in oral tradition and resulting from the political change in societal structures. This could be another point of contact between Sulpicia's and Sappho's experiences as women speaking of desire, if the greater freedom of women in the Late Republican Period is taken into consideration.

¹⁵⁸ Flaschenriem, "Sulpicia and the Rhetoric," 38.

¹⁵⁹ Milnor, "Sulpicia's (Corpo) reality," 260.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *Epigram* 30.

¹⁶¹ On the role of the poet's alter ego as a pimp who, through his poetic skills, "prostitutes" his text/mistress, see K. Myers, "The Poet and the Procuress: The Lena in Latin Love Elegy," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 86 (1996): 1–21; T. Fear, "The Poet as Pimp: Elegiac Seduction in the Time of Augustus," *Arethusa* 33, no. 2 (2000): 217–240.

¹⁶² J. Harrison, "Deflating the Odes: Horace, Epistles 1.20," *Classical Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (1988): 473–474.

art, represented as inseparable from her own body.¹⁶³ The connection between the body of the poetess and her poetic drive is supported even more by the ring structure of the poem. The implications that her writing has on her *fama* in line 9 mirrors *fama*'s earlier appearance in line 2. First, in a provocative way, she hints at her work to be widely received through the expression “*peccasse iuvat*” (“transgressing is pleasurable”). Second, by employing a word (*ferar*; “May I/ I will be said”) that can either be a present subjunctive (expressing desire) or future indicative (expressing future intention), Sulpicia recognizes, but also wishes, to be the object and subject of others’ discourse, delivering the provocative line: *cum digno digna fuisse* (“worthy together with a person worthy of me”).¹⁶⁴ Milnor notes further that another ring composition in the poem connects the materiality of the initial *nudasse* to the final expression *fuisse cum* (being-together), by which the poetess returns to the initial awareness of her own physicality and preoccupation to be deemed worthy in a variety of perspectives—personally, poetically, socially.¹⁶⁵

Sexual allusion enters the poem through the Latin expression *fuisse cum*, which is the equivalent of the Greek erotic term *syn-ousia*, referring to a sexual intercourse with her not-yet-explicitly-mentioned lover. The minor presence of the lover is also consistent with the employment of a less charged erotic term, since *syn-ousia* is a milder choice with respect to the more explicit and unequivocal verb *concumbere* (“lay together”).¹⁶⁶ Although the expression undoubtedly opens to erotic allusions, the passive voice (*ferar*) emphasizes that reputation over time is the poetess’ main concern. The temporal dimension in Sulpicia’s revelation, and her reception, is also highlighted by the choice of tenses. The present subjunctive in the jussive clause stresses the remembrance as having been worthy, as a poetess, with a laudable source of her poetry (or with praiseworthy poetry itself). Furthermore, the predicative adjective *digna* positively describes Sulpicia beyond the sexual act. The finitude of her human existence is in juxtaposition with the ever present *dignitas* that she desires for herself, just as the (male) elegiac poets are concerned with their everlasting notoriety. The employment of the figure of speech of the polyptoton (*digno digna*) catches the reader’s attention in valuing both the poetess and her object of interest.

The identity of love and poetry, the object of Sulpicia’s main interest, minimizes the role of the lover, who is in fact mostly absent from the narrative.¹⁶⁷ “He” enters the last line indirectly and ambiguously as an unspecified appendix (*cum digno*), which can also be interpreted as a product of Sulpicia’s poetic endeavour (“May I be deemed worthy together with something worthy of me”). The association of the poetess with her love-poetry might have been the reason for the choice of such an erotic term symbolizing the sexual act; the acme of an inextricable blurring of the two elements. Interpreting the vague expression *cum digno* as Sulpicia’s own poetic creation connects again to Gallus’ *digna carmina*, a literary image that is also similarly present in Sulpicia’s

¹⁶³ See relevant discussion on poem 3.8. Consider also the Propertian metaphor of the mistress’ name and her book in Propertius’ 1.18.21–2. Since ‘bark’ (*liber*) in Latin is a common metonymy to ‘book,’ Cynthia’s name is bound to Propertius’ name in his physical and poetic composition. See also Propertius’ 3.2.18 in which Cynthia’s *forma* is monumentalized through Propertius’ *carmina*.

¹⁶⁴ Milnor, “Sulpicia’s (Corpo) reality,” 276.

¹⁶⁵ Milnor, 274. Milnor defines corpo-reality as Sulpicia’s marked corporality in her erotic elegy as a way to represent the visibility of the author’s body and of her poetry.

¹⁶⁶ R. Piastrì, “I carmi di Sulpicia e il repertorio tipico dell’elegia,” 145. *Concumbere* is also employed elsewhere in Sulpicia (3.9).

¹⁶⁷ Percy, “Erasing Cerinthus,” 31–36. Note also that the identity of love and love poetry is also reflected linguistically in elegy. Ovid, for example, declares that he was not the only one who composed “*amores*,” clearly referring to love poetry *Tristia* 2.361.

other poems (cf. 3.8, 3.12).¹⁶⁸ While her contemporaries frequently portray the notoriety of their mistresses (and henceforth their poems), Sulpicia never displays any positive or negative concern with Cerinthus' reputation. Cerinthus does not represent her corpus as Cynthia for Propertius; it is her body, instead, that is at stake. The apprehension of *fama* is exclusively "Sulpician," she is solely concerned with the way *she* appears: the last verb is unequivocally first person singular.¹⁶⁹

As Sulpicia introduces Venus highlighting a *do ut des* ("I give, so that you may give") relationship between the goddess and the poetess, by offering her poetry (*meis Camenis*) she receives *illum* ("that") in exchange. The theme of Sulpicia's *ars poetica* proceeds consistently with the offering of her poems to those who do not have an "*amor qualis*." In another passive structure (*dicetur*; "it is said"), the poetess wishes to be the subject of conversation through the re-evocation of her own *gaudia* ("pleasures"). Fulkerson notices an internal contradiction in this line (*exsolvit promissa Venus: mea gaudia narret*; "Venus has maintained her promises: if someone may be said not to have had his own, may he recite my pleasures"), which she interprets as symmetrically dividing the public and private dimension of love: "Venus has done her job and S[ulpicia] has had joy, but why does this mean someone else should tell the story?"¹⁷⁰ However, this contradiction could characterize the whole poem, rather than the single line. The first four lines are purely concerned with Venus, Sulpicia, and the arrival of love; the rest of the poem discusses the public side of it. A key point in untangling this opposition is interpreting Sulpicia's *gaudia* as *scripta gaudia*, standing for her literary corpus. The verb *narrare*, therefore, should not necessarily be interpreted as an invitation to have her love as *materia* for an external poet, an "amicus" ventriloquizing her poetic voice.¹⁷¹ The employment of the verb *narrare* does not exclude Sulpicia's own poems from being material appropriated in future poetic discourses, as marked by the shift in adjectives from *meus* to *suam*. In addressing an audience composed also of men, Sulpicia claims that men can identify with her experience. Although it appears problematic for a woman to speak to a man on matters of love, elegy as a genre is based on constant gender inversion and transgression. Ovid's account of the poetess Perilla offers also another parallel to Sulpicia in which a poetess is described as a *praeceptrix* ("teacher") of love through her poetry directed to both women and men (3.7.29-30).¹⁷² Sulpicia's analogous presentation, almost as a universal *praeceptrix*, is also consistent with the constant presence of external readers of her poetry (*alicui, quis, non nemo*). Her poems are not created for the single audience of her lover alone, but on the contrary they are directed to every reader of the genre.

The Erotic and the Maternal

The blurring between the abovementioned erotic motifs and Sulpicia's poetic production is represented in the image of the goddess dropping *illum* in her embrace. Clearly, *illum* may both refer to the lover, who is not mentioned in the poem, or to *amor*, referring again to the type of love

¹⁶⁸ Fabre-Serris, "La réception d'Empédocle," 10. Fabre-Serris points out how the preoccupation for *digna carmina* comes as a frequent preoccupation for Sulpicia.

¹⁶⁹ Similarly, *arguar* in 3.9.16.

¹⁷⁰ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 276.

¹⁷¹ The trend becomes popular with Hinds, "The Poetess and the Reader," 42. Hinds suggests that Amicus has picked up on Sulpicia's provocative challenge in poetizing her love.

¹⁷² See note 76 on the reference for Perilla and Sulpicia in this thesis.

that generates her poetry.¹⁷³ The erotic mood is enhanced by a possible allusion to the Homeric erotic episode in which Paris is dropped into Helen's bedchamber by Aphrodite.¹⁷⁴ In contrast to Helen, Sulpicia welcomes the gift of the divine, rather than rejecting and rebuking it.¹⁷⁵ Combining a mix of metapoetic and erotic interpretation, Roessel suggests that *illum* might refer to the (not-yet-mentioned) *tabellae* where the elegiac poetic production results.¹⁷⁶ Despite the lack of gender agreement, which makes the interpretation not immediately clear to the reader, tablets in the laps of the poet are a Callimachean image (ἐμοῖς ἐπὶ δέλτον ἔθηκα γούνασιν; "I place a tablet on my knees"—*Aetia* fr.1.21–22).¹⁷⁷

The reference to an erotic dropping in the laps and to the literary Callimachean sense of holding scrolls becomes relevant for the association between poetic production and the dimension of poetic maternity.¹⁷⁸ Sulpicia's authorial claim of universal poetess is simultaneously evoked not only through the erotic note of *cum digno digna fuisse* ("to be worthy with someone/something worthy"), but also through images of (re)productive consequences of such eroticism. In noticing a resemblance between Sulpicia and the epic heroine Dido, Keith points out that *Cytherea* dropping *illum* as *Amor* recalls an episode from the *Aeneid* that involves the realm of affectionate love:¹⁷⁹ Venus, who also appears there with the epithet of *Cytherea*, instructs Cupid (alternative for *Amor*) to sit in the guise of Ascanius on Dido's *gremium* to spark her love for Aeneas. Despite the fact that the two terms *gremium* (bosom) and *sinus* (fold) are technically different at their origin, Virgil and his contemporaries use the two nouns interchangeably in accordance with its idiomatic use at the time.¹⁸⁰

Although Keith explores the episode in terms of similarity between Sulpicia and Dido and in terms of divine intervention, I read the reference to the Virgilian narrative as a combination of erotic and maternal affection in allusion to poetry.¹⁸¹ Sulpicia suggests "poetic maternity" without eliminating its erotic content. Dido's pleasure in holding Ascanius in her lap is eroticized through Ascanius' resemblance to his father (1.657–660); similarly, her neglected maternal desire to have "a little Aeneas" in her palace is almost an incestuous substitute for Aeneas' future absence (4.327–30). The Virgilian allusion represents a fitting image for elegiac discourse, since Sulpicia's poetic maternity and the erotic dimension coexist. Sulpicia's epic allusions to maternal scenes and their connection with her poetry also aligns her with a long-lasting literary trope, in which literary compositions are presented as the offspring of the author both in the Greek and in the Roman world. Hauser points out that Diotima defines the works of Homer, Hesiod, and other poets as their ἔκγονα (Plato, *Symp.* 209d). Similarly, Catullus defines his *carmina* as *dulces fetus* ("sweet

¹⁷³ Skoie, *Reading Sulpicia*, 286.

¹⁷⁴ C. Merriam, "Sulpicia and the Art of Literary Allusion," 161–163.

¹⁷⁵ Keith, "Tandem venit amor," 310 note 30; Hallett, "Sulpicia and Her Fama," 38; A. Keith, "Authorial Identity in Latin Love Elegy: Literary Fictions and Erotic Failings," in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. B. Gold (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 282.

¹⁷⁶ Roessel, "The Significance of the Name Cerinthus in the Poems of Sulpicia," 245–8.

¹⁷⁷ Merriam, "Sulpicia and the Art," 161.

¹⁷⁸ Even Fulkerson favours the asexual interpretation of the expression, as it is equally employed to describe a male embrace. See Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 274.

¹⁷⁹ Keith, "Tandem venit amor," 301.

¹⁸⁰ Keith, 309 notes 25 and 26.

¹⁸¹ Keith, however, explores the resemblance in terms of divine intervention and the machinery of the gods: "Sulpicia has thus sympathetically reimagined Dido's ignorance of the divine machinery of the *Aeneid* in her own informed personal relation with the Muses and Venus, and has recast Dido's pursuit of a love undertaken against the will of Rome's gods as a love fully in accordance with divine will." Keith, 301.

offspring” 65.3), and Ovid proudly emphasizes his masculine creativity by defining his work as *creata sine matre* (“creation without a mother” *Tr.* 3.14.13).¹⁸² To add to this sample, Ovid’s very first poem of *Tristia* presents him as his books’ *parens* (“parent” 1.115), while his books are presented as children thrown away from a reader’s bosom (*e gremio...suo* “his own lap” 1.66), resembling, in an opposite way, Sulpicia’s description of embrace.

Sulpicia’s use of this literary image comes through the epic allusion which combines the two different, but not mutually exclusive, spheres of love (maternal and erotic). Since in Sulpicia, as in elegy, the realms of sexuality and poetics are intertwined, with the sexual act as metaphor for the poetic inspiration, then the literary composition could correspond to the final product of Sulpicia’s maternal and poetic gestation. The relationship between artistic creation and procreation connects elegiac Sulpicia here instead with the reception of Empedoclean thought, according to which, women’s creativity would emerge during gestation when inspired by artistic masterpieces.¹⁸³ Sulpicia’s image of maternal creation is therefore particularly pertinent in a programmatic poem that anticipates the creation of other literary works. A later parallel from a masculine perspective comes from the *Tristia*, in which Ovid not only presents himself as a father of his own poems, but also merges the idea of parenthood with the evolving poetic composition. First, he starts by identifying himself with his interrupted *Metamorphoses*, employing a simile of paternity: *utque cremasse suum fertur ... natum Thestias... sic ego non meritos mecum peritura libellos imposui rapidis uiscera nostra rogis* (“Just as Thestius’ daughter burnt her own son... Thus, I placed my undeserving books, my own life, to die with me on the rapid pyre” 1.7.17–20). Then, he defines the unpolished and unfinished composition as an adolescent who is not fully grown “*adhuc crescens*” (“still growing” 22). With poetic anxiety about the perfection and completion of his work, he concludes by providing a fictional preface for the reader to excuse his own unfinished orphans (*orba parente suo [...] uolumina*; “volumes deprived of their own parent” 1.7.35).

So far, I have provided a reading of 3.13 that presents Sulpicia’s excitement not for the arrival of her lover, but for the arrival of a poetic inspiration which is erotic *prima facie* but permits metapoetic allusions. The authoress’ poetic affirmation also passes through powerful poetic allusion, which often reveals poetic concerns rather than erotic ones. I have also highlighted how Sulpicia’s main preoccupations are centered around the spread of her poetic voice to an external audience, and how this main preoccupation is in line with her other contemporary elegiac poems.

¹⁸² E. Hauser, “Optima tu proprii nominis auctor,”: 166.

¹⁸³ Aetius 5.11.1 (Dox. Gr. 422), it refers to the reproductive “two-seeds theory” but reserves a privileged role to the mother, see M. McAuley, *Reproducing Rome. Motherhood in Virgil, Ovid, Seneca and Statius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 56

Celebrating the City and Literary Patronage in 3.14 and 3.15

In 3.14 and 3.15, Sulpicia explores the motif of her birthday to complain about her distance from Rome. Poem 3.15 seems to be a response to the previous birthday poem, but the uncertainty of the transmitted text has complicated the interpretation. The second line in the manuscripts reads: “*Natali Romae iam licet esse tuo*” (“Now it is possible to be in Rome for your birthday”). Due to the presence of *tuo* in line two, some scholars considered the two events separately, assuming Cerinthus’ birthday to be the topic of 3.15, and Sulpicia’s birthday to be the topic for 3.14. However, there are several linguistic parallels between the two poems that lead me to prefer the emendation of *suo* in relation to Sulpicia, who is discussing her birthday in third person.¹⁸⁴ The presence of the phrase *ex animo* in 3.15.2, moreover, recalls the earlier use of the word in poem 3.14.7; the verb *ago* is employed in both poems, and the adjective *tristis* connotes the same situation in both poems (3.14.2; 3.15.3).¹⁸⁵ Concerns about the relation between poems are not an oddity of Sulpicia’s transmission alone. Propertius’ 1.8, for example, explores a similar topic of separation and travel in two probably separate poems (1.8a and 1.8b) that are clearly interconnected thematically and linguistically.¹⁸⁶

Although they are “birthday poems,” Sulpicia’s two compositions do not present the standard elements that characterize the subgenre of the genethliacon: there is no celebration of the event and of the birthday person, no prayer to the divinity, no ritual performed. The occasion of the birthday, therefore, is just a pretext to explore the theme of separation from Rome and her lover. I argue that for Sulpicia, the topic is separation not just from her beloved, but rather from the cultural environment that nourishes her art. I start by analyzing the predominant relationship that Sulpicia discusses: that with the landscape. In this context, I show how the city of Rome is associated with Sulpicia as an elegiac lover and as a poetic agent, a trope that is also present in Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid. To strengthen the connection between Sulpicia’s “abduction” and a literary landscape, I emphasize the open dimension of the poem: both the addressee and the full audience of the poem are external to the elegiac couple. The presence of Messalla, in particular, reworks the literary motif of patronage but in the context of Sulpicia’s female persona.

Poetically, the city of Rome has been represented as the center of elegiac discourse.¹⁸⁷ Catullus, first, binds himself to Rome in love elegy 68 (34–35). Similarly, Ovid and Propertius offer a topography of the city centred around the courtship of girls.¹⁸⁸ Tibullus 1.3, instead, focuses on separation from Delia and from the city of Rome (9). Although Tibullus artificially opposes the

¹⁸⁴ See discussion on 3.14 and 3.15 p. 45ff.

¹⁸⁵ This should not be interpreted as the idiomatic expression for “sincerely.” See R. Lyne, *Collected Papers on Latin Poetry*, 357–8.

¹⁸⁶ On this interpretation of Propertius 1.8ab, see B. Gold, “Time, Poetry, and Immortality in Propertius (“Propertius” 1.8),” *The Classical Journal* 81, no. 2 (1986): 148–157. S. Heyworth, “Place and Meaning in Tibullus, Lygdamus, Sulpicia,” in *Life, Love and Death in Latin Poetry*, ed. S. Frangoulidis and S. Harrison (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 83; M. Skoie, “Reading Sulpicia: (Em)plotting Love,” in *Plotting with Eros: Essays on the Poetics of Love and the Erotics of Reading*, ed. I. Nilsson (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2009), 61. Both Heyworth and Skoie consider Propertius’ 1.8 as a parallel for Sulpicia. Skoie, in particular, turns her attention to the successfully performative role of Sulpicia’s poem.

¹⁸⁷ On the treatment of Rome, I am obviously not considering the imaginary treatment of early Rome of Tibullus 2.5 and Propertius’ 4th book of elegies.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. for example Propertius 2.19.1–10 and Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 1.55.

corruption of the city to the idyllic landscapes of the countryside, Heyworth has shown that Tibullus' elegiac discourse still centres around Rome as the true background setting.¹⁸⁹ Tibullus' *locus* for his love for Nemesis is Rome and he curses *qui abducis ab urbe* ("he who abducts [Nemesis] from the city" 2.3.61).

In line with the central role played by Rome in elegiac discourse, Sulpicia's 3.14 and 3.15 celebrate the role of the city in opposition to the secluded sphere of the *villa* and its surroundings. Far from Tibullus' idyllic *rus* ("countryside"), Sulpicia conceives of the countryside as an element that exists against elegy. As a matter of fact, she describes the *rus* as *molestum*, an adjective that defines the countryside in the same way as an element that separates elegiac lovers.¹⁹⁰ In *Ars* 3.602, *molestus* is used to address the attention towards the lover from a rival; in 1.464, it characterizes speeches that bore the mistress; in *Amores* 2.3.15 and 2.28.8, it connotes separation due to the guardian. Opposed to this not-elegiac landscape is the city of Rome, which is instead described as *dulcis* (3.14.2). Heyworth supports an intertextual reference to Propertius' 1.8.b, in which the elegiac love in the City is described as *dulcia regna* ("sweet kingdoms").¹⁹¹

As for Sulpicia, the themes of both birthdays and separation from Rome are also explored by Ovid in his exilic poetry. Poem 3.13, for example, expresses the inverse of the celebratory birthday poem by un-welcoming his native day as *supervacuum* ("needless" 3.13.1) if spent away from Rome. Similarly, Sulpicia sadly welcomes the arrival of her birthday as *invisus* (3.14.1) when she is far from Rome. As in Propertius' work, in Ovid's *Ex Ponto* 1.3.35–40, the poet first recalls the sweetness (*dulcedine*) of the *natale solum* ("native land") and then he rhetorically asks "*quid melius Roma?*" ("What is better than Rome?" 1.3.37).¹⁹² In Ovid's poem, the city contrasts with the cold and hostile land of exile, and it reflects the "fertile" land of poetry.¹⁹³ Similarly, Sulpicia associates life in the *villa* with the cold stream of the river Arno which is *frigidus*, as is the Scythian landscape of Ovid (*Scythico frigore* "Scythian cold" 1.3.35).¹⁹⁴ Moreover, Sulpicia's forced belonging to the cold environments of the countryside contrasts significantly with her earlier representation in the cycle as an elegiac lover (3.8–3.12): her burning desire in 3.11.5, 3.12.17, 3.17.2, 3.18.1, and 3.18.6 is irreconcilable with a cold landscape. Until poem 3.15, the presence of the lover and her separation from him is limited to an initial litotes (*sine Cerintho* "without Cerinthus" 3.14.2).

The idea that the separation motif goes beyond the exclusivity of the elegiac couple is also enhanced by the presence of *omnibus...nobis* among those who will celebrate Sulpicia's birthday. While scholars have been found puzzling over the inclusion of people other than Sulpicia and Cerinthus, the presence of an audience is not only a standard feature of birthday celebrations, but

¹⁸⁹ Heyworth, "Place and Meaning," 71–75. Heyworth notes that the place of elegy is Rome even for Tibullus, and the countryside exists just for the hope of a peaceful union.

¹⁹⁰ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 281. Fulkerson notes that the use of *molestus* in Propertius and Ovid refers to people who interfere into their erotic matters.

¹⁹¹ Heyworth, "Place and Meaning," 83.

¹⁹² Clearly, Ovid refers to Italy and Rome, as the following sentence implies, even if his native land is Sulmo.

¹⁹³ However, Heyworth notes that the cold landscapes of Sulmo are appreciated by Ovid in the *Amores*. Heyworth, "Place and Meaning," 81.

¹⁹⁴ Percy considers the image of the stream as an insufficient poetic inspiration: "Messalla's mistake has been to over intellectualize the poet (*nimum Messalla mei studiose*) and to suppose that Callimachean streams of inspiration will be enough for her." Percy, "Erasing Cerinthus," 34.

it could also be explained through the interpretation of Sulpicia's abduction from Rome as a separation from the *locus* of nourishment of her verse: it reconciles her with the presence of other people, namely other members of Messalla's literary milieu.¹⁹⁵ In this framework, it is also possible to unfold the metaphor of her lover's pseudonym, beeswax, and to understand Sulpicia's concern as "it is sad to spend my birthday without writing."¹⁹⁶

Even the introduction of Messalla, as the addressee of the poem, favours its interpretation as concerning separation from a cultural environment.¹⁹⁷ Sulpicia accuses Messalla of having been too zealous towards her (3.14.5) but, as is common in Sulpicia's poetry, the expression allows for another reading that alludes to the role of Messalla as a literary patron more than as a relative. She, in fact, calls Messalla "*studiosus mei*" ("zealous of me" 3.14.5), subtly referring to the erudition of her literary patron and his knowledge of her poetry.¹⁹⁸ The presence of a patron as a force that takes her away from the specific cultural context of elegy is a trope. Propertius 1.6, to name one example, depicts the poet with the choice of leading his own life in the pursuit of Amor or, in contrast, following the patron and the ideology he represents.¹⁹⁹ While the (male) poets represent their personas through the ability to choose whether to "follow" their patron or not, Sulpicia reworks the trope of patronage by gendering it.²⁰⁰ She describes her lack of choice through a participle, *abducta* ("having been abducted"), that connects with a peculiarly female experience both of life and of literary stories. Sulpicia's use of the present active indicative (*relinquo* "I leave"), a rare choice in the small repertoire of poems, enhances the "reality" of the event. This choice contrasts significantly with her frequent use of passive verbal forms or potential subjunctives as expression of desire and of her subjectivity.²⁰¹ By "reality" I do not suggest here that Sulpicia was effectively dragged off to the countryside by Messalla, but rather that the way in which the poetess chooses to describe the abduction or denial of expression increases the *reality* of female existence in Roman society. Her subjugated position is also aggravated by their familial ties (*propinque* 3.14.6), which increase the "reality" of the trope. The emphasis on Messalla's kinship role intensifies the plausibility of the experience for a Roman woman to be subject to the will of her close male relatives. Therefore, as in other elegies, the presence of a historical figure like Messalla increases the reality—as a literary feature—of Sulpicia's poetry. As Gold puts it for

¹⁹⁵ See G. Luck, *Tibullus* (Tuebner: Bibl. Teubneriana, 1988): 104; Heyworth, "Place and Meaning," 82. Heyworth proposes the emendation of *utrique*, supporting exclusivity in the relationship with Cerinthus.

¹⁹⁶ Percy, "Erasing Cerinthus," 34. Percy notes the pun in the association between Rome as *dulcis* and the pseudonym Cerinthus.

¹⁹⁷ On Messalla and his literary cycle and the networking connection of its participants, see C. Davies, "Poetry in the 'Circle' of Messalla," *Greece & Rome* 20, no. 1 (1973): 25–35. On the problematics of applying the idea of a literary circle to the Roman world, see B. Gold, "Patronage and the Elegists: Social Reality or Literary Construction?" in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. B. Gold (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 303–317. Moreover, Gold has shown how that the presence of a patron does not have to be interpreted in terms of a socio-economic *amicitia* but rather as a literary trope.

¹⁹⁸ Percy, "Erasing Cerinthus," 34.

¹⁹⁹ B. Gold, "Amicitia: Literary Patronage in the Augustan Period," in *Literary Patronage in Greece and Rome* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 142–172; Gold, "Patronage and the Elegists," 310–316. However, Gold skillfully unveils Propertius' characterization of Tullus as an elegiac lover through his characterization with the same symbolic elements that define elegy.

²⁰⁰ See, for example, Tibullus 1.3.1–3,56 and 1.7.9–12 in representing himself as a follower of Messalla; Propertius' 1.6, instead, rejects following his patron Tullus.

²⁰¹ On Sulpicia's linguistic trend, see N. Lowe, "Sulpicia's Syntax," *Classical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1988): 198.

Tibullus' poetry: "Messalla has the more solid identity, possessing a strong and verifiable historical presence and a reality factor not possessed by Delia" (2012: 312).

Although her choices are limited, at least linguistically, Sulpicia is skillfully constricting her relative's imposition into the hyperbaton of her own free will (*arbitrio...meo*).²⁰²

Hic animum sensusque meos abducta relinquo
arbitrio, **quam uis non sinit esse**, meo.

(Since you abducted me, I leave here my
intelligence and my sensibility out of my own—**I**
whom you do not allow to be free—choice.)

She emphasizes having left her *animum sensusque* in Rome (*hic*). One way of interpreting *animum sensusque* is to consider them related to her beloved.²⁰³ At the same time, however, it is possible to assume *animus* as *ingenium*. Without connecting these words with the personal love-motif (that is just a negation—*sine Cerintho*—in the first part of the poem) *animum sensusque* can refer to her own capabilities as a poetess. Although the expression does not have another parallel in elegiac poetry, poets have used *animus* and *sensus*, separately, to describe the origin of their poetic ability.²⁰⁴ For *sensus*, Percy finds an analogous case in Catullus' 51.5–9, where the sight of Lesbia deprives the poet of his capacity of expression.²⁰⁵ For *animus*, I find Ovid's exile poetry to be another point of reference. In a poem that is primarily concerned with the coldness and harshness of the exilic landscape in contrast with the cultural flourishing of Rome as centre of elegy, Ovid claims that he occupies his time and mind by trying to approach his former poetic practice (*studii repeto signa sinistra mei./ Sic animum tempusque traho* "I return to the ill-fated signs of my own studies. Thus, I drag my mind and time" – *Tristia* 5.7.64–5).²⁰⁶

Celebrating *amor mutuus*

Sulpicia's emphasis on *amor mutuus* is somewhat rare in elegy in which this reciprocal representation of love occurs more frequently in terms of sexual pleasure.²⁰⁷ However, the joint pleasure or love constitutes an *adynaton* for the lovers, since elegy nourishes itself through the desire for love in a status of *agon*.²⁰⁸ Elegiac love is based on struggle and on power relations of dominance between the lovers, as Ovid summarizes in *Amores* 2.19.4: *ferreus est, siquis, quod*

²⁰² The same image of constriction with the last hyperbaton holds even in the MMS tradition of *quamvis non sinis esse*. Here I provide a translation that is freer than the more literal one at p. 23.

²⁰³ Percy, "Erasing Cerinthus," 34. Percy also defines *animus* and *sensus* as Sulpicia's "intellectual and emotional grounds of poetry."

²⁰⁴ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 283. Fulkerson considers the expression common; the examples are from epic narratives citing *Aeneid* 4.22 and *Metamorphoses* 14.178. However, in the *Aeneid*, the two accusatives refer to different verbs. On the contrary, *Metamorphoses* 14.178 is a good parallel.

²⁰⁵ R. Piastrì, "I carmi di Sulpicia e il repertorio tipico dell'elegia," 148.

²⁰⁶ The expression "*fert animus*" is employed by Ovid in multiple works to describe poetic inspiration most notably in the *Metamorphoses* (1.1). Similarly, it is employed in *Ars Amatoria* 3.467 and *Ex Ponto* 1.9–10.

²⁰⁷ Lilja, *The Roman Elegists*, 198–99 Cf. 2.682 (but also 683); 2.717–743; 3.793.

²⁰⁸ I borrow from M. Mayor, *Power Play in Latin Love Elegy and its Multiple Forms of Continuity in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 12–16. See this reference for the use of the term love-*agon*.

sinit alter, amat (“if anyone loves what another allows—this makes him insensible”).²⁰⁹ I briefly highlight below how reciprocity of feelings is treated by the other elegiac poets.

The presence of some aspect of mutuality has been connected to the use of epithalamic language and to the trope of the *foedus amoris* in Catullus’ poetry which influenced the way elegiac relationships are presented. Among the scholars who highlighted the role of Catullus as predecessor, Labate argues that marital language enters the Ovidian “elegiac motif” of Procris and Cephalus in the *Metamorphoses*, emphasizing the *felicitas* of both the partners in the conjugal relationship.²¹⁰ Ovid’s reworking of the mythological episode places less emphasis on infidelity in favour of emotional reciprocity, following Catullus’ *foedus*.²¹¹ While Labate comments only briefly that this typology of love is just “un ideale vagheggiato” (“a wished ideal”) (1975: 122–123), Mayor has more recently proved, through a close analysis of Catullus’ poems, that the mutuality of love in neoteric poetry is no different from the elegiac *adynaton* systematically revealed with Lesbia’s infidelity.²¹² As both Labate and Mayor suggested, Catullus indeed could be considered a predecessor of the elegiac genre in treating love as a struggle between the lovers, despite the presence of marital language.

Moreover, the representation of Catullus’ emotional ties as a *foedus* gives an accent of irony to the poems, since the relationship between the poet and Lesbia can hardly be considered marital. Lesbia resembles the *hetaera* of New Comedy and anticipates the ambiguous status of the *puella* in elegy.²¹³ Lesbia is described as often being with another man and only inconstantly reciprocates the poet’s feelings (8, 11, 14, 58; in elegiac meter 70, 72, 75, 83.1–2, 86). Indeed, infidelity is at the base of Catullus’ poetic discourse, in which the *amor* as *foedus* is paradoxically in contrast with Lesbia’s lack of *fides*.²¹⁴ The emotionally unbalanced relationship between Catullus and Lesbia prefigures the inequity of power between the soft poet and the dominant mistress that elegy develops in the trope of the *servitium amoris*.²¹⁵

A few elements of Ovid’s *Heroides* and Propertius’ 4.3 and 4.11 also reflect on reciprocity between lovers, emphasizing the presence of a *foedus* of possible Catullan origin.²¹⁶ Even when the couples are not husband and wife, the bonds between man and woman are often emphatically

²⁰⁹ Mayor, *Power Play*, 243.

²¹⁰ M. Labate, “Amore coniugale e amore ‘elegiaco’ nell’episodio di Cefalo e Procri (Ov. Met. 7.661-865),” *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Classe di Lettere e Filosofia* 5, no. 1 (1975): 107ff.

²¹¹ Labate, “Amore coniugale,” 122ff.

²¹² Mayor, *Power Play*, 270ff.

²¹³ N. Holzberg, “Lesbia, the Poet, and the Two Faces of Sappho: ‘Womanaufacture’ in Catullus,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 46, (2000): 32.

²¹⁴ See Mayor’s argument on the structure of the poem and on the contrast between *foedus* and infidelity in Carmen 72. Mayor, *Power Play*, 273.

²¹⁵ Holzberg, “Lesbia, the Poet,” 28.

²¹⁶ Mayor, *Power Play*, 248–250. Weinlich even considers Propertius’ genethliacon 3.10 as an anticipation of this new elegiac *materia* centered around conjugal and domestic love. See B. Weinlich, “Puella and Poeta in Propertius’ Elegy 3.10,” *Materiali e discussioni per l’analisi dei testi classici* (Materiali e discussioni per l’analisi dei testi classici) 67, (2011): 28ff.

associated with marital ties, which determine feminine *dignitas*.²¹⁷ In *Heroides* 2, Phyllis recalls Demophoon's promises of marriage:

iura fidesque ubi nunc, commissaque dextera dextrae,
quique erat in falso plurimus ore deus?
promissus socios ubi nunc Hymenaeus in annos,
qui mihi coniugii sponsor et obses erat?

(Where are now the promises and the faithfulness, and
your right hand committed to mine own, and that God
who was many times in your false mouth? Where is
now the Hymenaeus that was promised in our year
together that was for me certainty and pledge of
marriage?)

Similarly, Hypsipyle wonders where their symbols and values of marriage are (*pacta fides*, *conubialia iura*, and *fax* (6.41–2)). Lindheim also notes that Phyllis considered herself a wife as she addresses Demophoon's betrayal in looking for *another* wife.²¹⁸ Similarly, Oenone asks Paris if there is a *coniunx...nova* ("new wife" 5.3), and she defines him as *maritus* ("husband" 9). In their epistolary writing to a man and in their self-association with a man, they only exist as a function of their lover, and they are all reduced to an impersonal standardized group of similar women.²¹⁹ Although the relationships that the heroines represent are ones of domesticity and the language evoked is the one of marriage, the moment of reciprocity is not a description of the present but rather of a past feeling, with the reunion being beyond conceivable possibility. The love relationship that is poetic *materia*, therefore, is still based on the conception of love as *agon* rather than mutuality of feelings.

Similarly, in the *Heroides*, the elegiac relationship is *agon* also between Lygdamus and Neaera. The couple is at times described as if in a conjugal relationship, but love as poetic *materia* is still based on *agon* and reciprocity remains an *adynaton*.²²⁰ On one level Lygdamus is the one who puts emphasis on the conjugal aspect; on the other, Neaera's behaviour is not represented as that of an affectionate wife.²²¹ In 3.6, for example, the poet explores the standard elegiac trope of wine as a remedy for love sadness and Neaera is called *perfidia* ("cruel" 3.6.55–56); in 3.4, anxieties over infidelity are expressed through discussion with Apollo in a dream scenario in which Neaera appears as a cruel *domina* and their relationship as a harsh marriage ("*inmitem dominam coniugiumque ferum*" 3.4.74).

²¹⁷ Cf. Propertius 4.3 and 4.11; *Heroides* 1; 2.31–34; 6.41–2, 112, 134; 9.27–31; 12; 13; 14. On *dignitas*: Briseis 3.74 notes female dignity associated with male dignity; Oenone associates it with the husband (5.85); for Phaedra on dignity with respect to the son, see 118. Especially Propertius' Cornelia as *univira*.

²¹⁸ S. Lindheim, *Mail and Female: Epistolary Narrative and Desire in Ovid's Heroides* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 103.

²¹⁹ On the limits of the epistolary genre in empowering women in terms of their own subjectivities, see Lindheim, *Mail and Female*, 4–35; on Ovid's denial of female personal identities in constructing 'the Woman' see: Lindheim, *Mail and Female*, 180–184.

²²⁰ On the problems in the cycle of Lygdamus, see Antolín, *Lygdamus*, 3–20.

²²¹ P. Knox, "The Corpus Tibullianum," in *A Short Companion to Tibullus and the Corpus Tibullianum*, ed. Hans-Christian Günther (Nordhausen: Verlag Traugott Bautz, 2018), 141–2.

The treatment of mutual love as an *adynaton* is particularly present in various poems, in which love and feelings of reciprocity are a wish outside the realm of possibility of the elegiac relationship. In the programmatic poem 3.1, for example, uncertainty about feelings concludes the poem: *illa mihi referet, si nostri mutua cura est / an minor, an toto pectore deciderim* (“she will tell me if our love is reciprocal or if hers is less, or if I fell completely from her heart”). In poem 3.3, the impossibility of love is realized through two conventional tropes. First, love appears as an impossible desire at the beginning of the poem (3.3.8) since it is achieved in a temporal dimension that often goes outside the limits of elegy.²²² Second, the love between the poet and Neaera becomes reciprocal only upon the deathbed of the poet, turning the realization of love into an impossibility.

The essence of love as *agon* in elegiac discourse is also particularly marked in programmatic poems, in which the hierarchical (fictional) relationship between the lovers is reflected in a *domina-servus* relationship. References to the realm of love and slavery are both direct (through such recurrent words as *servus*, *servire*, *servitium*, *dominare*, *domina*...) and indirect (through the representation of acts of servitude).²²³ Power dynamics are even present in the reverse of the trope, when the relationship of subalternity is reinterpreted metapoetically with the poet now dominating his *puella*-text. For example, although Propertius represents himself as enslaved by his mistress in 1.1.1 (through the verb *capere* “to seize”), the line immediately following the mythological example of domination subverts the power dynamics (*ergo velocem potuit domuisse puellam* “therefore he could tame the swift girl” 1.1.15).²²⁴ The enslavement is counterbalanced only through literary expression, and poetry is what makes the poet endure the pain of a love-*agon*.²²⁵ Even Tibullus, who makes less use of the trope of *servitium amoris*, is enslaved through chains that bind him to his girl (1.1.55).

Only two Tibullan poems present the expression “*amor mutuus*” that is predominant in Sulpicia’s poetry. However, in both poems, this celebration is not the central theme of the poem, as it is in Sulpicia’s. In line with the more conventional celebration of desire as *agon*, the Tibullan expressions represent only a feeble *spes* within a condition of unbalanced feelings. Tibullus’ 1.2 is a poem of separation with a *paraclausithyron* motif, where *amor mutuus* appears as a solitary prayer to the divinity (1.2.63). Instead, in 1.6, Tibullus celebrates the cruelty of love after a brief parenthesis of *mutua venus* (1.6.14). *Amor mutuus* is ultimately an artificial hope for the speaker in a current condition of separation (1.6.75).

Two other rare situations in which *amor* is *mutuus* can be found in both Propertius’ opening of the *Monobiblos* and in Tibullus’ genethliacon 2.2. However, the presence of reciprocal and equal love affection is clearly ascribed to non-elegiac couples. In Propertius 1.1.31–32, the poet considers the status of lovers as equals (*pares*) in a stable love relationship (*in tuto amore*) as an irreconcilable counterpart to his existence as an elegiac poet and lover. Similarly, in Tibullus 2.2,

²²² On the way time is treated in elegy and its metapoetic implications, see H. Gardner, *Gendering Time in Augustan Love Elegy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 220ff.

²²³ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 183–4.

²²⁴ Mayor, *Power Play*, 60–61.

²²⁵ E. Greene, *The Erotics of Domination: Male Desire and the Mistress in Latin Love Poetry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 45.

the wish for faithful and long-lasting love (11, 19–20) is possible only because Cornutus is outside of the realm of elegiac love in which, instead, Tibullus is embedded.²²⁶

Ovid in the *Heroides* and in Lygdamus in his poetry also explore some aspects of love reciprocity and fidelity, love is consistently presented as *agon* and *adynaton*. The use of a vocabulary that evokes marriage per se is not a sufficient indicator that the cherished and poetic love is reciprocal and that both lovers are equally subjugated to an equal *servitium*, as it is instead the case for Sulpicia. Sulpicia's representation of elegiac love is not free from masculine language describing love (as chase, pursuit, or enslavement), but it does evoke a degree of reciprocity that is absent in male elegiac discourse, as the sections below demonstrate.²²⁷ The sections that follow explore three poems in which Sulpicia employs two tropes of elegy (the *genethliacon* – 3.11, 3.12 – and the *soteria* – 3.10) to form a representation of love that goes beyond that of *agon* that is so predominant in elegy. *Amor mutuus* is not just a passing hope, an *adynaton*, or a type of love outside the elegiac realm, but rather it is presented as her poetic *materia*. The mutuality of feelings inevitably also influences the way she employs the trope of *servitium amoris*, and although its characteristic vocabulary is not banished from her narrative, the hierarchical and subjugated dimension is lost, with the two lovers equally enslaved to one another. Alongside the celebration of *Amor mutuus*, the three poems present an image of Sulpicia as a poetic agent in the following ways: first, as an elegiac lover who burns and speaks of desire in 3.11; and second, as an embodiment of the text in 3.10 and 3.12.

Celebrating *amor mutuus*: Genethliaca 3.11 and 3.12

Sulpicia chooses to celebrate her poetic *materia* of *amor mutuus* through two *genethliaca*: wishful birthday poems. In the following section I show how by exploring the formal structure of the subgenre, Sulpicia defines her image as an elegiac lover, by reshaping the heroine Dido's burning desire, and as a poetess, by employing the motif of the birthday adornment. Sulpicia's choice to employ a *genethliacon* to discuss the *amor* that defines her as a poetess is aligned with a broader literary trope that considers the birthday as an occasion for poetic creation.²²⁸ Although Argetsinger considers the *genethliaca* to be exquisitely and exclusively Roman, it is interesting to notice that the theme of birthday celebration and the poem as a gift resembles a motif of Callimachean tradition.²²⁹ The poet elevates poetry as a gift with a mythological example, raising the minor experiences of mortals through grand parallels among the gods.²³⁰ In *Iambus 12*, in fact, the *genethliacon* of a young girl (fr. 202 Pf–20) becomes the starting point of the discussion on the superiority of poetry among the other gifts, a trope that frequently enters the elegiac discourse.²³¹

²²⁶ Cf. 2.3 directed to Cornutus, see Mayor, *Power Play*, 244–45.

²²⁷ J. Hallett, "The Eleven Elegies," 53–54. Hallett, in offering a brief summary and study of the poems in light of Virgilian allusion, notes that Sulpicia celebrates *amor mutuus*.

²²⁸ On the birthday as an occasion for literary compositions, see K. Argetsinger, "Birthday Rituals: Friends and Patrons in Roman Poetry and Cult," *Classical Antiquity* 11, no. 2 (1992): 175–193. In Roman elegy, Propertius' 3.10 also uses the subgenre of the *genethliacon* as a pretext to anticipate a new form of poetic *materia* of his fourth book of "Roman" elegies.

²²⁹ Argetsinger, "Birthday Rituals," 180–180, esp. note 12.

²³⁰ B. Acosta-Hughes, *Polyeideia: The "Iambi" of Callimachus and the Archaic Iambic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 125.

²³¹ As a practice outside of elegy, on Martial's *Epigrams* 10.87.17–20, see Argetsinger, "Birthday Rituals," 181.

In Ovid 3.1, the personification of elegy itself also takes the form of a poem sent for the birthday of a lover (3.1.57). The subgenre, therefore, can be appropriate for exploring and presenting love and poetic matters.

Poems 3.11 and 3.12 conform fairly closely to the subgenre. In defining the generic characteristics of birthday poems, Cairns notes that a composition welcomes the natal day, that different deities might enter the narrative, and that the celebrated individual is praised along with the acknowledgment of the proper ritual for the occasion.²³² In this perspective, Sulpicia's poems share some of the characteristics of the subgenre in terms of structure of the composition. The poems open with the celebration of the arrival of the day (Tibullus 1.7–1–4; Propertius 3.10.1–4; Sulpicia 3.11.1–4; 3.12.5; *Tristia* 3.13.1–2, 5.5.13–14), either from the birthday-person (*Tristia* 3.13; Sulpicia 3.12) or from people close to them (Tibullus 1.7, 2.2; Propertius 3.10; Ovid, *Tristia* 5.5, Sulpicia 3.11). Multiple divinities are addressed, and the one protecting the birthday celebration varies between men and women. Women's birthdays were entrusted to Juno Natalis, and men's to the Genius.²³³ Other gods are also included in the narratives, especially Amor, due to its connection to regeneration (Tibullus 2.2.18; Sulpicia 3.12.12).²³⁴ The ritualistic *debita* to the gods involved the burning of incense at the altars (Tibullus 2.2.3; Sulpicia 3.11.9, 3.12.1; Propertius 3.10.19; Ovid *Tristia* 3.13.16) and the offering of the characteristic birthday bread (Sulpicia 3.12.14; Ovid *Tristia* 3.13.17; 5.5.11).²³⁵ The poems tend to present a communal and public aspect where more people seem involved in the performative rituals and vows to the divinities (Tibullus 2.2; Propertius 3.10; Ovid *Tristia* 5.5). Requests were performed in the name of the celebrated people. In this aspect, Sulpicia's 3.11 diverges from the conventions of the subgenre.²³⁶

The requests that are presented in 3.11 reflect Sulpicia's will and desire, while Cerinthus has no wishes. Both the language and the structure of the poem explore Sulpicia's thought rather than the person who should be celebrated, marking herself as the sole protagonist. Starting from the first two lines, the motif of the birthday festivity is associated with the celebration of their love: "the day that gave me Cerinthus" can be also the day of their union (1–2). It is only by line 3 that the occasion of Cerinthus' birth is clarified to be the focus of the poem through the presence of the *Parcae* as divinities of life-lengths.²³⁷ Although the thematic elements of birthday poems are occasionally revived (*Genium–Geni* "Birthday divinity" 8–9; *tura* and *votis* "incense and prayers" 9; *Natalis* "Birthday divinity" 19), the attention to Cerinthus and his celebration drops in favour of a full focus on Sulpicia and her wishes, and the structure of the language is again intentionally

²³² F. Cairns, *The Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1972), 112–113; 136–138.

²³³ Argetsinger, "Birthday Rituals," 176.

²³⁴ F. Cairns, "Propertius 3, 10 and Roman Birthdays," *Hermes* 99, no. 2 (1971): 153; Cairns, *The Generic Composition*, 113.

²³⁵ The same birthday cake also appears in *Amores* 1.8.94, which is not a *genethliacon*.

²³⁶ Argetsinger, "Birthday Rituals," 180–183. Argetsinger, however, considers Sulpicia's poems to be in line with the genre due to the abovementioned elements of conformity, but her analysis is oriented towards the examination of the social customs of Roman birthdays through poetry, rather than analyzing the poems in literary terms. She also considers Sulpicia to be performing Cerinthus' prayer "Good Genius, take the incense willingly, and willingly grant his prayers, so long as he burns when he thinks of me" (183).

²³⁷ *Parcae* in a *genethliacon* also appear in Tibullus' 1.7.1. In 3.12, the only other agent that appears in the poem is a brief reference to her mother (15).

deceiving. Initially, the reader might think that Sulpicia is praying on behalf of and for Cerinthus (*per te* 3.11.7). However, by the end of the line the poetess reveals that she asks instead to have him (*te... rogo* 3.11.8).

While in other *genethliaca* the birthday-person is celebrated at length,²³⁸ Sulpicia concentrates only briefly on praising Cerinthus, using a chiasmic structure to define his birth as a *novum servitium* for girls over whom he possesses *regna superba* (“proud kingdoms” 3–4). While Fulkerson identifies the mention of *servitium* as a subversion of the standard trope in elegy where the male-speaker-poet is the one enslaved, the following lines of the poem show how this condition does not apply to Sulpicia.²³⁹ In 3.11, Cerinthus has vertical power over other girls, but Sulpicia’s celebration of her own love breaks from the traditional narrative of *servitium* in favour of *amor mutuus* in which the enslavement is equally shared, leaving no superior power role to Cerinthus.

As the analysis below will soon reveal, Sulpicia’s representation as a lover reworks the tragic figure of Dido by subverting her ill-fated destiny.²⁴⁰ The assimilation of the poetess with the dramatic character necessitates a creative rewriting in Sulpicia’s elegies that deal with mutual love. Reworking mythological examples in favour of a positive outcome has other precedents in *genethliaca*. In *Tristia* 5.5, Ovid self-identifies with Odysseus in imagining the hero celebrating Penelope’s birthday at a distance (3–4; 51–52). Propertius, in 3.10.7–10, briefly sends positive wishes for the ill-fated destiny of Niobe, Alcyone, and Procne, all mythological women who shall not suffer on his *puella*’s birthday. Sulpicia combines the two types of allusion by representing herself indirectly as Dido but with a positive fate. This choice of representation is not unprecedented in Sulpicia’s work: in 3.13, she uses and reworks Dido’s image of maternity, and in 3.9, she associates herself with Phaedra.²⁴¹ As for the allusion to Phaedra, the poetess identifies herself with the heroines, alluding to elements of their stories. The allusion, however, is free from the tragic dimension of the characters, while the speaker is a successful Phaedra and a successful Dido. Unlike Phaedra, Sulpicia persuades Cerinthus to participate in a sexual hunt; unlike Dido, Sulpicia is not left aside.

In 3.11, the anaphoric *per...per...per* that supports Sulpicia’s requests to the divinity recalls Dido’s supplication to Aeneas where the queen employs the structure *per* with the accusative three times (4.314–316). The Virgilian love of Aeneas and Dido is also defined as *furtivum...amorem* (“secret love” Aeneid, 4.171), evoking Sulpicia’s description of love encounters with Cerinthus as *dulcissima furta* (“sweetest secrets” 7).²⁴² The association of Sulpicia’s passage with the theme of Dido’s burning passion is further supported if Sulpicia’s lines are compared to Dido’s letter to Aeneas in the *Heroides* 7, authored by Ovid:

²³⁸ Cf. Propertius 3.10. in R. Lyne and J. Morwood, “Propertius iii. 10,” *Greece & Rome* 20, no. 1 (1973): 46.

²³⁹ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 256.

²⁴⁰ Hallett, “The Eleven Elegies”, 51-54. Hallett offers a series of allusions to Virgil in poems 3.8–3.12, completing Keith’s own analysis of Virgilian allusion of 3.13–3.18. Keith, “Tandem venit amor,” 295–310.

²⁴¹ See discussion on 3.13 p. 35 ff, and 3.9 p. 61ff.

²⁴² Hallett, “The Eleven Elegies”, 53.

Uror ut inducto ceratae sulphure taedae,
ut pia fumosis addita **tura rogis**.

(**I burn** as wax torches covered the sulphur /
as the pious **incense** thrown into the burning
pyre)

Not only does *uror* (“I burn”) appear emphatically in the same *sedes*, but the internal language is reworked for Sulpicia’s celebratory occasion. The incense (*tura*) appears in Sulpicia as the canonical scent for celebrating the birthday (9), while in Ovid the simile of the incense that burns in *fumosis rogis* (“burning pyre”) foreshadows the subsequent destiny of the heroine and Aeneas witnessing her funerary pyre. With the association to Dido, Sulpicia’s use of the verb *rogo* (“I ask”) at the end of the line not only serves as an expression of request, but it also phonetically recalls the image of Dido burning on a pyre. Although in the *Heroides* Dido is attempting to re-write her narrative, the presence of *rogis* evokes for the reader the tragic irony of her fate. In the opposite way, the phonetic allusion in Sulpicia in the form of active request (*rogo*) strengthens her desire and her success as an elegiac lover: her love will be granted by the end of the poem. Although Sulpicia confesses her love in anaphora in the form of being burnt by passion (*uror...uror* 5), what differentiates the ill-fated heroine from Sulpicia is the confidence in reciprocity between the two (*mutuus ignis* “mutual passion”; *mutuus...amor* 6–7): while their love encounters might be furtive, their love is *mutuus* and the condition of her “burning” is the mutuality of their heated passion (6). The burning is a way to represent her passion, but it is also a poetic self-definition. The expression *uror* is broadly used in the *Heroides* to describe the state of the elegiac lover (and “writer”) and Ovid also employs it to represent his commitment to the genre (Cf. *Amores*, 1.1.26 and 2.4.12).²⁴³ Her burning passion and the mutuality of the affection are tied at the end of the poem with the publication of their *amores*, and only in this aspect are the two lovers unproblematically uneven. Sulpicia attributes to Cerinthus a *pudor* that prevents him from publicly speaking (*dicere verba palam* “to speak openly,” 18), and by contrast she defines herself as the one who is representing her desire openly, as indeed she is doing by writing.

Mutuality is also revoked in the second part of the poem when Sulpicia asks that Cerinthus burn for her, representing both of the lovers with the heat of love (*ille calet* “he burns,” 10). She also clarifies the exclusivity: Cerinthus’ passion must be reserved for Sulpicia alone and must be away from *alios... amores* (“other loves,” 11) and *infidos... focos* (“unfaithful passions,” 12). In the *Aeneid*, Dido prays to a “just” divinity (*numen...iustum* 4.521) who protects lovers who are not equally involved emotionally (*non aequo foedere amanti* “lovers in an unequal engagement” 4.520). Similarly, Sulpicia addresses Venus, asking her not to be *inusta* (13), resembling the role that Venus played in the Dido episode as “unjust” in misaligning the lovers. To strengthen the point, she clarifies that they both have to “serve equally” (*servat aequae* 14) or no chains should hold her, proudly conceiving of herself as an agent even outside of the elegiac couple. As Hallett notes, even Dido is presented as enslaved to Aeneas (4.103ff.).²⁴⁴ The motive of *amor aequus* is once more revived by affirming that both lovers must be equally in *servitium* and held by worthy chains (*valida teneamur uterque catena* “may both be held by a strong chain,” 15). Sulpicia,

²⁴³ The expression is also recurrent in the *Heroides*, in which the heroines present themselves as writing agents 7.23; 15.9.

²⁴⁴ Hallett, “The Eleven Elegies”, 54.

therefore, is not advocating for the elimination of enslavement for love, but she is eliminating the subjugating power play that unevenly endows the lovers. While celebrating the mutual feeling of love is a standard practice in elegiac prayers to the divinity, by the end of the poem, the reader discovers that the wish for equality in feelings are not just requests that the lover addresses to the divinity or his wishful hopes, but rather they are a condition that characterizes their love (*optat idem iuvenis quod nos* “The young man desires the same things that I do,” 17).

The celebration of *amor mutuus* as the *materia* for Sulpicia’s composition is further enhanced in poem 3.12, where the representation of poetic Sulpicia and her conception of poetic love further reject the standard elegiac predilection for *amor-agon* and *servitium amoris*. Unlike 3.11, 3.12 is a more traditional genethliacon, since the prayers and desire of the speaker are coincident with those of the celebrant, Sulpicia.²⁴⁵ The author being the persona celebrating her own birthday is not uncommon in literature. A parallel can be seen in Ovid’s *Tristia* 3.13, in which the author inverts the genethliacon to lament the arrival of his birthday and presents his own wishes.²⁴⁶ A more direct parallel of auto-celebration, instead, comes from Sulpicia’s consideration of how to celebrate her birthday in 3.14 and 3.15.

The theme of the birthday celebration is present throughout 3.12 with the address to *Natalis Iuno*, the birthday-divinity of women, and with celebrations in her honour (1; 14). Paralleling the ambiguity of the initial lines of 3.11 (in which the reader wonders if the day is the day of the union or the day of the birth), the object of celebration in 3.12 is just a pretext for performing love poetry, as lines 5 and 6 immediately clarify. *Iuno* is not, in fact, Sulpicia’s *materia*. In Sulpicia’s poetry, *Iuno* is the apparent pretext of the composition both as the addressee of the poem and as a reason for which Sulpicia is dressing up as an elegiac poetess. The turning towards elegiac composition is marked by the joint employment of the words *ornandi causas* (“the reasons for the adornment” 5) and *occulte* (“secretly” 6). Elegiac poets frequently employ the word ‘*causa*’ as the origin of poetic drive in poems embedded with metapoetic concerns.²⁴⁷ The term is a key elegiac word that describes the sparkle of love and literary production, directly connecting with the Callimachean *aition*.²⁴⁸ Tibullus uses ‘*causa*’ in 1.4.10 to describe love as a subject matter and the reason for poetry, and the expression also appears in Ovid’s *Amores* 2.4.10 and 2.4.31.²⁴⁹ A more explicit metapoetic example comes from Propertius 2.1.12, as the speaker describes several elements of attraction to his *puella* and concludes: *invenio causas mille poeta novas* (“As a poet I find a thousand new reasons”).²⁵⁰ Similarly, in *Amores* 1.3.20, Ovid calls his lover *materia* and then affirms that *provenient causa carmina digna sua* (“Because of her, worthy poetry comes”).²⁵¹

²⁴⁵ However, as with 3.8 and 3.10, some scholars do not attribute the poem to Sulpicia but to Amicus. Others, instead, argue for Sulpicia’s authorship. Without re-proposing the academic debate on the poetic persona of Sulpicia, scholars who primarily focused on the study of the subgenre of the genethliacon considered it unproblematic to interpret the poetess as the poetic persona of 3.12, without being preoccupied about the third person voice or the division of the corpus. See discussion on p. 52ff.

²⁴⁶ Cairns, *The Generic Composition*, 135–137.

²⁴⁷ Mayor, *Power Play*, 96–98. Mayor presents Tibullus’ 1.4 and Ovid’s 2.4 as examples in which *causa* appears as poetic *materia*.

²⁴⁸ A. Keith, “The Domina in Roman Elegy,” in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. B. Gold (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 293.

²⁴⁹ Mayor, *Power Play*, 96–97.

²⁵⁰ Mayor, 113–114.

²⁵¹ Mayor, 119.

Sulpicia clarifies her role as she who dresses with elegiac poetry (*ornandi*) just as she has represented herself in 3.8. The connection with the programmatic first poem of the cycle (3.8) is also present in the adverb *occulte*, which might be a wordplay on Sulpicia's earlier poetic representation as *culta* in the opening line of the cycle.²⁵² At the same time, the word that Sulpicia employs recalls the furtivity of elegiac love and her earlier *dulcissima furta* in 3.11.7.²⁵³ Sulpicia is defined in her *doctrina* (*docta puella* 2) and her hands are described with the same adjective that connotes elegiac poetry (*tenera manu* 2). As in 3.8, her composition is reflected in her body (*se...compsit* 3), reinforcing the relationship between her writing and her body of writing. The description of Sulpicia's adornments, therefore, evokes more that of the elegiac *puella* rather than the traditional adornments for the occasion. In *Tristia* 3.12 and 5.5, Ovid describes the traditional birthday clothing to be a white tunic; Sulpicia's description instead resembles more closely Propertius' genethliacon for his *puella*. In 3.10, Weinlich has shown how Propertius' birthday girl mirrors the elegiac mistress in her textual characteristics. Just as in Sulpicia's 3.12, the woman is described as adorned with "a certain degree of *cultus*, which, in this case, is exemplified by his wish that his *puella* wear the dress that first captured his eyes (15) and adorn her hair with a flower (16)".²⁵⁴ In both poems, the two women are also capable of capturing the attention of the eye, and Sulpicia is in fact *conspicienda* ("to be noticed" 4) as in 3.8 she is a spectacle to see.²⁵⁵ Her description as a poetic agent culminates with an unambiguous confirmation: the birthday occasion is just a deceit; the reason for writing is to present herself as the elegiac lover.

In 3.11, the central core of the poem constitutes a prayer to the goddess to propitiate the type of love that she wishes for, and the presence of mutuality and reciprocity is stressed (*mutua vincla* "mutual ties," 8). In particular, the poem expands on this type of love by emphasizing its quality, employing the same language as in Sulpicia's programmatic 3.13 and 3.8. Even in 3.12, *dignitas* becomes a condition that characterizes Sulpicia's elegiac love, alongside her image as a poetess (9–10). Lastly, the association between a worthy love and poetic composition is enhanced by the request to Juno to compose well (*bene compones* "compose well").²⁵⁶

Celebrating *amor mutuus*: Soteria in 3.10

As for the case of the genethliacon, Sulpicia exploits the subgenre of the *soteria* (a thanksgiving for a god in the hope of celebrating a fast recovery) to present the elegiac pair in a condition of reciprocity of feeling both during the disease and afterwards. Although in *Ars Amatoria* 2.315ff Ovid prescribes sickness as a good occasion for lovers to display their devotion, only three poems have been classified as *soteria*. Propertius 2.28, 3.10 in the *Corpus Tibullianum*, and Ovid's 2.13 in the *Amores* are among the few poems exclusively concerned with a state of illness of a beloved one, for whose recovery religious rituals and prayers are performed. As Cairns and Yardley have pointed out, the structure of the poems requires a lover praying to a divinity,

²⁵² Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 263.

²⁵³ Argetsinger, "Birthday Rituals," 190.

²⁵⁴ Weinlich, "Puella and Poeta," 29.

²⁵⁵ On Sulpicia as a spectacle in 3.8 and Sulpicia's visual attractiveness, see also Hallett, "Spectacle in the Eleven Elegies," 195–205.

²⁵⁶ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 264.

addressing the sick girl and describing her condition, performing *obsequia*, and presenting a multiplicity of temporal dimensions for the transition from sickness to wished recovery.²⁵⁷

Propertius' 2.28, for example, starts with a prayer to Jupiter, to whom the speaker entrusts the safety of their beloved girl (1–2). The aetiology of the disease is ironically connected to her beauty and to disrespect towards the divinity (8–12); her condition of distress is expressed through mythological examples of women (17–28); the status of the beloved one affects that of the speaker (40–43). The elegiac lover foresees the healing, in virtue of which he acknowledges his future reverence to the gods (45–46; 59–60). The condition of the sick woman, however, is the central core of the whole elegy, which is explored especially through mythological examples. The speaker-lover is a protagonist only in a few lines, in which he binds his happiness to her survival and also offers his chastity in exchange for her healing. Nevertheless, the girl remains the primary character to whom the *debita* towards the gods are required (28.45). Similarly, Ovid's 2.13 starts with the aetiology of the illness (1–2); it moves to an invocation to the goddesses Isis, Memphis, and Ilithyia (7–14; 19–21). The poet binds Corinna's salvation to his own (15–16); he reassures the goddesses of their *debita* (23–25); and he addresses Corinna in the end, suggesting avoiding such a danger next time, hinting at her recovery (43–44). While in both Propertius and Ovid, the two love elegists are concerned with the wellbeing of their mistresses, no space is left for discussing their love feelings.

As in the previous examples of *soteria*, poem 3.10 presents an invocation to the relevant god; and the *obsequium* to the sick person is described at length (11–14), along with the *debita* towards the god (19–20; 23–24). From the beginning of the poem, the expression *huc ades* in anaphora communicates to the reader that the poem constitutes an appeal (“here you come”).²⁵⁸ The request for successful victory over the illness that is weakening the girl is directed to Apollo (1–2; 9; 11; 19). The reason for the distress, however, is not expressed, while her condition is described meticulously (5–8). Similarly, Cerinthus' indirect distress is highlighted at various points (21; 19–20) and the feelings of both of the lovers, as well as their mutual celebration of love, represent the core of the poem. While Sulpicia's description of distress occupies the first 10 lines of the poem, the focus then shifts completely to Cerinthus, and then to the couple. As expected in a *soteria*, Cerinthus is described as making *vota* to the divinity and despairing, but soon all the attention turns to their love (3.10.11–14). Sulpicia reassures him that there is no reason for distress, as he is the centre of her attention. She also points out her *fides*, showing no interest in her *turba* (“crowd” 3.10.18). Moreover, her salvation is inextricably linked to his perpetration of love (3.10.16), a condition that will not apply in her other poems (3.17.3–4). In 3.10, the speaker reassures Cerinthus, who is fearful for his *puella* (11), that the lovers are not going to be separated (*deus non laedit amantes* “a god does not hurt lovers,” 15). A similar expression also appears in 3.12, a poem that is strongly concerned with Cerinthus and Sulpicia's mutual feelings (*neu quis diuellat amantes* “may no one separate the lovers,” 3.12.7). At present, the lovers are represented through a harmonious and reciprocal love, while troubles are prospected only in a distant future (*lacrimis erit aptius uti / si quando fuerit tristior illa tibi* “it will be more suitable to save your tears instead for when she will make you sorrowful,” 3.10.21–22). Cerinthus is also reassured of Sulpicia's exclusive attention towards him *te solum* (“you alone,” 3.10.17), an expression that is

²⁵⁷ Cairns, *The Generic Composition*, 153ff.; J. Yardley, “The Roman Elegists, Sick Girls, and the Soteria,” *The Classical Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (1977): 394–401.

²⁵⁸ The same expression is used in Ovid's *soteria* in *Amores* 2.13.21.

frequently employed in elegy to highlight the uniqueness of the lover remarking on the speaker's fidelity.²⁵⁹

After the girl's healing has been anticipated in line 16, the last invocation to Apollo's action reminds us of the healing of two bodies in one (19–20). While this sentence is a standardized phrase within the subgenre of the *soteria*,²⁶⁰ the employment of the verb *restituisset* has a potential metapoetic meaning that is not present in Propertius' and Ovid's equivalent verses. Catullus, for example, leaving away from the iambic verses, uses the same verb in *Carmen 36* to describe the return to love composition (1–8). Again, in *Carmen 68A* Catullus associates the verb with the Muses and with erotic compositions (1–10). Moreover, the image carried in the expression “*in uno corpore servato restituisset duos*” (“having restored two people in one healed body”) evokes Sulpicia's presentation of Cerinthus' love as intrinsically connected to her poetic production.

The representation of Sulpicia as a poetic agent in 3.10 is neither evident nor absent: it is, rather, concealed beneath metapoetic nuances embedded in the treatment of the *soteria*. The invocation to the divinity plays a crucial role in the *soteria* and it is often connected to the ill health of the sick person. In Propertius, for example, the sick girl is not only entrusted to Jupiter, but also to Isis and Diana, both of whom pertain to the sphere of women and their healing.²⁶¹ In Ovid's 2.13, the dedication to the goddesses Diana and Ilithyia (divinities of childbearing and birth) enhances the connection to Corinna's cause of sickness (abortion).²⁶² However, in Sulpicia, the condition of the girl has no clear cause, and the invocation to Apollo appears appropriate for his healing skills. While Apollo's capability to overcome the pain of lovesickness is often questioned by the poets, the choice to invoke him in a *soteria* seems particularly pertinent both because he is the god of healing, but also the god of poetry, and therefore an adequate protector for Sulpicia as a poetess.²⁶³ The appropriateness of Apollo Phoebus is also recalled by Ovid in *Remedia*, where the god is meant to help the poet in virtue of his poetic abilities (75–78), and Apollo turns into his own divinity of reference to his role as a poet writing of sickness. Moreover, in 3.10, Sulpicia is entrusted to Apollo as *tenera*, an adjective whose positive connotations contrast with the subgenre of the *soteria* for sickness. Propertius, for example, employs *misera* for his mistress in 2.28.1 and 2.28.7 to strengthen sympathy and pain in conditions of distress. Likewise, the same association with the word *miserum* is employed by Catullus in appealing to a god to heal his love-related sickness (76.19). The adjective *tenera*, instead, is more often employed in elegy to pleasingly describe the mistress, the parts of her body, or objects that belong to her as a metaphor for the poet's literary *corpora*.²⁶⁴ Such a quality, however, is not limited to characterizing their verses, but it is also an adjective that is associated with the poets themselves. Thus Ovid, for example, describes Propertius as *tener* in *Ars* 3.333, and he defines the category of elegiac poets as *poetae teneri* in the *Remedia Amoris* (757).²⁶⁵ The choice to entrust Sulpicia-as-*tenera* to Apollo, the god

²⁵⁹ Sulpicia, in fact, also used the expression to manifest devotion in 3.18.5.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Propertius 2.28.41; Ovid, *Amores*, 2.13.15. See also in *Heroides* 11.60.

²⁶¹ Cairns, *The Generic Composition*, 156–157.

²⁶² Cairns, *The Generic Composition*.

²⁶³ Cf. Tib 2.3.13–14; Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1.520–524.

²⁶⁴ See discussion on 3.8 (p. ff.) and see the feminine character of V. Lev Kenaan, *Pandora's Senses: The Feminine Character of the Ancient Text* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 206 and note 15.

²⁶⁵ Lev Kenaan interestingly points out that describing elegy through *teneritas* over *mollitia* is an Ovidian tendency that enhances the value of female speech, eliminating the derogatory and pejorative connotation of *mollitia* in opposition to *duritia*. Lev Kenaan, *Pandora's Senses*, 109–114. Since Propertius' texts mostly

of poetry and healing, also highlights her identity as a poetess on top of her physically distressed condition.

The description of Sulpicia's sickness continues with another adjective, *formosa*, that many scholars have considered problematic as too "self-congratulatory" if Sulpicia was the authoress.²⁶⁶ The strength of the adjective, however, is not exclusively meant to compliment the aesthetics of Sulpicia's body. Similar metapoetic nuances can be found in the corpus when Lygdamus connects the poetic drive to beautiful, or *formosae*, girls (3.1.7). The connection between beautiful girls and sickness also offers an intertextual parallel with Propertius 2.28.2, in which Jupiter is evoked and will be held responsible for the life-threatening condition of the *beautiful* poet's girl, whose current condition is poetic *materia* and whose healing and restored beauty are declared as future poetic sources (44). In the poem 2.28, therefore, *formositas* exists in a causal relationship with poetic writing, as well as in opposition to sickness (13).²⁶⁷ The importance of *formositas* in Sulpicia's description is expanded in the two following lines, which explore what is feared. Thinness, as opposite to *forma*, defines her limbs, while *informitas* affects the colour of her body (more explicitly recalling the earlier adjective used to describe Sulpicia's beauty).²⁶⁸ The verb employed to describe her pale body (*notare*) is the same that is used to describe writing on the wax tablets, a way of writing elegies between lovers that is crucially emphasized in Sulpicia's poetry.²⁶⁹

Before the poem shifts its addressee to Cerinthus, the god is asked to perform a song/poem (*cantus*) that might help raise Sulpicia's now tired body. The image of healing a poetic condition is once again associated with Apollo's poetry, which also revives her poetically. The verb *levare* ("to raise" 10) and the contrasting *languere* ("to be weak" 13) recall a similar association in elegy: *surgere* ("to arise") and *languere*. Hallett has noticed that the latter couple (*surgere* and *languere*) is employed to represent the poetic impulse in terms of a phallic erection, as opposed to his status of (artistically) unproductive flaccidity.²⁷⁰ However, Hallett has not touched on any similarity in expression in Sulpicia. On the contrary, she considers any parallel use of language to be absent. Such presumed absence of phallic similes (*surgere* and *languere*) is interpreted by Hallett as Sulpicia's affirmation of her authorial female identity. However, 3.10 shows instead the presence of masculine elegiac language in Sulpicia, but her reworking is without explicit references to the male reproductive organ.

engage with *mollitia* rather than *teneritas*, Lev Kenaan's reading is therefore completely in opposition to Miller's interpretation of "feminine (without pejorative connotation) Propertius," considering Ovid, instead, as championing the positive feminine.

²⁶⁶ Parker, "Sulpicia, the auctor de Sulpicia," 54.

²⁶⁷ There is, however, disagreement with the interpretation that assumes Cynthia is affected by a disease; see Cairns, *The Generic Composition* 153–157; P. Alessi, "Propertius 2.28: Unity without Illness," *The Classical Journal* 81, no. 1 (1985): 39–48.

²⁶⁸ I exclude here Fulkerson's interpretation on a possible meta-poetic reference to the Callimachean *Aitia* fr. 1. As a matter of fact, thinness in Sulpicia is to be avoided. See Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 248, with a meta-poetic interpretation still standing.

²⁶⁹ See discussion on 3.13 p. 35ff. and 3.9 p. 61ff., as well as the analysis of the pseudonym of Cerinthus p. 47. See also note for other references in the use of *notare* (p. 68 and note 303).

²⁷⁰ Hallett, "Authorial Identity," 277–281.

Erotic Hunt and Dramatic Allusions in 3.9

In Sulpicia's 3.9, her poetic discourse incorporates tragic motifs in the simultaneous exploration of *amor mutuus* and infidelity. In this section, I show how Sulpicia employs the hunt and the separation of the lovers to describe erotic dynamics and desire, often evoking mythological parallels, a practice that is not unprecedented in elegy. I describe how the eroticization of the hunt is performed on two levels: first, through the reworking of sexual images under the metaphor of the hunt; and second, through the employment of specific mythological allusions. While the hunt constructs Sulpicia-the-speaker as an elegiac lover, the use of allusive art concurs in making Sulpicia-the-poetess *docta* on par with male elegiac poets. I argue that the figure of Sulpicia-as-poetess is further enhanced by her allusive identification with a specific representation of the Euripidean Phaedra, who becomes Sulpicia's literary model of a woman expressing and writing (fictional) desire.

The Erotization of the Hunt and Other Elegiac Tropes

A recurrent approach to the interpretation of Cerinthus and Sulpicia's hunting activity has been considering Cerinthus' hunt as a practice signaling his social status and a temporary condition of separation from the erotic game, in which Cerinthus' interest in the hunt is unproblematically asexual.²⁷¹ I take issue with this interpretation and I demonstrate, instead, that the dynamic of the whole poem pertains to the erotic sphere. Sulpicia masterfully develops various aspects of the same elegiac trope: love as a chase.

Sulpicia's description of sexual encounters through a metaphor that is not, per se, erotic in its nature is not unprecedented in elegy. The use of images that diverge from immediate erotic contexts constitutes, in fact, a poetic claim that love permeates every sphere of life and literary genre. Similar to the hunt, but this time in the context of farming, Tibullus discusses how Venus has migrated to the fields: the language of love changes to *verba aratoris rustica* ("the rustic words of the plowman," 2.3.4). Similarly, in the letter of Acontius to Cydippe, Ovid blurs physical contact and domination: the *servus-amator* wishes to be subject to his beloved's anger since such action brings him pleasure (*Heroides* 20.71–72). In line 45, the passage also offers an example of hunts in an erotic sense with Amor setting up nets to trap Cydippe: an element of similarity with Sulpicia's hunting scene and tools. Among the various scenarios in which love enters, the hunt in elegy becomes an inextricable metaphor for love dynamics,²⁷² and it constitutes a trope probably employed by Gallus, as scholars have inferred from Virgil's representation of Gallus' love afflictions in *Eclogue* 10.²⁷³

²⁷¹ Several scholars, however, consider Cerinthus' hunt without Sulpicia as asexual and of course a social marker of his aristocratic status. See Hinds, "The Poetess and the Reader," 34ff, on "the opposition" and later "collapse" of the hunt; on social status, see H. Currie, "The Poems of Sulpicia," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II* 30.3 (1983), 1755; Miller, *Latin Erotic Elegy*, 163; Knox, "The Corpus Tibullianum," 152.

²⁷² See the whole Ovidian rhetoric of the *Ars Amatoria*.

²⁷³ For the theme of hunting and Gallus, see D. Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus Elegy and Rome* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 90; contra G. Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets*, trans. C. Segal (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 119–129. While both authors connect the theme of the hunt and the lovers as an original trope of Gallus, Conte explicitly links the passage to Phaedra's delirium speech (120). He claims that this connection is based on *servitium*, whereas the same motive is absent in "Gallus," since Virgil describes Gallus' hunt as a *remedia*, as the other elegists seem to follow. As I explain further, I consider Sulpicia's passage as referring to Phaedra but

In Sulpicia, the allusion to Cerinthus' erotic encounters under images of hunts is presented through the reworking of other two elegiac tropes at the incipit of the poem: the *militia amoris* and the *paraclausithyron*. Already in the third line, the epic tone in *militia amoris* is recalled in the hexameter by the words *duros*, *proelia*, and *arcuisse* ("harsh, battles, having defended"), while the following pentameter hosts two terms that pertain the word of elegy: *custos* and *Amor*.²⁷⁴ Although *proelia* and *arcuisse* are epic words, they are absorbed into elegy through the trope of *militia amoris* positively connecting battles to sexual dynamics. The metaphor is most prominent in Propertius, among the other elegists; in his poems the battlefield moves into the lovers' chamber (2.1.45) and the battles are fought with the mistress (3.5.2), becoming metonymy for sex (4.7.19–20). Similarly, in *Amores* 1.8.96 Ovid affirms that love cannot properly last if you remove fighting (*proelia*). In Tibullus, love is mixed with fights among boys and girls in the Elysian fields (1.3.64). Sulpicia's use of the word *proelia* in the context of the elegiac hunt can therefore allude to the love-battles (*proelia*) that Cerinthus incurs in his hunting without Sulpicia. This reading is strengthened by the following use of the predicative addressed to Amor, *custos*, which recalls another elegiac stock character: the gatekeeper. In elegy, guardians and doors are two entities of separation between the mistress and the *amator* that the lover needs to overcome so as to be with his mistress. Tibullus, for example, missing the erotic freedom of the *aurea aetas* ("golden age") recalls its lack of gatekeepers and closed doors that separated the lovers (2.3.74–75).²⁷⁵ Similarly, Ovid represents the husbands as careful *custodes* of wives to watch over possible unfaithful encounters (*Ars* 3.612). At the same time, however, their very presence enhances the lover's desire, constituting a part of the erotic game.²⁷⁶

While *custodes* in elegy are a barrier that the lover must face, in Sulpicia's poetry, the motif is instead subverted and the *custos* becomes an exclusively positive figure: Amor will protect and preserve her own lover from the chases of others. On one hand, the association of Amor with the role of *custos* of Sulpicia's passion is very consistent with the role that gods play in her poetry: Venus, Apollo, Juno, and the Muses are often represented as favouring her own interests or coming to her aid.²⁷⁷ On the other hand, the request that Sulpicia makes regarding Cerinthus enhances Sulpicia's ultimate goal of being in a condition of *amor mutuus* with her lover. The hunt without Sulpicia but with other lovers endangers the exclusivity and reciprocity of desire that Sulpicia seeks with Cerinthus. Amor as *custos* for her lover, therefore, is not a motif of exclusion but rather of exclusivity. Using a structure of dative of advantage (*mihi*; "for me"), she reveals that what is at stake through hunting is the love between the two: Cerinthus' safety in the hunt is worthy in light of Sulpicia's interest.

If the elegiac theme of the *custos* is reworked in her favour, the boar, and hence the hunt, are threatening Sulpicia with sexual exclusion. This leads her to imagine what could happen during the hunt. In such an erotic context, the invocation and supplication to the boar is reminiscent of the lament at the door of the *amator*, and in 3.9, the poet's imagined idea of what happens inside *cubiculum* takes the form of the anxieties of infidelity in the chase. The *Delia cura* is clearly

neither in a form of *servitium* nor as *remedia*. The interesting parallel with the Virgilian treatment of Gallus, moreover, is that both Sulpicia and Virgil compose a poem that dialogues with different genres: elegy and tragedy for Sulpicia, pastoral, elegy, tragedy for Virgil, and it opens to metaliterary reading of the love dynamics, as the end of the chapter explores for Sulpicia.

²⁷⁴ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 238.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Tibullus 1.2, Propertius 1.16, Ovid *Amores* 1.6; *Ars Amatoria* 2. 259–60, 2.524–532 635–6, 652.

²⁷⁶ Cf. *Amores* 2.19.

²⁷⁷ See discussion on 3.8 p.26 and 3.13 p. 35ff.

presented as a sexual threat that abducts (*abducit*) Cerinthus away from Sulpicia. The anxiety over Cerinthus' abduction is also emphasized in a series of rhetorical questions. Sulpicia asks what fury and state of mind (*quis furor? Quae mens* "What folly, what mind") might bring one to risk physical threats to one's own body parts: lesions of the hands from holding nets and bruising of the legs with thorny brambles.²⁷⁸ Every elegiac reader would know that *furor* and *amor* are inextricably connected with the first (*furor*) being a clear way of expressing the latter (*amor*).²⁷⁹ Cerinthus' initial hunt without Sulpicia is therefore as erotically charged as Sulpicia's later pursuit of her love.

Cerinthus' endangerment of his hands and limbs in the process of hunting does also suggest an erotic motive. In fact, hands and limbs constitute sexualized parts in elegiac erotic dynamics, and parallel expressions are present both in explicit and implicit erotic scenes. Ovid shows the limbs both as a desirable vision of the mistress and as major actors in romantic interplay.²⁸⁰ Similarly, the hands are a first point of contact between lovers.²⁸¹ In other contexts that allude to sex via metaphor, the *arator-amator* and the *servus-amator* eroticize the same parts of the body that are endangered in Cerinthus' hunt. After a series of images that evoke penetration and burning of the flesh (2.3.5–9), Tibullus notes that he would not complain if, under the sight of his *domina*, he tore his gentle hands, an expression that is reminiscent of Sulpicia's language (*laederet et teneras... manus* "and that my sweet hands are cut" 2.3.10).²⁸² In Ovid's letter between Acontius and Cydippe (78), the contact first reminds of the act of the suppliant, by involving the touch of the mistress' knees (*crura*) with his hands (*manus*). In lines 80–83, the turmoil between the two lovers more clearly echoes sexual dynamics, where the lover's only concern is avoiding the tearing of his lover's hands (3.84). These also characterize the original fetish of Acontius, who imagines Cydippe's hands on his neck (57–58). In Sulpicia's anxious rhetorical question, the participle *hamatis...rubis* ("with thorny brambles") further describes the subjugation of Cerinthus in accordance with the elegiac practice of treating the participle as a metaphor for love weapons, and the verb *intrare* hints at the sphere of penetration ("to enter").²⁸³ The same verb and the analogous constructs are used in the *Metamorphoses* in two different and close mythological episodes that involve or allude to violent sexual encounters.²⁸⁴

When somebody threatens Cerinthus in the erotic games of the hunt, Sulpicia wishes that the forest would die, and the dogs disappear. On the contrary, if she is the one pursuing, then the forest brings her pleasure, revealing to the reader that the goal of her hunt is sexual intercourse: Sulpicia leaves nothing ambiguous thanks to the use of the verb *concupere*.²⁸⁵ Intercourse and

²⁷⁸ Hinds, "The Poetess and the Reader," 35–36. Hinds notes the intertextual parallel between Sulpicia's initial line and the *Met.* 10.545, continuing with Venus' description of the threat. However, the typology of threat expressed by Sulpicia and by Ovid are different in the way they are (or not) eroticized.

²⁷⁹ P. Hardie, *Literature, Rumour and Renown: Representations of Fama in Western* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 231.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Ovid *Amores*, 1.4.43, 3.2.23–34, *Ars Amatoria* 1.556, 3.777.

²⁸¹ Cf. Ovid *Amores*, 1.4.6f.; 2.5.30, 2.15.12; 3.7.74 *Ars Amatoria* 2.203–214; Tibullus 1.6.26; Propertius 2.15.18.

²⁸² Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 241. Fulkerson also compares (← compares what?) with *Ecl.* 10.48–49: *A, te ne frigora laedant! A, tibi ne teneras glacies secet aspera plantas*; Cf. also *Met.* 1.508–9 *ne prona cadas indignave laedi crura notent sentes*.

²⁸³ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 242.

²⁸⁴ Hinds, "The Poetess and the Reader," 36 cf. *latebris captivarumque ferarum* (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1.475), *latebras intrare ferarum* (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1.593).

²⁸⁵ R. Pichon, *Index verborum amatoriorum* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1991), 118.

hunt are also connected by the image of copulating in front of the net, transforming *de facto* Cerinthus into her prey.²⁸⁶ In the immediately preceding lines, Sulpicia has presented herself as the hunter, the *venatrix*, holding traps (*retia* 12) and chasing (*quaeram* 13). Her presentation as sexually pursuing Cerinthus is strengthened by the way in which traps and hunts are treated in elegy. More often than not, they represent a position of dominance and power in enforcing non-consensual approaches rather than to alluding to less violent sexual intercourse.²⁸⁷ The same verb that Sulpicia uses in her hunting, *quaerere*, is also employed by Ovid in *Ars Amatoria* (2.13) to describe male conquests of women, previously depicted as *praedae* (2.2). Ovid, more than the other elegists, uses the image of the *venator-amator* chasing his *praeda-puella* extensively, and it is through this masculine image that Sulpicia chooses to claim her agency: she proclaims herself publicly using the same dynamics that the elegiac predator employs in describing his pursuit of the girl.²⁸⁸ The lover's representation as prey persists in the text through the systematic similarity between him and the boar. They both roam in the same landscape (1–2), and they are both threatened with wounds (*laedere...inlaesus* 8, 17).²⁸⁹ Initially, Sulpicia hopes Cerinthus-the-prey will be left unharmed by others for her exclusive enjoyment (4). Unsurprisingly, it is the boar that ends up *inlaesus* rather than in the net, while Cerinthus lies on Sulpicia's *plagas* ("nets").²⁹⁰ The possession and entrapment of the prey by the poetess is also strengthened by the use of the demonstrative adjective *ipsas* ("themselves"). Its employment not only reminds the reader of the *retia* that Sulpicia was just holding in line 12, but also of the anaphoric repetition of *ipsa ego* (12–13) which underlines and marks Sulpicia's active agency. In the very last line, in a crescendo of transformation, Cerinthus' metamorphosis as the hunted animal is reflected in the adjective that she chooses to describe him: *celer* ("swift"). In an intratextual parallel, Cerinthus' description resembles the limited freedom of Sulpicia's *celeri* hunting dogs in line 14, which the poetess can bind as she wishes with *ferrea vincla* ("iron chains").

The Double Role of Allusion

Sulpicia's sexualization of the hunt also comes through the use of mythological references, creating a relationship of poetess-speaker-reader based on *doctrina*: the capability to perform and recognize cultural references.²⁹¹ Through the use of various myths, Sulpicia in fact models her passion on mythological examples of *amor mutuus* and reciprocity, anticipating the sexual encounter between Sulpicia and Cerinthus. As I explain, Sulpicia alludes particularly to the myth of Venus and Adonis, the myth of Procris and Cephalus, and Phaedra's delirium in *Hippolytus*. Thanks to such allusions, therefore, Sulpicia not only proposes her poetic *materia* based on mutual love and faithfulness, but she also displays her role as *docta* in a cultural context.

²⁸⁶ Hallett, "The Eleven Elegies", 53. Hallett considers Sulpicia to be impersonating Dido due to the presence in both texts of the otherwise rare word *indigo* ("net").

²⁸⁷ For the first interpretation cf. 270–275; for the second, see Pichon, *Index verborum*, 253.

²⁸⁸ Cf. 1.45–49, 1.89, 263–278, 391–392, 762; 2.13, 2.188–190, 580; 3.425–428, 560, 591–92 (where it is a woman to employ the nets), 669–670.

²⁸⁹ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 244.

²⁹⁰ Fulkerson.

²⁹¹ On the various facets of the word *doctrina* see T. Habinek, *The Politics of Latin Literature: Writing, Identity and Empire in Ancient Rome*, 122–136. Habinek, however, argues that there is a different way in which genders can engage with *doctrina*, a thesis that is not supported in this thesis.

In the first two lines of the poem, the poetess opens with an invocation to the boar, who is begged to spare Cerinthus from the danger of the hunt. Hinds has pointed out how the opening of the line recalls the writing form of the hymns until the very last word, *aper*.²⁹² Through it, the poetess specifically alludes to the myth of Adonis by associating the danger of the hunt, the threat of the boar, and the relationship with Sulpicia/Venus-the-huntress.²⁹³ Hinds interprets the allusion to this myth and its intertextuality in the *Metamorphoses 10* as a double role of the hunting that both “opposes and collapses” the lovers: initially it divides—on the grounds of different leisure interests—and then it unifies lovers.²⁹⁴ However, Sulpicia is presenting herself as a pursuer of Cerinthus through his construction as prey and his quasi-metamorphosis into a boar. The allusion to the episode of Adonis, therefore, might serve the purpose of introducing, from the very beginning, Cerinthus’ sexual desirability through his assimilation with Adonis. As a matter of fact, in the following distich Sulpicia’s interest turns explicitly sexual, asking for Amor’s protection of Cerinthus for her own benefit; and in *Metamorphoses 10*, Venus’ description in the “a-sexual” moment of the hunt anticipates instead the later sexual encounter with Adonis by enforcing Venus’ erotic appearance.²⁹⁵

Since the speaker’s anxieties about the dangers of the hunt pertain to the sexual sphere of exclusion and infidelity, the chase over Cerinthus is thematically connected with another mythological episode from the Ovidian epic. In *Metamorphoses 7*, the love dynamics between Procris and Cephalus are similar to those of Sulpicia and Cerinthus in a multiplicity of senses. Just like Cerinthus, Cephalus’ sexual integrity and masculine virility is threatened by Aurora’s desire during the hunt (v.700–713). Procris’ later anxieties about Cephalus’ possible infidelities (v.813–826) mirror Sulpicia’s feeling in the first and last parts of the poem. Both mythological episodes play on the irony of the “chaste-chase” just as Sulpicia concludes 3.9. In the episode of *Metamorphoses 7*, Procris’ chaste hunt is just an eroticized pause in the love dynamics with Cephalus,²⁹⁶ and it is precisely during this time that Procris obtains the *iaculum* later responsible for her death and highly suggestive of the penetrative action. In Sulpicia’s poem, the separation in the hunt is ironically eroticized through its opposite: chastity. The figure of speech of the polyptoton (*caste...casta* v.20) emphasizes Sulpicia’s request which also reflects on the hoped for, but impossible, de-sexualization of the use of *retia* in her absence (*casta retia tange manu* “hold the nets with your chaste hand,” 20). The irony is immediately revealed when Sulpicia clarifies explicitly that the hunt in her absence is indeed erotic: the main threat to Cerinthus is to be pursued by another woman (v.21-22), and the poetess addresses her rival as potential threat. The employment of the verb *subrepat* (“to creep from below”) increases the suggestion that the matter is elegiac subtle love, which is also enforced by the use of the adverb (*furtim*; “secretly”).²⁹⁷

²⁹² Hinds, “The Poetess and the Reader, 34–35.

²⁹³ The same considerations are also reported in Hubbard “The Invention of Sulpicia,” 191; Fabre-Serris, “Sulpicia: An/other Female Voice,” 160–161; Batstone, “Sulpicia and the Speech of Men,” 103–05. Batstone notes that this poem recalls the mythological narrative of Venus’ companion in poem 3.8. Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 237–8. Fulkerson notes important intertextual parallels with the same mythological episode in Ovid’s *Met.* 10.545.

²⁹⁴ Hinds, “The Poetess and the Reader, 35.

²⁹⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10.535.

²⁹⁶ C. Littlewood, *Self-Representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 272–273.

²⁹⁷ Cf. *subrepens* in Catullus’ 76.21, where the arrival of love is presented not only as a disease but also as the heavy sleepiness that slowly enters the inner body uncontrollably. Fulkerson also notes the parallel with

While the myths of Venus and Adonis, and of Procris and Cephalus are examples of reciprocal love and affection, the mythological couples face threats of separation and faithfulness that breaks the harmony of the couple just like in Sulpicia's poems. As Mayor points out for the myth of Procris and Cephalus:²⁹⁸ "The lovers' *fides* must overcome challenges and difficulties, as in the case of the episode concerning Cephalus and Procris. Yet, even in these cases mutual love finally prevails [...]". The interpretation of the wild hunt as a metaphor for erotic involvement with someone other than Sulpicia is further reinforced by an internal symmetry that characterizes the central core of the poem, and by Sulpicia's last verses.

3.9

Sed procul abducit venandi Delia cura: 5
 o **pereant silvae** deficientque canes!
 Quis furor est? Quae mens, densos indagine colles
 claudentem teneras laedere uelle manus?
 Quidve iuvat furtim latebras intrare ferarum
 candidaque hamatis crura notare rubis? 10
 Sed tamen, ut tecum liceat, Cerinthe, vagari,
 ipsa ego per montes retia torta feram,
 ipsa ego velocis quaeram vestigia cervi
 et demam celeri ferrea vincla cani.
 Tunc mihi, tunc **placeant silvae**, si, lux mea, tecum 15
 arguar ante ipsas concubuisse plagas:

3.9

But already the Delian passion of
 hunting takes him far,
O that the forest would die, and the
 dogs disappear!
 What madness is this? What folly wants
 to tear your gentle hands as you trap the
 packed hills with your hunting net?
 What good is in secretly entering the
 dens of the beasts and bruising the white
 limbs with thorny brambles?
But nevertheless, so that I could roam
with you, Cerinthus,
I will bring the twisted nets through the
mountains,
I will look for the footsteps of the fast
deer
And I will remove the iron chain of the
swift dog.
 Then, my love, then **the forest will be**
pleasing for me if I will be said to have
 lain with you in front of your nets,
 Then the boar can come to our nets, and
 it will go unharmed not to trouble the
 pleasures of passionate love.

After the first two distiches, Sulpicia expresses the above-mentioned wish for the forests to perish. Forests are reflected again in line 15 and the connection of the two lines is emphasized by the assonance of the verbs employed (*pereant...placeant* "may they die... they will be pleasing," v. 6; 15). The verses that are enclosed within these lines are a pair of mirroring sets of two couplets each. The first two couplets that follow curse the "Sulpicialess" hunts that pose a threat to Cerinthus' sexual integrity. The second set of couplets, instead, has now positive claim

subrepsti in 77.3 for the unexpected subtraction of love and the similarity with *surrripio/subripio*. See Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 245.

²⁹⁸ Mayor, *Power Play*, 251.

towards the hunts, which are enjoyable only when Sulpicia is the *venatrix* empowered by and endowed with hunting traps.

If the allusion to Adonis testifies of Cerinthus' beauty, and the dynamics (and anxieties) of the hunt are evoked by the myth, Sulpicia's self-representation alludes to the image of Phaedra. It is also Sulpicia's construction as Phaedra that reinforces the allusion to the story of Procris, since the co-existence of the two mythological episodes is not unprecedented for the reader: Cephalus is explicitly referred to in the Euripidean tragedy (*Hippolytus*, 455) and in the epistle of Phaedra to Hippolytus by Ovid (*Heroides*, 4.93) as an example of lover/hunter/cheater. More specifically, the presentation of Sulpicia-the-*venatrix* participating in the hunt with a *iuvenis* presents parallels in content and form with Phaedra's delirium speech in the Euripidean tragedy. The association comes not so much from the love affair and the obvious element of the hunt (*velocis... cervi*; "swift deer" 13 vs. *celeri... cani*; "swift dogs" 15; θηροφόνοι... κύνες βαλιαῖς ἐλάφοις "dogs beast hunting spotted deer" 214–216), but from the overall verbal structure of the composition. A wishful subjunctive (*pereant silvae*; "may the forests die," 6) and subjunctive (*liceat*) introduce Sulpicia's transformation into a huntress. Symmetrically, even Phaedra's speech is introduced by wishful structures: the lyric optatives (ἄρυσάιμαν; "would that I drink," 209; ἀναπαυσάιμαν "would that I stop," 211; εἴθε γενοίμαν "if only I were," 230). After expressing wishes, both of the speeches portray the transformations of the protagonists with indicative tenses (futures and present) (*feram, quaeram, demam* "I will bring, seek, take," 12–14... εἶμι... ἔραμαι "I go... I desire," 15–19). The change in the mood of the verbs increases the illusion of Sulpicia's and Phaedra's metamorphoses as briefly possible.²⁹⁹ Sulpicia's allusion to Phaedra's speech is also another element of the eroticization of Cerinthus. In Phaedra's delirium, the presence of erotic and sexual dynamics is unquestionable, immediately signalled by Phaedra's wish to rest in a meadow (208–211), a literary *topos* for sexual encounters. Her speech is a progressive climax of transgression: Phaedra wishes to roam from resting in a meadow to the active pursuit of taming of horses (πῶλους Ἐνέτας δαμαλιζόμενα "taming the Henetian foals," 231) with all due allusion to Hippolytus.³⁰⁰ Similarly, Sulpicia wishes to roam with Cerinthus (*tecum ut liceat Cerinthis vagari* "so that I could roam with you, Cerinthus," 11) not to catch wildlife but to facilitate a sexual encounter.

While Phaedra's hopes for reciprocity are ironic for the reader in the ill-fated outcome of the dramatic episode, Sulpicia chooses to model her representation on Phaedra's delirium speech; the only point in the tragedy in which Phaedra opens to desire and displays provocative agency away from any allusion or anticipation of the tragic outcome of the play. The association with Phaedra therefore allows Sulpicia to present herself as a deviant and desiring agent and noblewoman, identifying Sulpicia's interest in erotic (composition) with a specific female narrative. In Euripides' tragedy, erotic deviance is presented through Phaedra's own voice as a purely aristocratic trait (v.409–410), strictly connected to literary tradition and writing (v.450 – the nurse; v.387 – Phaedra), and new forms of writing desire (Phaedra's writing). In 3.9 a further connection with the narrative of the Euripidean tragedy comes from the relatively close association of the word *notare* ("to scratch") with the word Cerinthus,³⁰¹ whose name derives from bee-bread,

²⁹⁹ On the Euripidean illusion that the transformation is possible, see B. Goff, *The Noose of Words: Readings of Desire, Violence and Language in Euripides' Hippolytus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990), 34). In Euripides, however, the illusion of the transformation is revealed in the following lines, where Phaedra returns to the use of wishful optatives.

³⁰⁰ φοιτᾶω used by the chorus to describe Phaedra's status in the immediately preceding first stasimon cf. 148, 169.

³⁰¹ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 241.

the essential material component to be scratched off wax tablets.³⁰² Sulpicia is not only writing about Cerinthus, but she is writing of her erotic desire. The action of writing on the tablets is a metapoetic claim on Sulpicia's own poetic writing (present similarly in 3.13), but it is also a point of contact with Phaedra's narrative of female agency, writing, and the literary tradition of desire.³⁰³ First, it is through writing on a wax tablet, δέλοτος, that the Euripidean Phaedra displays her agency in trying to self-direct the narrative of her desire. Second, in the Roman reception of the myth of Phaedra in the *Heroides* of Ovid, her transgressive behaviour comes through Phaedra's persuasive writing about her erotic desire, as indeed Sulpicia is doing in the poem.³⁰⁴ Moreover, the use of the verb *arguer* ("I will be said"), along with *concubuisse* ("to have had sex"), connects discourse and eroticism, and it has a particular semantic facet that reveals the nature of the erotic desire/writing of Sulpicia and further reworks the allusion to Phaedra. The verb implies the confutation of falsities: as the Cretan heroine has written a story of desire that will be discovered as detached from reality, Sulpicia proclaims the fictionality of her story and with this element she signals and limits the extent of fate that she and Phaedra share.

The role that allusion plays in the poem, however, is not only the evocative association with similarly thematic myths. The employment of literary and cultural references, in fact, collocates the poem in a literary panorama in which composition and composer are valued as "learned" through allusion, an allusion which also functions as an authorial claim. In line with the Alexandrian poetic tradition to which the elegists refer,³⁰⁵ the poetess is showing to her reader her engagement with *doctrina* by embedding her narrative with mythological ones. In her engagement with the tradition, the poetess does not only look at the past, but she proclaims her belonging to the forthcoming literary tradition, making herself a future "Alexandrian footnote":³⁰⁶ *arguar ante ipsas concubuisse plagas* ("I will be said to have lain with you in front of your nets," 16). The Latin verb *arguere* encompasses a declaratory meaning as it would for the verbs *dicere* and *ferre* ("to say"), which have been identified as signposting of allusions.³⁰⁷ But it also has sense of self-revelation: almost in a programmatic fashion, Sulpicia both challenges the reader to go beyond her eroticism and hopes that her narrative itself will be part of the erudite tradition. It is not coincidental, perhaps, that line 16 mirrors Sulpicia's 3.13 in which the use of *ferar* in place of *arguar* can be interpreted more closely as Sulpicia's "personification" of future literary references and her becoming part of an established literary tradition, wishing for her poetry to be narrated. Lastly, since in elegy the couplet often constitutes a unit of meaning, this metapoetic interpretation of the pentametric line might parallel an equivalent one on the hexameter.

Tunc mihi, tunc placeant silvae, si, lux mea, tecum 15
arguar ante ipsas concubuisse plagas:

³⁰² See Currie, "The Poems of Sulpicia," 1754 note 10; Roessel, "The Significance," 246–250. See for example Ovid's *Amores* 1.11.15: *Cetera fert blanda cera notata manu*.

³⁰³ Similar motives are also present in elegy, where *notare* is also used in meta-poetic terms. Propertius 1.6.16; 3.8.6; Ovid *Amores* 17.50; 2.6.4; 3.6.38; Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 242.

³⁰⁴ See Ovid, *Heroides* 4.10–16.

³⁰⁵ Cf. Propertius 3.1.1; 4.1.64; Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.58.6.

³⁰⁶ Ross, *Backgrounds*, 78.

³⁰⁷ S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1–5.

(Then, my love, then the forest will be pleasing for me if
I will be said to have lain with you in front of your nets.)

In the earlier verse (15), Sulpicia declares her appreciation for her eroticized forest (*silvae...tecum*). The term *silva* (“forest”), the Latin equivalent of the noun ὄλη, retains the Greek meaning of raw literary *materia*.³⁰⁸ There is therefore a unity of meaning in the elegiac distich that is based on the constructed identity of Sulpicia’s *corpus* and authorial identity.³⁰⁹ Sulpicia recognizes the value of her poetry (a preoccupation that permeates many compositions of hers), and she wishes other poets would echo her by allusion. Thus, the line could be interpreted as “Then, my love, then my raw *materia* will be pleasing for me if I will be said to have lain with you.”

Lack of *amor mutuus*: *sine beneficio*, *sine fide* in 3.17 and 3.16

If *Amor mutuus* represents Sulpicia’s poetic *materia*, its absence is presented as a poetic challenge. In this section I explore two of the short Sulpician epigrams that present a misalignment of feelings. I suggest that the poet reflects on their poetic implications through some metapoetic references. While Sulpicia’s 3.10 represents the lovers in a harmonious state, the opposite topic is represented in 3.17, in which the performance of proper *obsequia* is questioned. Unlike the *soteria*, the poem is a direct dialogue between Sulpicia-the-speaker and her lover, and the aetiology of the disease as lovesickness is made more explicit by Sulpicia’s association with a burning passion. In the opening line, Sulpicia explicitly questions Cerinthus’ devotion (*pia cura* 3.17.1) and immediately clarifies her condition as a sick *puella*, whose body is described as distressed (*corpora fessa* “distressed body,” 3.17.2).³¹⁰ Maltby has noted that the expression *calor* (“heat, fever”) is a strictly medical term, but the theme of sickness is undoubtedly associated with her condition as an elegiac lover.³¹¹ In 3.8.11–12, 3.11.5, 3.12.17, and 3.18.1, Sulpicia associates her passion with the heat of desire and assimilates herself to Dido’s burning love. Moreover, the second distich recalls but reverses line 16 in 3.10, in which Cerinthus’ devotion to the *puella* ensures salvation from her condition. This time, Sulpicia clarifies that she would have not looked forward to recovery if she knew that her lover did not share the same feelings. In this way she is expressing, but reversing, another image from 3.10, in which the lovers were expected to be saved as a joint unit (3.10.19–20). Although the closing couplet of 3.17 might be a marginal annotation that intruded into the text, the expression *lento pectore* (“indifferent chest”) stresses again Cerinthus’ “less ardent” elegiac condition and his inadequacy in their elegiac love, which affects the state of the poetess.³¹²

³⁰⁸ Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*, 11–14. For a survey of a similar meta-poetic interpretation in elegy see J. Westerhold, “Ovid’s Epic Forest: A note on ‘Amores’ 3.1.1-6,” *The Classical Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (2013): 899–903.

³⁰⁹ See discussion on 3.8 p. 26ff., and 3.13 p.35ff.

³¹⁰ Cf. 3.10.10.

³¹¹ R. Maltby, “The Unity of Corpus Tibullianum Book 3: Some Stylistic and Metrical Considerations”, 335. Also, cf. Propertius 1.12.17, 3.8.9; Ovid, *Heroides* 15.12; *Ars Amatoria* 1.237.

³¹² Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 291. Fulkerson considers the line an interpolation since it adds no new meaning in the poem, and its sole role is strengthening the previous line in clarifying Cerinthus’ detachment. In favour of an organic belonging to the poem, see instead N. Lowe, “Sulpicia’s Syntax,” *Classical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1988): 200. Lowe notes the poetic sophistication and continuity in the chiasm in *evincere morbos* and the enjambment.

The poem, therefore, expresses concerns about the misalignment of feelings between the two lovers, and in doing so, it turns towards the elegiac norm. Needless to say, in Latin love elegy, scenes of illness are most often centred around lovesickness: the elegiac lovers constantly struggle within their *amores* and the very struggle becomes *causa* of composition. Propertius, for example, in his programmatic opening elegy of the *Monobiblos*, considers love a *malum* that generates pains and therefore justifies his poetic role (35–38). Likewise, Ovid’s *Amores* 1.2 describes the poet’s body as tormented by an undefined form of love that compels him to write. This theme is also prominent in *Heroides*, with love sadness/sickness being what inspires the heroines’ fictional writing. Ovid’s *Remedia* presents lovesickness as the sole focus of his elegiac poetry. However, in Sulpicia, the presence of some metapoetic nuances might reflect, instead, the impossibility of expression.

The poetic dimension is revoked not only through the obvious reference to the body (*mea...corpora* “my body,” 3.17.2), but also through the thematic employment of the verb *vexare* (“to harass”). As a matter of fact, the verb is used for a physical condition and for a poetic one.³¹³ In *Tristia* 2.1.318, the poet uses the verb to present a poetic composition (epic) for which he considers himself inept.³¹⁴ Similarly, in *Epistulae Ex Ponto* 4.14.37, the verb is skilfully employed to describe a poetic rival who is not up to his standard. Poem 3.17 then continues by showing Sulpicia’s desire to overcome her status, unaware of her lover’s lack of interest in her condition. As in the earlier line, the ambivalence between physical and poetic distress continues with the use of the word *morbus* associated with the adjective *tristis*. The expression *tristes...morbos* commonly describes both physical sickness and love sickness, but the very same adjective is also employed to evoke poetic weaknesses.³¹⁵ In Propertius 1.9.13, for example, the adjective *tristis* is associated with an inadequate book (1.9.13–18). Similarly, Ovid’s *tabellae* are *tristes* when they cannot accommodate the union of the elegiac lovers (*Amores*, 1.12.1); in *Tristia* 2.1.493 the adjective is used to describe a negative reception of his earlier elegiac work as well as his current composition, far away from his earlier elegiac work and cultural environment (*Tristia* 5.1.42–48). In describing her condition of exhaustion due to a lack of *amor mutuus*, Sulpicia is also expressing the exhaustion of her corpus. This poem, coincidentally, appears as the second last of her poems.

Poem 3.16, instead, expresses similar concerns about poetic creativity by looking at the effects of infidelity. In Sulpicia, the belief in reciprocity in the elegiac relationship leads the speaker, on one level, to hurt Cerinthus with the same *culpa*. On the other level, she expresses concern for what unfaithfulness might imply in poetic terms. The earlier preoccupation towards qualifying the type of love (and poetry) in 3.13, 3.12, and 3.11 is recalled here in 3.16. Sulpicia threatens Cerinthus by saying:³¹⁶

Gratum est, securus multum quod iam tibi de me
permittis, subito ne male inepta cadam.

³¹³ Cf. Propertius 2.28.15.

³¹⁴ Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 290.

³¹⁵ On the instances in which the expression appears in literature, see Fulkerson, 291.

³¹⁶ Lowe, “Sulpicia’s Syntax,” 201. Lowe notes that the MSS entry—*credam*—is not to be accepted due to its complication of the meaning. Lyne, *Collected Papers on Latin Poetry*, 361. Lyne notes how (← how or that?) Statius’ emendation is essential for surpassing *credam*.

(It is great that you are so sure that I do not fall, all of a sudden, into bad and improper situations, since you already take much liberty from me.)

While some commentators prefer to understand the last clause referring to Sulpicia (*subito ne male inepta cadam*) as depending on the impersonal construct “*gratum est*,” it is equally possible to interpret the proposition introduced by *ne* as dependent on *securus*.³¹⁷ With the latter interpretation, Sulpicia is almost challenging Cerinthus’ certainty of her own devotion. Almost in a litotes of the word *cura*, the lover’s lack of interest in Sulpicia makes him *securus* (as if *sine cura* “without care”) of her fidelity, and with *cura* towards undignified women (3.16.3–4).³¹⁸ In the logic of mutuality that is expressed frequently in the earlier poems, Sulpicia threatens him and opens to the possibility of hurting him by looking for alternative encounters. The reciprocity of the threat in Sulpicia is also enhanced by a pun that many scholars have identified in the *sphragis* of Sulpicia. Although Sulpicia’s *nominatio* recalls her (possible) privileged status as historians have reconstructed, by describing herself as “*Servi filia*” (“daughter of Servius”) she is also declassing her status and her moral behaviour, almost associating herself with the *scortum* (“prostitute”) that Cerinthus is pursuing.³¹⁹ In a fictional self-representation as a quasi-freedwoman, the possibility of a threat of infidelity in the earlier part of the poem becomes more real.

solliciti sunt pro nobis, quibus illa dolori est 5
ne cedam ignoto maxima causa toro.

(Several people are concerned that I, whose pain is their greatest (poetic) concern, do not end up in an insignificant bed.)

If this threat reflects Cerinthus’ pursuit of lower-class women, then even the closing verse might mirror the same behaviour on Sulpicia’s side. Her close family—or literary circle—is scared that she might fall into anonymous, sterile, and unfruitful relationships (*ignoto toro* “insignificant bed”). In this case, *ignoto toro* should not be attributed to Cerinthus, whose poetically inspirational quality Sulpicia misses and requires.³²⁰ Rather, the expression reflects the threat of her sexual freedom *sine fide* (“without faithfulness”).³²¹ These relationships not only appear inappropriate for a woman belonging to the Roman elite, but they are also not worthy of being narrated. Although the expression *ignotum torum* only appears in Lygdamus 3.6.60, the two terms separately are frequently found in elegy. The adjective *ignotus*, however, has a strong implication connected to a metapoetic reading of the verse, in which Sulpicia expresses concern for the quality of love that Cerinthus is ruining. Both Propertius and Ovid employ the term to discuss either *amores* that are

³¹⁷ Thus, the whole sentence would read: “I’m glad you feel free and are so permissive to yourself about me—so that I don’t fall into disgrace in my folly.” Lyne, *Collected Papers on Latin Poetry*, 359.

³¹⁸ M. Santirocco, “Sulpicia Reconsidered,” *The Classical Journal* 74, no. 3 (1979): 232–233.

³¹⁹ Hinds, “The Poetess and the Reader,” 45; Flaschenriem, “Sulpicia and the Rhetoric,” 47; J. Hallett, “Sulpicia, Absent Roman Fathers in the Writings of their Daughters: Cornelia and Sulpicia,” 188.

³²⁰ Lyne, *Collected Papers on Latin Poetry*, 346, 361–2. Lyne thinks the *ignoto toro* must be Cerinthus.

³²¹ This poem has stimulated different readings and interpretations, which are often associated with the derogatory term *ignotus*. Most scholars attribute it to Cerinthus as a marker of inferior status or a derogatory expression referring to Sulpicia.

not written (2.1.6) or *amores* that do not bring any poetic *fama* to the mistress or the poet (2.11.1), strengthening the interpretation of Sulpicia’s concerns as pertaining the poetic quality of her love.

Sulpicia’s concern about the infidelity of her lover and the loss of his inspirational love is another point of divergence from the standard treatment of the elegiac trope. Unlike in Sulpicia, the condition of unbalanced feelings is the fruitful norm in elegiac poetry, where the happy endings are an *adynaton*. The trope of the unfaithful lover seems to have originated with Gallus’ poetry, as in Virgil’s 10th eclogue the elegiac poet is crying about Lycoris’ departure and infidelity.³²² Propertius seems to rework this episode in which Cynthia is associated with Lycoris, and her later reversed behaviour does not seem credible (1.8).³²³ Even at the beginning of the *Monobiblos*, Propertius claims that his elegiac love is based on the mistress’ unfaithfulness, and that he in fact dislikes all chaste women (1.1.5) in favour of Cynthia’s wantonness. Cynthia’s unfaithfulness is frequently remarked on by Propertius in opposing her to both the example of faithful mythological women (2.9.1–16) and to his own persistent faithfulness (2.9.44–48). Similarly, Tibullus’ 1.6 discusses the unfaithfulness of Delia, employing the same tricks that she learned from him. Ovid’s 3.11 is a lament on his lover’s unfaithfulness, which keeps reiterating his love.³²⁴ Even more clearly, in *Amores* 2.19.13–16, the poet explores how unfaithfulness revives love, proposing again the *agon* as the necessary condition for elegiac love.

In-Conclusions on 3.18

The last poem that closes the cycle constitutes a prayer of forgiveness from Sulpicia to her lover, to excuse the dissimulation of her feelings. Some scholars have found it problematic that this poem does not constitute a proper closure to the cycle, leaving the reader uncertain about the outcome of the relationship.³²⁵ While the lack of closure might be simply the result of history of transmission of the text (which might or might not have been intended as the concluding poem of a cycle), there are some elements in the narrative that bring closure with respect to the other poems of the cycle: the joint treatment of two major and opposing themes of the cycle—*amor mutuus* and its absence; using a ring structure that mirrors the programmatic poem 3.13.

Ne tibi sim, mea lux, aequae iam fervida cura
ac videor paucos ante fuisse dies,
si quicquam tota commisi, stulta, iuventa
cuius me fatear paenituisse magis
hesterna quam te solum quod nocte reliqui, 5
ardorem cupiens dissimulare meum.

³²² A. Keith, “The Domina in Roman Elegy,” in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. B. Gold (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 289–290.

³²³ Keith, “The Domina,” 293.

³²⁴ Cf. especially with Catullus 8 and 85. Ovid, however, is often himself faithful to the genre (*puellae*) rather than Corinna; see for example 2.4 and 2.8. On the unfaithfulness of Ovid and his lover, see R. Armstrong, *Ovid and His Love Poetry* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 2005), 64–65.

³²⁵ With this view, see: C. Merriam, “Some Notes on the Sulpicia Elegies,” *Latomus* 49, no. 1 (1990): 96; Milnor, “Sulpicia’s (Corpo) reality,” 277; Holzberg, “Four Poets,” 188; P. Dronke, *Forms and Imaginings: From Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century*, (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007): 155; Fabre-Serris, “Intratextuality and Intertextuality,” 75.

(O my life, may I not be your glowing attention now, as I seem to have been previously in these days. O silly me, if—there’s anything—that I did in my whole youth, and that I could confess to have regretted more than leaving you alone last night, desiring to hide my burning passion.)

The first distich opens with a wish, in which once more, there is misalignment of feelings: when Cerinthus was displaying *cura* (“attention”), Sulpicia was dissimulating her passion, and she was leaving. While the threat in 3.16 and 3.17 was coming from Cerinthus’ side, here Sulpicia is a threatening agent, connecting to the narratives of danger to *amor mutuus* in the cycle (3.9, 3.14, 3.16, 3.17). She depicts herself as *stulta* (“silly”) in opposition to the fervid desire of her lover (3.18.3). The self-representation that she employs here is strikingly divergent from the earlier impersonation of a devoted *puella*. Now, she aligns with an inadequate lover, a representation that fits the end of the cycle, as well as the end of the erotic narrative. Elsewhere in elegy, for example, Tibullus uses the adjective twice in 1.9.45 and 65 to describe a condition of emotional discrepancy, and the word is also employed to represent uninterested or incapable lovers in *Amores* 2.8.25 and 2.19.1.³²⁶

By the end of the poem, however, Sulpicia’s inadequacy and threat to their *amor mutuus* is revealed instead to be just an illusion; a variation in the game of their erotic experience that instead confirms her role as an elegiac lover. The poetess, in fact, admits and reassures her partner of the mutuality of their love through her verses, and almost provocatively, minimizes their separation as just a part of their erotic play. In the letters of Paris and Helen, for example, both characters put emphasis on their dissimulation of love as a necessary part of their erotic interaction.³²⁷ Not only does Paris explicitly affirm his attempt to dissimulate (*sed male dissimulo* “but I dissimulate badly,” 16.7; *qua licet et possum, luctor celare furorem, sed tamen apparet dissimulatus amor* “as I can and may, I struggle to conceal the passion, but my concealed love appears all the same,” 16.235), but Helen recommends this practice to him as part of their elegiac game of furtive courtship (*at tu dissimula, nisi si desistere mavis. sed cur desistas? dissimulare potes* “but you dissimulate, unless you prefer to stop, but why should you stop? You can dissimulate,” 17.151–2). Lowe, in fact, notes that the relationship with the lover has gone “uncharacteristically well” for elegy and that there is hope for a happy ending.³²⁸

The ring composition of the cycle (3.13–3.18) suggests a connection between the celebration of love in 3.13 and the closing poem. Paolucci, for example, notes that the *ardor* (“passion”) that Sulpicia confesses in 3.18 coincides with the *amor* that opens the cycle (3.13).³²⁹ Keith’s interpretation of this closing poem is particularly relevant since she individuates a ring

³²⁶ See also its use in Propertius to describe the contention of the lover (Cf. 2.21.18; 2.34.20). The adjective is also employed by Ovid to define his own poetic elegiac expression that “caused” his exile. Cf. *Epistulae Ex Ponto* 2.9.73; 3.3.37.

³²⁷ Helen’s dissimulation on her lover’s behaviour: 17.75–6.

³²⁸ Lowe, “Sulpicia’s Syntax,” 199.

³²⁹ Paolucci, “Sulpicia e l’antitesi,” 140. Against this reading but still recognizing a form of ring structure, Milnor notes that the poem opposes 3.13 as a poetic declaration in emphasizing *cupiens dissimulare* (“wishing to dissimulate”) over the ‘reality’ of *ardorem cupiens* (“wishing love”). See Milnor, “Sulpicia’s (Corpo) reality,” 278.

structure between 3.13 and 3.18 centered around a systematic reversal of Dido's fate.³³⁰ In particular, Keith notes how both poems evoke the image of Dido, but unlike Aeneas and Dido, with the possibility of continuation of the relationship. In this same line of interpretation, my reading of 3.9 and 3.10 has shown how Sulpicia systematically evokes mythological images of heroines (Phaedra, Procris, Dido), reversing the tragic outcome of their dramas in her elegiac verses. The joint presence of a positive and negative outcome of the love/poem not only reflects the two themes of love and separation that are present in the cycle, but also Sulpicia's employment of mythological and literary allusion in the cycle.

A last point of contact between the two poems is the emphasis on publicizing love, which reaffirms her rhetorical declaration of desire in many of her poems (3.9, 3.11, 3.13).³³¹ In 3.13 in particular, the poetess wishes to publicize her feelings through her own writing, and in 3.18 her only regrets would have been not to do so. While this clash of contrasting outcomes has puzzled some scholars, the poem constitutes a good closing point for the cycle in that it coincides with and brings back all of its motifs: *amor mutuus*, the threat of unreciprocated feelings, and the desire for poetic publicity.

³³⁰ Keith, "Tandem venit amor," 307.

³³¹ Flaschenriem, "Sulpicia and the Rhetoric," 50–53.

Chapter 3: Female Authorial Identity and Literary Fame

As we have seen, Propertius, Ovid, and Tibullus often lament the asymmetry of affection as a permanent condition in their elegiac relationship. The presence of love as *agon*, *materia* of the elegiac discourse, is at the base of the poets' literary endeavours. The contrast between the *puella* and the speaker is present both in the role of *domina* that the *puella* assumes over the elegiac lover, but also in the poet's control and shaping of the textual *puella*. What differentiates Sulpicia's poetry is not the absence of trouble in the relationship (as there have been plenty of threats to *amor mutuus*: from external erotic pursuits, to illnesses and separation) but rather the presence and celebration of reciprocated feelings as an essential part of her poetic efforts. In 3.13 and 3.16, for example, Sulpicia clearly associates the fidelity of a valuable lover with her desire to publicize her love. The harmony of the poetess and her lover in the pursuit of *amor mutuus* is also represented through the partners' enslavement to their feelings in a joint *servitium amoris*, and with the reworking of mythological allusions of loving couples.

In this concluding chapter, I analyze how the two lovers in Sulpicia's elegiac couple are constructed. I show how Sulpicia's conception of *amor mutuus* influences the way in which both Cerinthus and Sulpicia are composed as characters of her *elegidia*. I start by analyzing the role of Cerinthus as a featureless character who exists solely as a necessary part of Sulpicia's bilateral idea of love. Unlike the other elegists, his character lacks some defined and "realistic" qualities, leaving all the focus on Sulpicia as a protagonist. Her own body, instead, absorbs all the qualities (and textual allusions) of the elegiac *puella*, as I have explored throughout chapter two. However, this representation is free from the mechanism of control that characterizes the gendered relationship between the male-speaker and the female-spoken in male elegy. Her marked agency and the very action of self-defining as a *docta puella* ensure her own control over her body as *materia* and over her *fama* as a poetess. I then move to Sulpicia's references to her *fama*, showing how literary concerns, more than social ones, are at the centre of the poetess' preoccupation. Her rejection of agonistic love is also reflected in Sulpicia's concluding declaration of *fama* in 3.13 in which *amor* and *fama* do not exist in opposition, with the (artificial) creation of a *mala fama* resulting from the erotic *fabula*. On the contrary, *amor* and *fama* are in harmony at a literary level.

The Role of the Male and Female Lover in *amor mutuus*

One of the elements that commonly creates emotional tension between the speaker-lover and his *puella* is the availability of the girl to other men. The elegiac lover laments her cruelty in abandoning him for others, constructing his girl as a sophisticated courtesan or a married woman.³³² The status of the *puella*, although ambiguous, is constructed with some realism. The "realistic" characteristics that Cynthia, Delia, Nemesis, and Corinna display are based on the materiality of their characters: they are often described as beautiful and learned mistresses, interested in wealth and luxury with a clear focus on the aesthetic of their bodies.³³³ Latin elegy, therefore, emerges as a genre that is strictly related to the socio-cultural context of the 1st century

³³² See, for example, Ovid, *Amores* 2.19. On the complexity of the status of the elegiac *puella*, see E. Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite from Cornelia to Julia Domna* (London: Routledge, 1999), 76ff and note 95.

³³³ For a survey on the characteristics of the *puella* and their scholarly interpretation, see A. Keith, "The Domina in Roman Elegy," in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. B. Gold (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) 285–300.

BC, and particularly to the city of Rome.³³⁴ The employment of “realistic devices” in the description of the body and persona of the elegiac *puella* has led scholars to identify a “textual portrait” for each elegiac beloved.³³⁵ These characteristics create the illusion of a *puella* as a “real” controlling *domina* with power over a “real” *servus*-lover-speaker, and it is through these characteristics that the poets employ realism as an aesthetic characteristic of the genre, while nonetheless presenting the woman as a textual allegory.³³⁶

Scholars have tried to construct a defined persona of Cerinthus from the text, an approach that has been taken for other elegiac beloveds. Currie, Miller, and Knox have considered him a noble man due to his practice of hunting in 3.9.³³⁷ Drawing an opposite conclusion based on Horatian intertextuality, Hallett considers him an upper-class male prostitute with whom the poetess actually had a relationship (outside the elegiac compositions).³³⁸ These irreconcilable conclusions about Cerinthus’ status (as an aristocratic youth or a prostitute for aristocratic women) seem to reflect the same ambiguity that characterizes the status of the elegiac *puellae* and their variable personas, but they reveal a greater plasticity in Cerinthus’ character.³³⁹ Sulpicia does not focus on any characteristic of Cerinthus’ body, and no “textual picture” of his persona is created, as is typical for a female beloved in the genre. At the same time, however, he often appears as a character in line with the stereotypical elegiac lover and, in this context, he is embedded into the socio-cultural context of 1st century BC Rome. The *Ars Amatoria* is the *locus classicus* in which the behaviour of such a successful lover is represented. Like Cerinthus in Sulpicia, lovers are expected to perform *obsequia* during the mistress’ illness (2.315ff), to celebrate her birthdays (1.427), to be attentive (1.152).³⁴⁰ Cerinthus’ presence, therefore, is required only as a part of the elegiac couple in the perspective of *amor mutuus*, solely because without him there would be no elegiac *amor* to tell of for Sulpicia. In 3.9, for example, Cerinthus the hunter is transformed into the prey of her passion. In 3.13, 3.14, and 3.15 he exists only as a personification of the practice of Sulpicia’s love poetry, while in 3.16 and 3.17 he threatens the harmonious ideal of *amor mutuus*. In 3.10, he acts as a devotee for the poetess, performing the tasks that are expected from a partner; in 3.11 and 3.12, he is openly an elegiac lover who reciprocates her love. His characteristics,

³³⁴ The use of realistic devices has been at the centre of the discourse around Latin elegy, with particular attention on how to interpret “realistic traits” in the *puellae*. See M. Wyke, “Mistress and Metaphor in Augustan Elegy,” *Helios* 16, no. 1 (1989): 193–224.

³³⁵ Wyke, “Mistress and Metaphor,” 389. Wyke highlights Sullivan’s and Lyne’s portraits of the mistresses.

³³⁶ K. McNamee, “Propertius, Poetry, Love,” in *Woman's Power, Man's Game*, ed. J. King (Wauconda: Bolchazy-Carducci Publisher, 1993), 223–35.

³³⁷ H. Currie, “The Poems of Sulpicia,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II* 30.3 (1983), 1755; P. Miller, *Latin Erotic Elegy: An Anthology and Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), 163; P. Knox, “The Corpus Tibullianum,” 152.

³³⁸ J. Hallett, “Sulpicia and her Resistant Intertextuality,” 148 ff. See especially p. 150 on the reality of the life experience. Against Hallett’s suggestion, it is also worth noticing that Sulpicia never associates Cerinthus with the trope of greediness with which both the *puellae* and the *pueri* are represented, as one could have expected.

³³⁹ A similar role is also reserved for Marathus, Tibullus’ beloved in 1.4, 1.8, 1.9, who only retains the few characteristics of *formositas* (1.4.3), greediness, and love for luxury attributed to the elegiac mistress cf. 1.9.10ff. M. Drinkwater, “‘His turn to cry’: Tibullus’ Marathus cycle (1.4, 1.8, and 1.9) and Roman Elegy.” *The Classical Journal* 107, no. 4 (2012): 423–450. Drinkwater considers it in line with the representation of the lover in the genre in which lovers are “depersonalized” instead.

³⁴⁰ M. Drinkwater, 248. Drinkwater considers the similar behaviours to be necessary both in homoerotic and in heteroerotic relationships.

therefore, lack any specific personalization capable of creating a defined identity for Cerinthus, who appears just as a generic lover.³⁴¹

The construction of Cerinthus contrasts, instead, with the features of Sulpicia's persona and the metaphorical roles that female bodies play in elegy. As Wyke and many scholars following her lead have pointed out, the realistic components of the elegiac *puella* are an allegory for the quality of elegiac texts.³⁴² Cynthia's body in the programmatic opening of 2.1 has poetic qualities:

ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit.
sive illam Cois fulgentem incedere †cogis†,
hac totum e Coa veste volumen erit;
seu vidi ad frontem sparsos errare capillos,
gaudet laudatis ire superba comis;

(She herself generates my poetic ability: if you think of her going shining in Coan clothing, this whole volume (of mine) will come into being from the Coan dress; you have seen her hair spread loose on her forehead, she enjoys going around proud for her hair praised in poetry)

The emphasis on the island of Cos goes beyond the preciousness of textiles: it inevitably recalls the Hellenistic poet Philitas of Cos, whose priest Propertius claims to be.³⁴³ The loose hair of the mistress is transformed into poetry. Similarly, all the qualities and aesthetic poetic values characterize Sulpicia's persona, instead of the beloved's, as it most prominently appears in elegy. As Wyke has noted for six of her poems (3.13–3.18), the poetess takes on the persona of the elegiac mistress, mitigating her active role as a speaker with the representation of the *puella*, who is objectified in 3.14.3, 3.15.1, 3.17.1.³⁴⁴ Unlike Wyke, I identify Sulpicia as *puella* even in the first part of the cycle (3.8–3.12); her poetry reveals none of the passivity of the elegiac *puella* in any part of the corpus and the writer takes control her own corpus. In 3.8 she is the sole protagonist, and similarly, her body and corporality take a prominent role in 3.10, 3.12, 3.13, and 3.17. In 3.8, 3.11, 3.12, and 3.13 the speaker presents herself as a poetic agent far from the objectivized *puella* moulded by the other elegists. Sulpicia's persona, therefore, takes the role both of the *puella* and of the lover/speaking agent played by the male in the poems of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid. The other elegists, in fact, create a binary system in which they carry some qualities of elegies (see Propertius' *teneritas* and *mollitia*) but they are clearly separate entities from their creative products. This division, but assimilation, is perhaps best represented in Propertius, who is *mollis*: the same adjective defines elegy as a genre and the body of his mistress Cynthia.³⁴⁵ Only in his exilic poetry does Ovid develop a closer identity of his physical corpus and his literary corpus.

³⁴¹ On the insignificant and undefined role of Cerinthus in portion 3.13–3.18 of the cycle, see especially L. Percy, "Erasing Cerinthus: Sulpicia and Her Audience," *The Classical World* 100, no. 1 (2006): 31–36.

³⁴² M. Wyke, "Written Women," 47–61, and McNamee, "Propertius, Poetry, Love," 215–248.

³⁴³ Cf. Propertius 3.1.1

³⁴⁴ M. Wyke, "Taking the Woman's Part," 114–115.

³⁴⁵ Cf. 2.22.13, 1.7.19, 2.11.14.

From this perspective, Milnor consider this assimilation between Ovid's exilic corpus and the representation of his persona as a direct reference to Sulpicia's earlier self-representation.³⁴⁶ In her poetry, in fact, the relationship between the poetic body and the body of the poet is enforced by the *doctrina* of the *puella*. It is the description of her body as an elegiac text that identifies and establishes her role as a poetess.

While the construction of the *docta puella* in male elegy depicts a woman that is ultimately the object of male desire and reason for his *fama*, Sulpicia's representation through this trope reveals her agency as a poetic being. In Propertius' poetry, for example, Cynthia is just an instrument for the appreciation of Propertius' own poetry. Cynthia, in fact, is praised as *docta* mostly for her ability to read her lover's poetry,³⁴⁷ and for playing the lyre in a way that ultimately inspires the poet.³⁴⁸ Cynthia's inspirational value is instrumental to the enhancement of every (male) artist's fame, as indeed is the case for Propertius. Similarly, in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* 2.73ff, the *docta puella* again serves the male's writing and sexual conquest: they are treated as a small category among many more women who pretend to be learned—by male judgment. In both cases, they exist as recipients of the poetry that a male instead writes.

In Sulpicia's poetry the emphasis on her learned status is instead associated with the creation of poetry: Sulpicia's descriptions resemble a performative elegiac text.³⁴⁹ Her literary education and her *doctrina* are revealed in her use of allusions, which are consistent throughout the text (3.8–3.18), and in her ability to shape her poetry within the genre of elegy, both employing and modifying its standard tropes. Moreover, in 3.13, Sulpicia reflects on her practice of writing as an activity that is not limited to her lover, as it is often the case for the *docta puella*. Ovid, for example, limits his mistress' need for writing to the one word that can facilitate their encounter (*veni* "come" 1.11.24), silencing every possible creativity expression from the mistress in favour of the immediacy of his sexual gratification. On the contrary, Sulpicia rejects the idea of writing solely for her lover. Instead, she aims at a larger audience with enough confidence in her narrative to consider it universal (3.13.5–8).

Identifying a woman as a *puella* in the context of elegy could be potentially problematic, since it implies a subordinate status that is incompatible with the writing of a poetess, since in elegy a *puella* is usually "written" rather "writing"; it also questions the respectability of a woman. As Hamelrijk puts it, the *docta puella* constitutes the counter-ideal of the Roman woman in the moralistic society of the Augustan Period, due not only to its association with *meretrices*, but also to a generally negative association between women and education.³⁵⁰ Male sources, in fact, display an anxiety around the amoral consequences that education might bring to women: Sallust's portrait of Sempronia and Cicero's and Catullus' representations of Clodia are two fitting examples.³⁵¹ Hamelrijk, however, has shown how this negative ideological association co-exists with a much

³⁴⁶ K. Milnor, "Sulpicia's (Corpo) reality," 265–266.

³⁴⁷ Cf. 2.24.21; 2.26.25–6; 2.33.38.

³⁴⁸ Cf. especially 2.1.10.

³⁴⁹ Cf. 3.8 and my interpretation of the poem at p. 26ff. On Sulpicia and performance in her poetry, see also J. Hallett, "Spectacle in the Eleven Elegies of Sulpicia: To Marcus Colyer, M.D., and Joseph Pasternak, M.D.," *Helios* 45, no. 2 (2018): 195–205.

³⁵⁰ Hamelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite From Cornelia to Julia Domna*, 81ff. Hamelrijk also argues in favour of a "domestication" of the *docta puella* a process in which the expression loses all its negative connotations from the late 1 CE.

³⁵¹ Sallust *Bellum Catilinae* 25; for a full survey and contextualization of the primary sources on Clodia. see M. Skinner, "Clodia Metelli," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 113, (1983): 274.

more positive attitude towards female education in among the Roman upper-class.³⁵² In the late republic and early principate, in fact, female education also reflected the cultural level and status of the male component of the household.

The coexistence of this ambivalent attitude towards female education is present in Sulpicia's discourse through the association with her *doctrina* as marker of social status. Both in 3.8 and in 3.12, her *doctrina* is associated with her status through a display of wealth, and through the proper clothing (*palla*) expected for an upper-class woman (3.8.11; 3.12.13).³⁵³ Hamelrijk also notices that, despite her association with the *docta puella*, her respectability is enhanced in various poems through images of *pudicitia*.³⁵⁴ In 3.16, moreover, a poem in which Sulpicia proclaims herself an elegiac *puella* (3.16.), her reputation and class are cunningly preserved through the contrast with the other lover, who is denigrated as a low class prostitute. There are also two other aspects that frame the "normality" of Sulpicia as a learned upper-class woman and *docta puella*. If prosopographic works are correct in identifying Sulpicia's kinship to the family of the jurist Servius Sulpicius Rufus, the poetess' learned status reflects that of her family. From this perspective, Hallett identifies in Sulpicia's language some juridical expressions that highlights Sulpicia's belonging to the family of the renowned jurist.³⁵⁵ With the same line of reasoning and under the same caveat about a familial connection of Sulpicia's, her association with Messalla and her role as an elegiac poetess present a form of continuity between the patriarchal household and the learned status of the girl, since Messalla himself might have been an amatory bucolic and love poet.³⁵⁶ If the learned status of upper-class women was reflective of the family and male relative to whom women belonged, then Sulpicia's case should not come as surprise.

Sulpicia's representation as a *puella* authoress of elegy is also reflected in the way the relationship with Messalla is constructed in 3.14. Framed around the motif of the birthday celebration, Sulpicia weaves the topic of separation with metaliterary preoccupations. As I have explored in the treatment of the poem, her forceful separation from the city determines the extraneity and exclusion from the magnetic center of elegy. However, it also laments a limitation of her poetic autonomy. Poetic choices regarding autonomy are to be expected in poems in which the figure of the literary patron appears. In Propertius' 3.9, for example, Maecenas, as a literary patron, represents the opposite poetic program to that of the elegist. Maintaining a certain degree of autonomy of choice, male poets perform *recusationes* rejecting the public high poetry of epic and tragedy. In Sulpicia, instead, the relationship with Messalla is presented as a restriction on her poetic autonomy in which the poetess has no choice, sharply contrasting with the self-publicizing portrait that Sulpicia depicts in 3.13. Her loss of agency as a writer is depicted through the act of abduction, a typically gendered type of trauma, that potentially characterizes the experience of any *puella*.³⁵⁷

³⁵² Hamelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite from Cornelia to Julia Domna*, 140ff.

³⁵³ A. Keith, "Sartorial Elegance and Poetic Finesse in the Sulpician Corpus," 199.

³⁵⁴ Hamelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite from Cornelia to Julia Domna*, 273 note 97. On a different note, I showed how discourses of *pudor* also relate to metapoetic allusions, and speaking appears as a potential deviance from the social norm.

³⁵⁵ J. Hallett, "Sulpicia, Absent Roman Fathers in the Writings of their Daughters: Cornelia and Sulpicia," 186.

³⁵⁶ Such evidence, however, is problematic in that it derives from *Catalepton 9*, a pseudo-Virgilian poem of the 1 CE.

³⁵⁷ Cf. Tibullus 2.3.61.

Lastly, Sulpicia's construction of her authorial identity as a *docta puella* runs parallel with another representation of an elegiac poetess: Perilla.³⁵⁸ Although we have no evidence whatsoever that the elegiac poetess Perilla actually existed and belonged to the Roman upper-class,³⁵⁹ the Perilla of Ovid's *Tristia* 3.7 is evidence of the use of the *docta puella* to strengthen female authorial identity.³⁶⁰ Perilla, in fact, is praised for her *doctrina* and it is through this characteristic that her female authorial identity is enhanced. In *Tristia* 3.7.31 she is described as *doctissima*, and her *carmina* are *docta* in 3.7.12. She has rare artistic capabilities (*raras dotes ingeniumque* 3.7.14), while her description also confirms her status as a *puella* in (3.7.33-36). Like Sulpicia, emphasis is given to her appearances (*decens facies* "beautifully appropriate face" 3.7.33) and to the beauty of her body (*formae; formosa* 3.7.35; 37), with all the metapoetic implications that both of these terms imply in defining elegy as a genre.³⁶¹ Her participation in the elegiac genre is first enhanced through images of fire (3.7.19), as in Sulpicia; second, it is strictly connected to male authority through poetry (...*studiis communibus ecquid inhaeres* "do you hold on to our common study?"), since Ovid takes on a paternal role towards her. Poetically, she does not follow the path of her own father (*sine patrio...more* 3.7.12), but Ovid defines himself *utque pater natae duxque comesque fui* ("as a father with his daughter, I was your guide and fellow," 3.7.18). The progressive loss of negative connotation in associating women and *doctrina* signals the start of an evolution in the respectability of the *doctae*.³⁶² This evolution is even more evident outside the elegiac genre and later in the principate, when Pliny praises the learned capabilities of his wife in a quasi-elegiac manner, a process that Hamelrijk defines as "positive domestication of the *docta puella*."³⁶³

Controlling *fama*

In Roman elegy, the preoccupation with the speaker's own *fama* is centered around its social and literary implications. For both men and women, the enslavement to love has an impact on their own *fama*-as-reputation due to its deviance from the social expectations of male and female behaviour in Roman society. In particular, Augustus highly promoted regulations for the restoration of traditional *mores* including the domestic role of women in the household as wives and mothers, responding to the excessive liberty of female behaviour during the republic. Another purpose of this legislation was securing a rise in the demographic trends of the citizen body. Hallett has also noted in particular how the marital law served as a means to reduce the probability of systemic challenge to the principate; by weakening the financial strength of prominent families

³⁵⁸ Hallett, in particular, finds the similarity between Sulpicia and Perilla, but also divergences in Ovid's downplaying of female authors. J. Hallett, "Contextualizing the Text: The Journey to Ovid," *Helios* 17 (1990); Hallett, "Ovid's Sappho and Roman Women Love Poets," 1-11.

³⁵⁹ Hemelrijk considers the presence of the mother (3.7.3) and the emphasis on her *mores pudicos* (3.7.13) as an indication of her upper social status. As indicated in Chapter Two (p.39-40) of this thesis *pudor* also enters the discourse on poetic reputation and *fama* for the elegists. Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite from Cornelia to Julia Domna*, 143 ff.

³⁶⁰ While I agree with Ingleheart's interpretation of Perilla as a *docta puella*, I do not consider her an Ovidian alter ego, but rather I emphasize how the *docta puella* can be a way to express or represent female authorial identity. J. Ingleheart, "Ovid's Scripta Puella: Perilla as Poetic and Political Fiction in *Tristia* 3.7," *The Classical Quarterly*, 62, no. 1 (2012): 227-241

³⁶¹ On *decor*, see p. 29ff; on *formositas* see p. 60.

³⁶² Against this view, see in particular: T. Habinek, *The Politics of Latin Literature: Writing, Identity and Empire in Ancient Rome*, 122-136.

³⁶³ Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite from Cornelia to Julia Domna*, 81ff.

through the presence of a broader number of heirs.³⁶⁴ A first set of legislation was presumably proposed in 28 BCE, but only later in the principate (18/17 BCE) was the promulgation of the marital laws and the adultery laws (*Lex Iulia de Maritandis Ordinibus* and *Lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis*) passed, in an attempt to regulate female life and sexuality with the needs of the households. Adultery, in particular, was strictly persecuted as a public offence, rather than a private one. The internal contradiction of the adultery laws with the proclaimed need of larger demographic trends shows how the political goals of the legislation were oriented towards establishing a base for Augustus' support: only conforming women and their heirs were adequate for enlarging the body of the principate.³⁶⁵ Lastly, the intrusion of the public sphere into private matters conformed to a change of the role of the *cives* from the republic into the principate. Deviance from Augustus' legislation and the customs that it imposed on citizens would have been problematic for both men and women, but nevertheless, during the principate, elegy speaks of aspects of sexuality that would not have been in line with Augustus' ideology and it directly engages with this political scenario.³⁶⁶

The position of elegy with respect to the system of values that Augustus promoted goes beyond the sphere of love encounters, since it is also through the erotic *fabula* that the elegists articulate their discourse on their own *famae*.³⁶⁷ The male elegists often frame their literary choices as being in contrast with the valued life of the Roman *vir* centered around the public career, a rhetorical trend that pre-existed the elegiac practice. Writing was in fact presented as a practice that needed to be parallel to a public career in order to fit the normative expectations of the upper-class Roman man. In the late republic, however, writing professionalism emerged, a practice of self-exclusion from the public sphere: in the political chaos of the end of the republic, poetry and writing remained a space in which the value of autonomy and *libertas* were preserved,³⁶⁸ but nonetheless the *fama* of a writer remained inevitably subordinate to political reputation.³⁶⁹

In literary terms, the deviance from manly genres is also reflected in the elegists' rejection of epic (as a literary genre that focuses on man's *kleos*) in favour of the more "effeminate" elegy. Not only does epic explore the *kleos* of men in its narrative, but its creation is also the *kleos* of the author, guaranteeing him perpetual fame as Propertius reminds the reader in 3.1.25-34. At a social level, the exclusive dedication to *amor* and poetry constituted *per se* an act of deviance from the social expectation, but at the same time it contributed to men's literary affirmation.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁴ J. Hallett, "Women in Augustan Rome," in *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, ed. S. James et S. Dillon (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 382.

³⁶⁵ M. Henry and S. James, "Woman, City, State: Theories, Ideologies, and Concepts in the Archaic and Classical Period" in *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, ed. S. James et S. Dillon (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 94.

³⁶⁶ A. Wallace-Hadrill, "Propaganda and Dissent? Augustan Moral Legislation and the Love-Poets," *Klio* 67, no. 1 (1985): 180–184. Wallace-Hadrill notes, in particular, how the poets' engagement with this particular discourse could have had implications for the social order that Augustus was aiming at restoring (5).

³⁶⁷ P. Hardie, *Literature, Rumour and Renown: Representations of Fama in Western*, 363–368. On deviance of the elegists from the social stages expected by a man see H. Gardner, *Gendering Time in Augustan Love Elegy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 33–59.

³⁶⁸ L. Roman, *Poetic Autonomy in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 16–20.

³⁶⁹ Against this view, Roman presents a progressive evolution and "validation" of the *fama* of the writer after the fall of the republic. Roman, *Poetic Autonomy*, 16 ff.

³⁷⁰ These social stands, however, also reflect literary belonging. Tibullus' programmatic poem sets the author away from grandiose public life towards a smaller and humbler setting (1.1.1–5; 1.1.51–55; 75ff). This choice reflects not only a way of life, but also a poetic path, following the Hellenistic rejection of wealth for the

Although the elegists consider themselves a minor category with respect to the highest genres of epic and tragedy,³⁷¹ they nonetheless express their intention of obtaining an everlasting literary *fama*. *Fama*, in fact, is as much associated with *eros* as it is with epic strife, and *furor* equally holds both.³⁷² Ovid's *Amores*, for example, describes the poet's desire to be celebrated throughout the world (1.3.25–26) even after the poet's death (3.15.20). In 3.3.15–24, for example, Phoebus persuades the poet not to ride the large-wheeled chariot of epic in a wide road, but rather to use the small-wheeled chariot in a softly elegiac (*mollis*) way which nevertheless would carry the poet's posthumous reputation (3.1.36–38).³⁷³

The elegists' *fama* therefore must pass through their literary compositions and the mistress is necessarily constructed as a vehicle for the poets' literary reputation. Greene notes in particular how this relationship is evident in the use of the myth in Ovid's 1.3, in which mythological episodes of dominance and rape of women reflect the author's control of his and their *fama* through the narrative.³⁷⁴ The elegiac association between a woman and the poet's *fama* is perhaps made even more explicit by Propertius' last verse of his second book of elegies in a list of women and their poets (2.34.85ff). Cynthia-as-poetry concludes this list of women-poetry and, like the others, generates Propertius' poetic *fama* (*Cynthia †quin etiam† versu laudata Properti/ hos inter si me pone fama volet*; "Even Cynthia will be celebrated by the verses of Propertius, if *Fama* will want to put me among those [poets]").

As Cerinthus is not the protagonist of Sulpicia's poetry, his character is not "turned into verse," but rather the elegiac couple and/or Sulpicia alone are at the base of her discourse around *fama*. Her concerns over her literary *fama* are evoked in her representation as an elegiac agent burning with desire in several of her poems (3.8, 3.11, 3.12, 3.17), since fire imagery is commonly shared by love and fame.³⁷⁵ In poem 3.9 and 3.13, moreover, Sulpicia's *fama* passes through her narrative of *amor mutuus* with Cerinthus and turns her love, more than her lover, into the topic of a *fabula*.³⁷⁶ These two aspects (being a burning lover and being/creating *fabula*) connect the image of Sulpicia with Dido's character in Virgil's epic.

As Keith has noted, concerns about the shame that *amor* might bring are present in both narratives, but in Sulpicia the lack of *pudor* is embraced as a necessary condition for publicizing her lover and obtaining literary *fama*.³⁷⁷ On the contrary, Dido regrets having discarded the *pudor* that characterized her persona, and in her closing lines, she longs for her initial remarkable *fama* as a queen and for the deeds that she accomplished. At the same time, however, the glory of her former reputation has been substituted for the rumour of her love with Aeneas and its shameful conclusion. Her love turns into a *fabula* spread around the cities through the personification of *fama*, corrupting her reputation. Hardie shows that the same contrast between *amor* and *fama* that spreads through the city characterizes the elegiac discourse, and the *fabula* that the elegist creates

purpose of love. On Callimachus' *Iambus 3*, see F. Cairns, *Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 20.

³⁷¹ Cf. for example Ovid *Amores* 3.1. I am refraining from discussing the various ways in which epic and elegy interact (for example through the trope of *militia amoris*) or from attributing elegiac motifs at the base of epic narrative (especially Ovid *Heroides* 5), but also Propertius 2.3.35–40.

³⁷² Hardie, *Literature, Rumour and Renown: Representations of Fama in Western*, 330–331.

³⁷³ Along the same lines, McNamee also cites Propertius 1.7.9–11. McNamee, "Propertius, Poetry, Love," 236.

³⁷⁴ E. Greene, "Gender and Elegy," in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. B. Gold (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 361, 367.

³⁷⁵ On the association between *fama* and *fire* see Hardie, 353–354.

³⁷⁶ Hardie, 370.

³⁷⁷ Keith, "Tandem venit amor," 298–301.

and becomes (artificially) assumes negative connotations.³⁷⁸ The authors “ruin” their own names due to his uncontrolled passion, while at the same time he creates his own poetic name.³⁷⁹ Unlike the Dido episode and the elegiac practice, Sulpicia’s dedication to love and her turning into *fabula* are not presented with a negative connotation. On the contrary, Sulpicia creates “unanxious reconciliation of *amor* and *fama*” in 3.13,³⁸⁰ in which she is subject of an erotic narrative and writing subject worthy of literary *fama*. The reconciliation of *amor* and *fama* are present in 3.11, a poem in which Sulpicia must evoke the image of the Carthaginian queen. Sulpicia’s love affair will define her *fama* because of her public revelation of desire, but the association between her *amor* and her *fama* is not disruptive, as for Dido, thanks to the mutuality of feeling. Similarly, in her reworking of Phaedra in 3.9, the specific allusion to the delirium speech and the positive metaliterary allusion to her erotic *materia* reverse the *mala fama* of the Cretan heroine.

The positive association between *amor* and *fama* and the general welcoming of her literary *fama* also set Sulpicia’s discourse in contrast with the pejorative narratives of literary fame of the late republic. In 3.13, a ring composition frames the importance of the topic of *fama* marking its progressive evolution: from the negative connotation of *fama*, to a positive literary reputation.³⁸¹ In presenting herself as a desiring agent, Sulpicia expresses her lack of *pudor* (3.13.1–2), and she asserts her deviance with the final line *cum digno digna fuisse ferar* (“May I/I will be said to have been with someone worthy of me”).³⁸² Her verse recalls the same theme of literary reputation as Horace’s *Ode* 3.30.10 and 3.30.12–14. The eternal reputation of the poet is captured, as in the examples given above, by variation of the form of the verb to say: *dicar* [...] *princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos deduxisse modos* (“I will be said the first to have brought an Aeolic poem into Italian meters”).³⁸³ Horace’s *dicar* and Sulpicia’s *ferar* clearly refer to the poets’ reputations through their literary endeavours: lyric and elegiac compositions. However, in Horace’s poem, the poet’s future literary reputation frames and downplays the role of the poet himself (he will only be greatly renowned in far distant lands (3.30.10–12). On the contrary, Sulpicia’s last line stresses the value of her heritage of literary tradition through the polyptoton *cum digno digna*.

Moreover, the employment of the verb *ferar* marks her position in the panorama of poets by using the same structure and alluding to the same literary preoccupations of fame in other

³⁷⁸ Hardie also notes that a similar theme is also present in Horace, *Epode* 11.7–10. P. Hardie, *Literature, Rumour and Renown: Representations of Fama in Western*, 361.

³⁷⁹ Hardie, 363–8.

³⁸⁰ Hardie, 370–1.

³⁸¹ M. Santirocco, “Sulpicia Reconsidered,” *The Classical Journal* 74, no. 3 (1979): 234 ff; B. Flaschenriem, “Sulpicia and the Rhetoric of Disclosure,” 44; J. Fabre-Serris, “Sulpicia: An/other Female Voice in Ovid’s *Heroides*,” 152; J. Fabre-Serris, “Intratextuality and Intertextuality in the *Corpus Tibullianum* (3.8–18),” 76; Milnor, “Sulpicia’s (Corpo) reality,” 276; Percy, “Erasing Cerinthus,” 34; P. Paolucci, “Sulpicia e l’antitesi Sulpicia and the Antithesis,” 136.

³⁸² Keith, “Tandem venit amor,” 300. Keith sees a close relationship between Dido and Sulpicia in the rejection of *pudor* and the preoccupation of *fama*. She also considers discourse on *pudor* as exclusively associated with the women. I disagree with this interpretation, finding a parallel of a pre-existing literary *topos*, perhaps as far back as Sappho, that is also widely used by the elegist in relation to their practice of writing and their literature.

³⁸³ The text is even better than a monument in passing the test of time in 3.30. The parallel is first noted in L. Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary on the Elegies of the Appendix Tibulliana: Pseudepigrapha Latina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 280.

authors.³⁸⁴ In elegy, the verb is employed twice by Propertius to discuss his role as an elegiac poet within a literary panorama. Verses 3.9.59–60, in a poem that exclusively pertains Propertius’ poetic agenda, concludes: *nunc mihi, Maecenas, laudis concedis, et a te est quod ferar in partis ipse fuisse tuas* (“Maecenas, now you grant me praise, and it is because of you that I will be said to have been in your circle”). Similarly, in 3.17.20, Propertius again employs the verb to consider himself as a poet of Bacchus: *virtutisque tuae, Bacche, poeta ferar* (“Bacchus, I will be said to be the poet of your virtues”). With the employment of this verb, Sulpicia is explicitly turning herself into literary *fabula*: a text to be narrated. The validation that the poet obtains through the association with a powerful literary patron, Maecenas, or a god, Bacchus, parallels Sulpicia’s association of her *fama* with the presence of a worthy man (*digno*). However, the presence of the poetess through the polyptoton of *digna* equates the validation that comes from a “*digno*” in the creation of an erotic *fabula* in which both take part. Through this mechanism, Sulpicia remarks on her identity as a writer in a literary panorama and creates the positive association between love and literary fame.

Although poets, at times, explicitly state that their erotic narratives are not their own biographic experiences,³⁸⁵ the female practice of erotic writing is potentially twice as problematic an act of deviance. As Wyke notices in the case of both Sappho and Sulpicia, a poetess transgresses into the masculine role first by presenting herself as the speaking agent, and second as the agent endowed with her own sexuality.³⁸⁶ Sulpicia’s reflection on *fama* therefore explores jointly that both of these characteristics are always connecting social and literary concerns. Two *topoi* are explored particularly for the purposes of exploring the intergenerational matters of her poetic *fama* through a female perspective: maternal *fama* and sensual *fama*. As the character of Cornelia in Propertius’ 4.11 exemplifies, women’s *fama* is strictly connected to their ability to reproduce through their male offspring’s *fama*: not only must women carry children to guarantee the intergenerational existence of the family, but their children’s (father-resembling) physiognomy is reflective of her own good name and reputation, eliminating any questions about her *pudor* and fidelity.³⁸⁷ The pride of maternity and its reflection on female *fama*, therefore, are conceived only in relation to the patriarchal structure of the household. As I have explored in the analysis of 3.13, the image of maternity, with its inter-generational *fama*, is evoked in Sulpicia through some verbal patterns with the character of Dido. As in other poems (3.9 and 3.11 especially), the connection with the heroine is not an assimilation, but rather Sulpicia reverses Dido’s fortune and *fama*. Dido’s desire for a little Aeneas partially compensates the *mala fama* that she obtained through the relationship with the hero. Moreover, her feelings for the little Ascanius mark the reputation of the heroine: they represent the result of a socially disruptive *eros*, or they are almost incestuous in nature. By

³⁸⁴ The association between the verb *feror* (in its simple future or present subjunctive forms) and the poetic presentation of the speaker is not strictly elegiac: it also appears in Horace’s lyric 2.20, a poem concerned with poetic immortality (*non usitata nec tenui ferar/ penna biformis per liquidum aethera* “I will not be said as being held by ordinary wing through the liquid air—me a two formed poet”). The parallel with Horace is first noted in Fulkerson, *A Literary Commentary*, 280.

³⁸⁵ See, for example, Catullus *carmen* 16, or more explicitly Ovid *exit in inmensum fecunda licentia vatum, / obligat historica nec sua verba fide* (“the fruitful liberty of poets approaches the infinity, and he does not restrain his own words to the historic truth”) or Tristia 2.353–4: *Crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostro / uita uerecunda est, Musa iocosa mea* (“Trust me, my habits are different from my poetry, my life is respectable, my muse is light-hearted”).

³⁸⁶ Wyke, “Taking the Woman’s Part,” 114.

³⁸⁷ Hardie, *Literature, Rumour and Renown: Representations of Fama in Western*, 370–1.

contrast, although Sulpicia plays on the un-chaste (without *pudor*) nature of her poetic act, her (re)productive creation has only positive undertones associated with it: it constitutes her poetic affirmation in a literary panorama. Through the allusion to epic episodes of maternal love, Sulpicia creates her afterlife through a *corpus*, the ultimate result of the sexual experience. Like a child, the erotic (hence elegiac) experience led to the creation of a body of work whose life will survive that of the poetess, ensuring her intergenerational literary reputation. Although not unprecedented in literature, the expression of her own *fama* through the creation of her narrative-offspring is without parallel in the panorama of Roman love elegy. A similar maternal image is only appropriated by Ovid in his exilic poetry, where the maternal dimension is explicitly cancelled in favour of his masculinity: his poems are in fact *de me sine matre creata*, “created by me without a mother” (3.14.13).

Sulpicia’s emphasis on her sexual pleasures and their reproductive potential therefore creates a contrast with the images of decay of the body and death that characterize elegiac discourse. Male poetic intergenerational *fama*, in fact, is more frequently expressed through images of funerary monumentality. The poets contrast the oblivion of death by immortalizing their literary *fama* in a fictional funerary monument. On one level, this practice constitutes another “reality effect” that reflects the importance of funerary practices in Roman culture for the remembrance of the individual.³⁸⁸ On the other, they turn their own text into a funerary moment, creating a contrast between their *corpora* and the image of their decayed bodies. Their texts with their morbid funerary images become in effect their “*monumenta*” to which their *fama* is entrusted. The literary equivalents of Propertius’ tomb and funerary inscription, for example, are strictly connected to his *fama* as a poet in 2.13.35–38:

et sit in exiguo laurus super addita busto,
 quae tegat extincti funeris umbra locum,
 et duo sint versus: QVI NVNC IACET HORRIDA PVLVIS,
 VNIVS HIC QVONDAM SERVVS AMORIS ERAT.
 nec minus haec nostri **notescet fama** sepulcri,
 quam fuerant Pthii busta cruenta viri.

(and may a laurel tree be added above my small sepulchral tomb so that its shade covers the spot of my extinguished funerary pyre, and may there be two verses: “He who lies here is now dreadful dust, he who was once slave of a sole love. Nor **this fame** of our resting place **will be less known** than the cruel tomb of the Pthian hero).³⁸⁹

The association between funeral and fame is immediately obvious to the reader, but so are metapoetics within the text. The laurel tree symbolically evokes poetry, as much as the emphasis

³⁸⁸ On the topic of elegy and funerary inscription/monuments, see J. Yardley, “Roman Elegy and Funerary Epigram,” *Echos du monde classique: Classical views* 15, no. 2 (1996): 267–273; T. Ramsby, *Textual Permanence: Roman Elegists and the Epigraphic Tradition* (London: Duckworth, 2007).

³⁸⁹ The hero is Achilles, and the tomb is cruel because of the sacrificial blood of Priam’s daughter Polyxena.

on the modest size of the sepulchre evokes Callimachean aesthetics.³⁹⁰ Moreover, the enslavement to ‘sole love’ refers not only to the passion for Cynthia, but also to the enslavement to *amor* as poetry.

Elegists also employ the funerary theme and its connection to everlasting *fama* to represent the reputation of women. In this case Cornelia’s lines in Propertius 4.11.36 offer a striking parallel with Sulpicia’s closing line. The *matrona*’s own funerary inscription reads: *in lapide hoc uni nupta fuisse legar* (“May I be said on a tombstone to have been with one man alone”).³⁹¹ Ironically, both Sulpicia’s and Cornelia’s personas employ the same language and they intertwine their reputation with eroticism. But, while Cornelia is remembered just as an *univira*, Sulpicia binds her *fama* with poetic value and with elegiac matters (*fuisse cum*; “have been with”).³⁹²

In conclusion, Sulpicia’s persona as an authoress emerges in her poetry through two different strategies: as a writing *docta puella*, and as a poetess with her literary *fama*. In both instances Sulpicia exploits and twists the tropes of elegy for the purpose of a woman writing love poetry. In her depiction as a *docta puella*, Sulpicia stresses the poetic capability of performing and embodying her poetry. The very body of the authoress is presented with all the poetic qualities that are normally attributed to the beloved. She therefore creates an association between the poetic body and the body of the poet(ess) that finds no parallel in Latin love elegy until Ovid’s exilic poetry. Her authorial role in the elegiac panorama is also strengthened through her concerns with her poetic *fama*. Sulpicia combines both social concerns (connected to a woman writing) and literary preoccupations (connected to her poetic reputation). She enters the discourse of poetic reputation through powerful literary allusions, overturning the predominant image of everlasting reputation in Latin elegists. She does not associate her literary *fama* with images of death and funerary monuments to which the name of the poet is entrusted. On the contrary, her *fama* is connected to life, through an image of poetic intergenerational (re)production by means of her literary corpus.

³⁹⁰ On the Callimachean aesthetics of the expression *in exiguo...busto* in the passage, see Roman, *Poetic Autonomy*, 178–179.

³⁹¹ A. Cozzolino, “Il carme III, 13 del ‘Corpus Tibullianum’ e il ‘Fragmentum Grenfellianum’,” *Athenaeum* 80 (1992): 477; Flaschenriem, “Sulpicia and the Rhetoric,” 45; Flaschenriem “Sulpicia and the Rhetoric of Disclosure,” in *Women Poets in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. E. Greene (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 177. Flaschenriem both mention the parallels between 4.11 and 3.13.

³⁹² On *dignitas* and poetic value see reference to Gallus discussed in Chapter Two p. 35ff.

Conclusions

“*[Sulpicia] was [~~not~~] a brilliant artist; her work is of interest [~~only~~ also] because the author is female.*”³⁹³

Following the lead of several scholars who revealed the complexity in Sulpicia’s discourse,³⁹⁴ I explored the whole Corpus Sulpicianum (3.8–3.18) as the creation of a single author, Sulpicia. While the work of this thesis does not and cannot prove authorship, I support the argument in favour of Sulpicia’s authorial identity by recognizing the presence of a female persona whose characteristics are persistent throughout the whole corpus. The choice of what I consider “Sulpician,” therefore, is the most prominent level of divergence between this thesis and the most popular approaches of literary criticism on the topic, with the exception of Judy Hallett. Unlike Hallett, however, I focus predominantly on Sulpicia’s discourse on poetics within the elegiac genre, mainly considering the socio-historical background as a feature and “realistic device” of the genre, rather than a mirror of reality.³⁹⁵

I applied a metaliterary approach that has sufficiently characterized the smaller corpus (3.13–3.18) as well as to the remaining poems of the cycle, showing that the representation of Sulpicia as an elegiac woman may reveal her strong poetic agency.³⁹⁶ In my analysis of the poems, I offer a reading in which Sulpicia still appears to be a provocative and desiring speaker, against the traditional view of the presence of an external moralizing male gaze reworking Sulpicia’s smaller corpus.³⁹⁷ I chose to analyze poems both thematically and individually, offering a close reading of Sulpicia’s verses within the context of the elegiac genre. There are three major patterns that are worthy of revisiting in these conclusions, all of which pertain to the role of Sulpicia as a poetess in the elegiac genre. First, Sulpicia’s persona is clearly defined through the image of the *docta puella* as a way in which the poetess claims authorship. She also construes an identity between the representation of her body and the body of text she claims authorship of, which constitutes part of her poetic *materia*. Second, the erotic *materia* that she explores as an elegiac

³⁹³ The quote is a reworking of Pomeroy’s famous claim: “She was not a brilliant artist; her work is of interest only because the author is female.” See S. Pomeroy, “The Roman Matron of the Late Republic and Early Empire,” in *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 173.

³⁹⁴ See among the first, M. Santirocco, “Sulpicia Reconsidered,” *The Classical Journal* 74, no. 3 (1979) and N. Lowe, “Sulpicia’s Syntax,” *Classical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1988).

³⁹⁵ In particular, Hallett, “Sulpicia and the Valerii: Family Ties and Poetic Unity,” 141–149. Of course, Hallett has also at times focused on some metapoetic interpretations of Sulpicia. See especially Hallett, “Sulpicia and Her Fama,” 38; Hallett, “Authorial Identity in Latin Love Elegy,” 282.

³⁹⁶ On the metaliterary approach on poems 3.13–3.18, see in particular: Keith, “Tandem venit amor,” 295–310; Flaschenriem, “Sulpicia and the Rhetoric of Disclosure,” 36–54; Milnor, “Sulpicia’s (Corpo) reality,” 259–282; Merriam, “Sulpicia and the Art of Literary Allusion,” 158–168; Fabre-Serris, “Sulpicia: An/other Female Voice in Ovid’s *Heroides*,” 149–173; Percy, “Erasing Cerinthus,” 31–36; Roessel, “The Significance of the Name Cerinthus in the Poems of Sulpicia,” 243–250.

³⁹⁷ N. Holzberg, “Four Poets and a Poetess or a Portrait of the Poet as a Young Man?,” 183; Fabre-Serris, “Intratextuality and Intertextuality in the Corpus Tibullianum (3.8–18),” 68–73; W. Batstone, “Sulpicia and the Speech of Men,” 103–107.

poetess is characterized by *amor mutuus* and *servitium equum*. Third, the treatment of her literary *fama* develops directly from her erotic discourse, and it signals her exclusive gender contribution to the genre through images of biological reproduction.

In 3.8, Sulpicia's physiognomy sets her body as part of a literary program. In the corpus, the body of the poetess is the focus of attention, and its arrangement reflects the characteristics of an elegiac text. Specific attention is given to the arrangement of the woman's hair, clothing, and movement, representing Sulpicia as the elegiac female lover in elegy. As it is the case for the other elegiac *puellae*, the presence of metapoetic nuances in the text reveals that these descriptions do not depict a realistic image of a lover who is the embodiment of poetry; the qualities of her aesthetics are an allegory for the quality of elegiac verses. While this characteristic aligns Sulpicia with elegiac *puellae*, she also displays a level of agency that the female elegiac beloved does not normally have; she is the one who controls her own body (and text) thanks to the authorial position that emerges in the text. Her persona is in fact a speaking and desiring agent, whose discourse is empowered by her *doctrina* and authorial identity at the end of the poem, both of which are claimed through the image of the *docta puella*.

The creation of this persona and Sulpicia's body as poetic *materia* (with a physicality full of metapoetic nuances) becomes a permanent feature of the remaining corpus, and her claims of authorship are expressed through her corporality. For example, as I have argued for the interpretation of 3.14 and 3.15, Sulpicia stresses her physical experience as an *abducta puella* to express motifs of literary autonomy with respect to a literary patron, and in her participation in the cultural centre of Rome. Similarly, the body of the poetess is represented as if suffering from exhaustion when her poetic inspiration is threatened (3.16 and 3.17).

As many scholars have pointed out, the presence of corporality also characterizes Sulpicia's second programmatic poem through the display of her body and her eroticism.³⁹⁸ Indeed, 3.13 welcomes the arrival of love that prompts her poetic discourse. While the poem is mostly concerned with issues of authorship and publication, it also sets the other *materia* of Sulpicia's poetics: a *dignus* and *mutuus amor*. To be publishable and valuable, Sulpicia's elegiac poetry does not have to be centered around the conflict between the lovers, as it is predominantly the case for the other elegiac poets.

In elegiac discourse, love is mostly conflictual, and the condition of emotional happiness is just an *adynaton* that the lover struggles to reach. At the same time, however, it is precisely the presence of conflict that inspires the poet to compose; without struggle, there would be no poetry to write. This unbalanced condition is also reflected in the trope of *servitium amoris* through which the elegists represent the unbalanced love by means of images of power and dominance; the lover-*servus* is enslaved to his beloved-*domina*, as much as the poet-*servus* is enslaved to the genre-*amor*. As Greene and Mayor have pointed out, the use of mythological episodes that involve the trope of *servitium* reveals another contrasting representation of power between the elegiac lovers.³⁹⁹ While the poet artificially presents himself as *servus*, he is in fact the *dominus* of the body of the textual *puella*.

³⁹⁸ Flaschenriem, "Sulpicia and the Rhetoric," 36–54; Milnor, "Sulpicia's (Corpo) reality," 259–282.

³⁹⁹ E. Greene, *The Erotics of Domination: Male Desire and the Mistress in Latin Love Poetry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 45; M. Mayor, *Power Play in Latin Love Elegy and its Multiple Forms of Continuity in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 60–61.

On the contrary, in the majority of her corpus, Sulpicia explores the type of love that is at the base of her poetic drive, clearly focusing on the mutuality of feelings between the lovers and on the equal enslavement to love. Sulpicia clearly states that what makes a lover *dignus* (or *digna*) is reciprocity, and this *dignitas* justifies poetic expression (see most especially 3.11, 3.13, 3.16; but also the metapoetic readings of 3.9, 3.10, and 3.12).

The importance of reciprocity in Sulpicia's program is also reflected in the way the figure of the male lover, Cerinthus, is (not) constructed. Cerinthus, in fact, does not appear as a figure of flesh and bone. With the realistic devices that are used in the description of the elegiac beloved, he is described only in the way he behaves as an elegiac lover. His role in the poem is necessary only to the extent that love poetry requires duality. All the characteristics that define the values and the genre of poetry are instead absorbed into the persona of Sulpicia who, as the authoress, is the only one who controls her body.

Even in the use of mythological allusion, I demonstrated that Sulpicia subverts images of unbalanced love, creating a positive assimilation that reverses the dramatic episodes she alludes to (most notably Dido and Phaedra). Within this framework, Sulpicia's persona is defined as a successful desiring and speaking agent, who is embedded in the elegiac and dramatic tradition. Her ability to twist and rework allusions further strengthens the display of her *doctrina* and they contribute to the construction of her authorship.

Lastly, Sulpicia's poetic discourse is concerned with issues of literary reputation, as is indeed the case for every poet. As I highlighted in my interpretation of 3.13, Sulpicia's preoccupation with *fama* is embedded in her discourse of literary publicization. Her treatment of the topic reveals a double level of interpretation. Her evocation of a lack of *pudor* alongside her *fama* seems to exhaust the preoccupations of the poetess in terms of female social respectability, as indeed a number of scholars have pointed out.⁴⁰⁰ However, a closer reading of the lines within the context of Latin elegy and Sappho's discourse on poetics reveals that Sulpicia's preoccupation pertains to her literary reputation at the same time. As Hardie has revealed in his monograph on *fama*, lack of *pudor* defines both male and female poetics, and what differentiates Sulpicia's from the male treatment of the topic is the lack of anxiety about the possibility of creating her own poetic name through writing.⁴⁰¹

To expand Hardie's suggestion of Sulpicia's confident approach in the discussion of her *fama*, I have also shown how Sulpicia connects her *fama* with images of maternity in the Aeneid through intertextual allusions and shared vocabulary. Once again, the evocation of Dido is ironic in that even the heroine's maternal wishes are stigmatized by *infamia*. On the contrary, Sulpicia's embrace of her *amor*/poetic corpus reveals all her *fama*, a reputation that she both wants and claims. This image of a creation of a new life through the presence of a new corpus that survives the authoress and provides her with intergenerational reputation is strikingly different from the elegiac trend in the treatment of *fama*. In male elegiac discourse, in fact, *fama* is strictly connected with death, rather than life, with the poet building a funerary epitaph and monument through his text.

Throughout this thesis, I focused my attention on Sulpicia's poetic project and her authorial construction. I have provided evidence for a metapoetic reading, but indeed, several different (and

⁴⁰⁰ See, among many, Flaschenriem, "Sulpicia and the Rhetoric," 36-54; Milnor, "Sulpicia's (Corpo) reality," 259-282; Merriam, "Sulpicia and the Art of Literary Allusion," 158-168.

⁴⁰¹ Hardie, *Literature, Rumour and Renown: Representations of Fama in Western*, 370-1.

equally arguable) interpretations are possible since the social and the poetic dimension are often intermingled. My consideration of Sulpicia's persona as a learned upper-class poetess has allowed me to contextualize the construction of her authorial identity in the socio-cultural context of Rome in 1st century BC. From this perspective, my research aligns with Hallett's and Hemelrijk's studies on the status of upper-class women in Roman society. While the association between women and *doctrina* is frequently stigmatized and morally condemned by some (male) authors, Sulpicia's self-presentation as *culta* marks a progressive shift in attributing a positive connotation to the learned status of women on three artistic levels. First, within the genre of elegy, her construction of the *docta puella* anticipates Ovid's representation of *Perilla* as a learned authoress, with such *puellae* no longer stained with the negative connotations of being courtesans.⁴⁰² Second and more broadly in literature, this representation marks a trend that sees learned women as *doctae puellae* consonant with the dignity of senatorial households.⁴⁰³ Third and more broadly in the arts, Sulpicia's positive representation of a learned upper-class woman is also consistent with contemporary representation of women in visual arts, in which emphasis is given to symbols of erudition that have a direct connection to elegy (scrolls, wax tablet, ivy).⁴⁰⁴

My rewording of Pomeroy's opinion in the epitaph of this conclusion reflects the way in which I analyzed Sulpicia's poetry in her corpus. I have highlighted, with particular attention to gender, how Sulpicia's poetry works within but also expands the boundaries of the genre. My emphasis on the metaliterary dimension of her poetry has allowed me not only to study Sulpicia's self-construction as an authoress, but also to highlight the social implications of her verses.

⁴⁰² Hallett, "Contextualizing the Text: The Journey to Ovid," 191–192.

⁴⁰³ Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite from Cornelia to Julia Domna*, 81ff.

⁴⁰⁴ B. Bergmann, "Face at Face Value: Painted Ladies on Pompeian Walls," in *Roman Artists, Patrons, and Public Consumption: Familiar Works Reconsidered*, ed. B. Longfellow and E. Perry (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 160–162. Bergmann identifies a fashion trend of female self-representation as a *docta puella* in medallion portraiture.

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Appendix of Sulpicia: Text and Translations

3.8

Sulpicia est tibi culta tuis, Mars magne, kalendis;
spectatum e caelo, si sapis, ipse veni;
hoc Venus ignoscet; at tu, violente, caveto
ne tibi miranti turpiter arma cadant:
illius ex oculis, cum vult exurere divos, 5
accendit geminas lampadas acer Amor.
Illam, quidquid agit, quoquo vestigia movit,
componit furtim subsequiturque Decor;
seu solvit crines, fuscis decet esse capillis:
seu compsit, comptis est ueneranda comis. 10
Vrit, seu Tyria uoluit procedere palla:
urit, seu nivea candida veste venit.
Talis in aeterno felix Vertumnus Olympo
mille habet ornatus, mille decenter habet.
Sola puellarum digna est cui mollia caris 15
velleret det sucis bis madefacta Tyros,
possideatque, metit quidquid bene olentibus arvis
cultor odoratae dives Arabs segetis,
et quascumque niger rubro de litore gemmas
proximus Eois colligit Indus aquis. 20
Hanc vos, Pierides, festis cantate kalendis,
et testudinea Phoebe superbe lyra.
Hoc sollemne sacrum multos haec sumet in annos:
dignior est vestro nulla puella choro.

3.9

Parce meo iuveni, seu quis bona pascua campi
seu colis umbrosi devia montis aper,
neu tibi sit duros acuisse in proelia dentes;
incolumem custos hunc mihi servet Amor.
Sed procul abducit venandi Delia cura: 5
o pereant silvae deficientque canes!
Quis furor est? Quae mens, densos indagine colles

3.8

O great Mars, on your Kalends you have erudite
Sulpicia here for you.
If you are wise, come from the sky to witness her
yourself,
Venus will forgive you for this: but, o violent
Mars, be careful
So that you don't shamefully drop your weapons
while you admire her,
From her eyes, cruel Love sparks twin flames
Whenever he wants to enkindle the Gods.
In whatever she performs, and wherever she steps
her feet, Elegance composes her.
If she unties her hair, although unkempt, she still
is appropriate.
If she ties her hair up, she should be revered.
She sparks passion, whenever she appears
candidly in Tyrian dress.
She sparks passion, whenever she appears in
Ivory dress.
Just like Vertumnus in the eternal sky,
She has a thousand, and all appropriate,
adornments.
Among the girls, she is the only one worthy of
receiving soft fleece, twice dipped in the precious
dyes from Tyros;
And she might have whatever the rich Arab
harvester of the scented lands reaps in his sweet-
smelling fields;
And whatever gem the dark Indian in the Eastern
waters collects from the red-Persian shores.
Recite about her on the day of the Sacral Kalends,
o Muses and superb Apollo, with your tortoise-
shell lyre,
She will claim this solemn song for many years:
There is no girl more worthy of your circle.

3.9

Boar, spare my youth, whether you inhabit the
nice pasture of the plain or the unreachable ways
of the shady mount,
May it never be that you sharpen your teeth in a
struggle,
May Love protect him safely for me.

claudentem teneras laedere uelle manus?
 Quidve iuvat furtim latebras intrare ferarum
 candidaque hamatis crura notare rubis? 10
 Sed tamen, ut tecum liceat, Cerinthe, vagari,
 ipsa ego per montes retia torta feram,
 ipsa ego velocis quaeram vestigia cervi
 et demam celeri ferrea vincla cani.
 Tunc mihi, tunc placeant silvae, si, lux mea, tecum 15
 arguar ante ipsas concubuisse plagas:
 tunc veniat licet ad casses, inlaesus abibit,
 ne Veneris cupidae gaudia turbet, aper.
 Nunc sine me sit nulla Venus, sed lege Dianae,
 caste puer, casta retia tange manu: 20
 et, quaecumque meo furtim subrepat amori,
 incidat in saevas diripienda feras.
 At tu venandi studium concede parenti,
 et celer in nostros ipse recurre sinus.

But already the Delian passion of hunting takes
 him far,
 O that the forest would die, and the dogs
 disappear!
 What madness is this? What folly wants to tear
 your gentle hands as you trap the packed hills
 with your hunting net?
 What good is in secretly entering the dens of the
 beasts and bruising the white limbs with thorny
 brambles?
 But nevertheless, so that I could roam with you,
 Cerinthus,
 I will bring the twisted nets through the
 mountains,
 I will look for the footsteps of the fast deer
 And I will remove the iron chain of the swift dog.
 Then, my love, then the forest will be pleasing for
 me if I will be said to have lain with you in front
 of your nets,
 Then the boar can come to our nets, and it will go
 unharmed not to trouble the pleasures of
 passionate love.
 Now may there be no love without me, but only
 the law of Diana,
 Chaste child, hold the nets with your chaste hand
 and whatever woman tries secretly to creep under
 my love,
 May she fall ripped apart against ferocious
 beasts.
 But you leave the chore of hunt to your parent and
 run fast in my embrace.

3.10

Huc ades et tenerae morbos expelle puellae,
 huc ades, intonsa Phoebe superbe coma;
 crede mihi, propera, nec te iam, Phoebe, pigebit
 formosae medicas applicuisse manus.
 Effice ne macies pallentes occupet artus, 5
 neu notet informis pallida membra color,
 et quodcumque mali est et quidquid triste timemus,
 in pelagus rapidis evehat amnis aquis.
 Sancte, veni, tecumque feras, quicumque saporis,
 quicumque et cantus corpora fessa levant; 10
 neu iuvenem torque, metuit qui fata puellae
 vota pro domina vix numeranda facit;
 interdum vovet, interdum, quod langueat illa,
 dicit in aeternos aspera verba deos.
 Pone metum, Cerinthe: deus non laedit
 amantes; 15
 tu modo semper ama: salva puella tibi est;

3.10

Here you come and expel the illness of the sweet
 girl,
 Here you come, superb Apollo, with your loose
 long hair,
 Believe me Apollo, hurry, and you will never
 regret that you applied your healing hands to the
 beautiful girl.
 Do so that the thinness does not invade her paling
 arms,
 and that the hideous colour doesn't stain the
 white limbs
 and may a river with his seizing water carry to the
 sea whatever is evil and whatever gloom we fear
 Come, divine, and bring with you
 Whatever scent and whatever magic chants
 revive a vexed body

nil opus est fletu: lacrimis erit aptius uti, 21
 si quando fuerit tristior illa tibi. 22
 At nunc tota tua est, te solum candida secum 17
 cogitat, et frustra credula turba sedet.
 Phoebe, fave: laus magna tibi tribuetur in uno 20
 corpore servato restituisse duos.
 Iam celebrer, iam laetus eris, cum debita 23
 reddet
 certatim sanctis laetus uterque focus;
 tunc te felicem dicet pia turba deorum, 25
 optabunt artes et sibi quisque tuas.

And do not torment the young who fears the fate
 of his girl and offers endless prayers, for his lady.
 Sometimes he vows; other times, as she gets
 weaker, he says harsh words against the divinity.
 Abandon your fear, Cerinthus: a god does not
 hurt lovers.
 Always keep loving: your lady will be saved.
 And it is not necessary to cry, it will be more
 suitable to save your tears instead for when she
 will make you sorrowful.
 But now she is completely yours. Immaculate,
 she thinks about you alone,
 And a gullible crowd sit in vain.
 O Apollo be favourable, a great praise will be
 granted to you for having restored two people in
 one healed body.
 Soon you will be celebrated, and you will be
 pleased
 When the two of them, pleased, will eagerly
 recite their dues at the sacral altar,
 Then the blessed crowd of gods will call you
 lucky
 And everyone will wish your arts for himself.

3.11

Qui mihi te, Cerinthe, dies dedit, hic mihi sanctus
 atque inter festos semper habendus erit:
 te nascente novum Parcae cecinere puellis
 servitium et dederunt regna superba tibi.
 Uror ego ante alias: iuvat hoc, Cerinthe, quod uror, 5
 si tibi de nobis mutuus ignis adest;
 mutuus adsit amor, per te dulcissima furta
 perque tuos oculos per Geniumque rogo.
 Mane, Geni, cape tura libens votisque faveto,
 si modo, cum de me cogitat, ille calet. 10
 Quod si forte alios iam nunc suspiret amores,
 tunc precor infidos, sancte, relinque focos.
 Nec tu sis iniusta, Venus: vel serviat aequae
 vinctus uterque tibi vel mea vincla leva;
 sed potius valida teneamur uterque catena, 15
 nulla queat posthac quam soluisse dies.
 Optat idem iuvenis quod nos, sed tectius optat:
 nam pudet haec illum dicere uerba palam.
 At tu, Natalis, quoniam deus omnia sentis,
 adnue: quid refert, clamne palamne roget? 20

3.11

The day that gave you to me, Cerinthus,
 That day is sacral for me and it should always be
 celebrated among the festive days.
 With your birth, the Parcae foretold a new
servitium for the girls, and they gave you an
 incredible realm,
 I burn before others: you like that I burn,
 Cerinthus.
 If you have a reciprocal fire in my regard,
 May love be reciprocal, I beg you in the name of
 our most sweet secret-love, in the name of your
 eyes, and in the name of your Genius.
 Stay, Genius, and receive my incense offerings
 with good will and be favourable to my prayers,
 if he burns when he thinks of me.
 But if by chance he already sighs at other lovers,
 then I pray, o divine, leave his disloyal hearth.
 May you, Venus, not be unjust: either we both
 serve you equally or you remove my chains,
 But rather may both be held by a strong chain that
 no day henceforth can untie
 The young man desires the same things that I do
 But he desires them more secretly:
 Indeed, he is ashamed to say these words openly.

But you, Natalis, since as a god you perceive everything, allow it: what does it matter if he prays openly or secretly?

3.12

Natalis Iuno, sanctos cape turis acervos,
quos tibi dat tenera docta puella manu;
tota tibi est hodie, tibi se laetissima compsit,
staret ut ante tuos conspicienda focos.
Illa quidem ornandi causas tibi, diva, relegat; 5
est tamen, occulte cui placuisse velit.
At tu, sancta, fave, neu quis divellat amantes,
sed iuveni, quaeso, mutua vincla para.
Sic bene compones: ullae non ille puellae
servire aut cuiquam dignior illa uiro. 10
Nec possit cupidus vigilans deprendere custos
fallendique vias mille ministret Amor.
Adnue purpureaque veni perlucida palla:
ter tibi fit libo, ter, dea casta, mero;
praecipit et natae mater studiosa, quod optat: 15
illa aliud tacita iam sua mente rogat;
uritur, ut celeres urunt altaria flammae,
nec, liceat quamuis, sana fuisse velit.
Si iuveni grata ac, veniet cum proximus annus,
hic idem votis iam vetus exstet amor. 20

3.12

O Natalis Juno, take the sacral piles of incense that the learned girl gives you with her gentle hand,
Today you have her all for you, and for you she composed herself most flamboyantly
So that she can stay before your eyes worthy to be admired.
O diva, she indeed recounts to you the reasons for the adornment.
Nevertheless, there is someone that she secretly wants to please.
But you, o divine, be favourable and may no one separate the lovers,
but prepare mutual chains for the youth.
In this way you will compose them well: he is not worthier to serve any other girl
Nor is she worthier to serve any other man.
And may a vigilant guardian not be able to catch them in passion
And may Love provide a thousand ways of deception for them.
Be favourable and come splendid in purple garments:
O chaste goddess, sacral bread and wine are offered here for you three times,
And the zealous mother recommends to her daughter what she wishes,
But she already asks something else silently.
She is burnt, as the fast flames burn the altars,
Nor she would want to be sane, even if possible.
If you are agreeable to the lover, when indeed this love will come next year as already old passion, it may still be standing.

3.13

Tandem venit amor, qualem texisse pudore
quam nudasse alicui sit mihi fama magis.
Exorata meis illum Cytherea Camenis
attulit in nostrum deposuitque sinum.
Exsolvit promissa Venus: mea gaudia narret, 5
dicetur si quis non habuisse suam.
Non ego signatis quicquam mandare tabellis,
me legat ut nemo quam meus ante, uelim,

3.13

Finally, love has come, such a love that it would be more shameful for my reputation to have covered it with decency, rather than to have revealed it to someone.
5 Persuaded by my Muse, Cytherea has taken it here and she has entrusted it in my heart.
Venus has maintained her promises: if someone will be said not to have had his own, may he recite my pleasures.

sed peccasse iuvat, vultus componere famae
taedet: cum digno digna fuisse ferar.

3.14

Invisus natalis adest, qui rure molesto
et sine Cerintho tristis agendus erit.
Dulcius urbe quid est? An villa sit apta puellae
atque Arretino frigidus amnis agro?
Iam, nimium Messalla mei studiose, quiescas, 5
Neu tempestivae saepe, propinque, uiae.
Hic animum sensusque meos abducta relinquo
arbitrio, quam uis non sinit esse, meo.

3.15

Scis iter ex animo sublatum triste puellae?
Natali Romae iam licet esse suo.
Omnibus ille dies nobis natalis agatur,
qui nec opinanti nunc tibi forte venit.

3.16

Gratum est, securus multum quod iam tibi de me
permittis, subito ne male inepta cadam.
Sit tibi cura togae potior pressumque quasillo
scortum quam Servi filia Sulpicia:
solliciti sunt pro nobis, quibus illa dolori est 5
ne cedam ignoto maxima causa toro.

3.17

Estne tibi, Cerinthe, tuae pia cura puellae,
quod mea nunc vexat corpora fessa calor?
A ego non aliter tristes evincere morbos
optarim, quam te si quoque velle putem.
At mihi quid prosit morbos evincere, si tu 5
nostra potes lento pectore ferre mala?

I would never want to entrust anything to sealed
tablets, with the result that nobody reads me
before my man.

But I enjoy having transgressed, I am tired of
making my face presentable for reputation:
May I be deemed worthy together with a person
worthy of me.

3.14

Here it comes my unwelcomed birthday, day that
will pass sadly without Cerinthus in the grievous
countryside.

What is sweeter than the City? Or perhaps are the
countryside life and the cold river in the
landscape of Arezzo appropriate for a girl?

O Messalla, you are much too thoughtful towards
me, may you be calm:

O relative, trips are often not well-timed.

Since you abducted me, I leave here my
intelligence and my sensibility out of my own - I
whom you do not allow to have free - choice.

3.15

Do you know that the burden of leaving was
removed from the mind of your girl?

Now it is possible to be in Rome for her birthday.
May that birthday be celebrated by all of us,
That day which now comes to you unexpectedly
as it happens.

3.16

It is great that you are so sure that I do not fall, all
of a sudden, into bad and improper situations,
since you already take much liberty from me.

May you have more attention for a courtesan and
a whore, who is weighted down by her basket,
rather than for Sulpicia the daughter of Servius:

Several people are concerned that I, whose pain
is their greatest (poetic) concern, do not end up in
an insignificant bed.

3.17

O Cerinthus, do you have dutiful attention for
your own girl, since now a fever burdens my tired
body?

Ha, I would have not otherwise desired to
overcome this sad illness, if I pondered how
much you wanted it.

3.18

Ne tibi sim, mea lux, aequae iam fervida cura
ac videor paucos ante fuisse dies,
si quicquam tota commisi, stulta, iuventa
cuius me fatear paenituisse magis
hesterna quam te solum quod nocte reliqui,
ardorem cupiens dissimulare meum.

5

But what benefit may come to me in overcoming
this illness, if you can endure my pains in your
indifferent chest?

3.18

O my life, may I not be your glowing attention
now, as I seem to have been previously in these
days.

O silly me, if – there’s anything – that I did in my
whole youth, and that I could confess to have
regretted more than leaving you alone last night,
desiring to hide my burning passion