

# THE INVENTION OF SULPICIA

The short cycle of six elegiac poems in the *Corpus Tibullianum* attributed to Sulpicia (4.7-12) has occasioned considerable scholarly interest in recent years,[1] but its context and authorship have not in my view been properly understood. Although biographical interpretation has fallen out of fashion in virtually all other areas of Roman poetry,[2] Sulpician studies are the one place where this approach has tenaciously and stubbornly persisted. The allure of possessing one authentic female voice amid Roman literature's welter of uncontradicted masculinity has proven too strong for critics to resist, and it has therefore remained a virtually unquestioned orthodoxy that these six poems are indeed a young girl's poetic transcription of genuine feelings at or near the time she experienced them—a procedure scarcely any critic today would attribute to any of the male love poets.

Interestingly, this "naive" reading of Sulpicia had its origins in the work of Otto Gruppe, a journalist and non-specialist polymath of the German Romantic Era, whose *Die römische Elegie* (1838) first proposed to segregate the epigrams supposedly *by* Sulpicia from the longer poems *about* her. The nearly contemporary commentary of Ludolph Dissen (1835), a philologist of the first order, had no difficulty in reading these epigrams as genuine works of Tibullus assuming a young girl's persona—the normative view of earlier scholarship,[3] which, I intend to argue, may be closer to being correct than the naively autobiographical reading.

The naive reading carries with it a number of troubling improbabilities. Would Sulpicia's family have really welcomed her rebellious announcement in 4.7.9-10 that she is tired of worrying about public appearances, but will throw modesty to the winds and

[1] The most thorough and recent survey of scholarship on these poems and the *Garland of Sulpicia* (4.2-6) is that of Piastri 1998.

[2] For different critiques of literalist reading, see Hubbard 1984.29-32; Kennedy 1993.83-100; Fitzgerald 1995.21-29; Sharrock 2000; Wray 2001.1-9. An early forerunner of these doubts is found in the important essay of Cherniss 1943.

[3] See Gruppe 1838.I,48-49, and Dissen 1835.426, 459. For a review of the earliest scholarship on the Sulpician question, see Parker 1994.40, Skoie 1998, and Skoie 2002.

let her inmost feelings hang out for public view (cf. 4.7.2 *nudasse* "bare it all")?[4] What would they make of her announcement in the same lines that she is no longer a virgin (*sed peccasse iuvat ... / ... cum digno digna fuisse ferar.* "It pleases me to have sinned ... / ... May I be reported, a worthy woman, to have been with a worthy man")?[5] Would her uncle Messalla[6] have welcomed her publicly telling him to shut up and get off her case in 4.8.5? At points, as in 4.7.3-4 (*illum Cytherea ... / attulit in nostrum deposuitque sinum.* "Cytherea brought him and deposited him into our lap"),[7] the poems border on being sexually explicit. How would her elders have received this image from the mouth of a teenage girl? Would a true adolescent have really been so anxious to advertise to her adult guardians her sexual and romantic feelings, her quarrels with her boyfriend, and her later apology to him? How would Cerinthus himself react, even if protected by a pseudonym, to her announcement that she wants everyone else to read her letters to him before even he does (4.7.7-8)? While it is hazardous to apply our own moral assumptions to the very different social realities of ancient Rome, we have no reason to think that sexual freedom was encouraged or condoned among unmarried adolescent girls of the upper classes.

Let us then try some less naive scenarios.[8] Suppose that there was no boyfriend in reality and the events described in the poems were all imaginary, but the poet was still a genuine teenage girl named Sulpicia. Would revealing her romantic dream life to her family and social circle have been any more seemly or less embarrassing? Let us then try another possibility: perhaps these poems are the work of an older, happily married Sulpicia, reflecting back on her feelings as a young girl, whether authentic or stylized. The problem with this scenario is that we have no parallel in Greece

[4] For the full force of the image of covering and revealing her body in 4.7.1-2, see Milnor 2002.260.

[5] The idiom *esse cum* . . . unquestionably refers to relations of sexual intimacy: see Smith 1913.508, citing Varro, *De Lingua Latina* 6.80. See also Adams 1982.177, Probst & Probst 1992.29, Flaschenriem 1999.44, and Milnor 2002.263. Tränkle 1990.306 gives further examples of the idiom. In the usage of the elegists, *peccare* also refers to sexual relations, particularly those outside of marriage.

[6] For the identification of Sulpicia with the daughter of Servius Sulpicius Rufus, who married Messalla's sister, see Haupt 1871.32-34, and more recently, Liebs 1984-85.1455-57.

[7] See Keith 1997.301.

[8] Keith (1997.309n21) does at least distinguish between author and persona, even as Milnor (2002.268) employs a different rhetoric to speak of "authenticity and constructedness." However, neither give us any insight into how the auhor may have differed from the persona: Keith assumes that the author was indeed the historical Sulpicia, and Milnor (2002.269n37) assumes that she was at least female.

or Rome for first-person poetry that reflects the poet's own persona at a different time of life than the time of composition. Events and experiences may be and usually are wholly imaginary, but the persona always maintains a plausible identity with the age and circumstances of the author, unless it is explicitly identified as someone other than the author: accordingly Catullus and the love elegists all write in a young man's persona, the exiled Ovid appears tired and past his prime, the Horace of the *Odes* appears middle-aged and worldly wise, ever ready to lecture younger companions like Leuconoe and Thaliarchus. And if these poems are the work of an older and more experienced woman, why does she stop the story so early? Why not give us a sense of her development and later feelings as a bride and eventually as a mature *matrona*? Although the style of the poems is very different from anything else in Augustan Latin,[9] they are not by any means artless or untutored. Why, if she had many years to compose poetry, did this talented and interesting older woman not produce more than a scant 40 lines, or if she did, why were they not preserved along with the poems we have?

The final possibility we must consider is that the poems were written by someone else in the persona of Sulpicia, consciously imitating the style and emotions one might expect from a teenage girl. Indeed the artificiality of the persona may be ironically implied by vv. 5-8 of the introductory 4.7:

> mẹa gaudia narret,
> dicetur si quis non habuisse sua.
> non ego signatis quicquam mandare tabellis,
> ne legat id nemo quam meus ante, velim . . .

"Let him narrate my moments of joy, if anyone will be said not to have had his own. I would not wish to entrust anything to sealed tablets, so that no one would read it before my boyfriend."

Even the preceding vv. 3-4 had foregrounded the poeticity of the relationship, by relating that Venus brought Sulpicia a beloved when begged by her Camenae, her Muses, as if to suggest that she were first a poet and only subsequently a girl in love.[10] What vv. 5-6

[9] For a detailed analysis, see Lowe 1988.197-205.

[10] See Flaschenriem 1999.40 on this couplet as an announcement of Sulpicia's "constructedness." She further notes that vv. 3-4 present Sulpicia's work as a union of Greek (cf. *Cytherea*, an epithet of Aphrodite attested in Sappho) and Roman poetic traditions (cf. *Camenae*). In a similar vein, Milnor (2002.271) sees the fourth word of the poem as already deconstructing the apparent sincerity of the initial *tandem venit amor:* "In lines 1-2, Sulpicia begins effusively and impulsively—at last love has come!—but immediately undermines the apparent naturalness of the statement by telling us what

envision is that she will soon become, and perhaps already is, an object of discursive construction by male poets just like the other women of Roman elegy. Vv. 7-8 assure us that her poems are not transcriptions of historical experiences and communications that formerly transpired between her and her lover, but reflections that Cerinthus reads no sooner than the rest of her public audience.

Even Otto Gruppe, the Romantic inventor of the "poetess Sulpicia," felt compelled to assign 4.7 to the *Garland of Sulpicia* in recognition of these elements of programmatic artificiality; for Gruppe, only 4.8 through 4.12 could count as genuine compositions of the young lady, even though this conclusion left a group of merely 30 lines without any program poem or introduction at all.[11] In a recent article, Niklas Holzberg has proposed that none of these poems were in fact Sulpicia's own work, but his scenario for their creation is altogether different from mine: he believes that all the poems of Books 3-4 were composed by a single post-Ovidian imitator of Tibullus who was engaged in an imaginative reconstruction of Tibullus' earliest work.[12] This view strikes me as fanciful at best: only 4.13 (at the end of the supposed collection) identifies its speaker as "Tibullus." If a post-Tibullan imitator truly wanted his work to be construed as that of Tibullus, all the poems would be in his voice. There is no solid Roman parallel for Holzberg's contention that young poets would be expected to write pseudonymously and hence that "Lygdamus" (3.1-6) would be the kind of name a Tibullan imitator would expect the young Tibullus to use. Holzberg goes on to argue that the *Panegyricus Messallae* (4.1) is an intentionally bad composition designed to imitate an impoverished young poet desperate for patronage, but that poem, whatever its demerits, is hardly a parody, nor does parody of Tibullus seem to be the intention of the rest of the hypothesized book. Holzberg's approach to the Sulpicia poems requires that he consider them a continuous linear sequence, with the so-called *Garland* (4.2-6) chronologically prior to the "Sulpician" epigrams (4.7-12), despite the shift from a more polished and allusive elegiac style in 4.2-6 to the more naive and laconic style of 4.7-12. Moreover, as I shall demonstrate, 4.2 in particular presupposes a married Sulpicia, whereas 4.7-12 cannot, and 4.3.24 presupposes 4.7.3-4. Holzberg

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kind of love it is: the kind that you publish. We must, I think, take careful note of the oddity of *qualem* here, which instantly dismantles the pose of authentic feeling set up in the poem's first three words."

[11] Gruppe 1838.37-62.

[12] Holzberg 1998-99.

never explains in a convincing way why the readership of this book would be inclined to assume that poems claiming to be by Lygdamus or Sulpicia are really previously unknown works of Tibullus without any prefatory signposting. Moreover, the evidence for a post-Ovidian date is not as strong as Holzberg believes, particularly for 4.7-12.[13] As will be seen, I believe that the six Sulpicia poems do in fact date to the later part of Tibullus' own career, when we can assume Sulpicia to have been approaching marriage.

There is no question that male poets often experimented with appropriating a female voice: witness Ovid's explorations of female emotion and psychology in the *Heroides*, Horace's dialogue with Lydia in *Ode* 3.9, the bitter diatribe of the jilted ex-mistress in *Catalepton* 13, or Propertius' several experiments with adopting a woman's persona in Book 4.[14] In Prop. 4.11, the poem throughout speaks in the voice of the deceased Cornelia, with no prefatory quotational frame; similarly, Prop. 4.3 assumes the form of an epistle written by a woman named Arethusa.[15] Both poems address the woman's husband, even as the Ovidian and Horatian examples (and *Catalepton* 13) show a woman addressing her husband or (ex-)lover. Greek poets as early as Alcaeus (fr. 10 V) experimented with adopting the voice of a passionate, lovelorn female;[16] from the Hellenistic period or earlier we have familiar examples such as Theocritus' *Idyll* 2, the Grenfell fragment (= Powell 1925.177-80, the

[13] Holzberg 1998-99.177, 187-88. He draws heavily on the work of Tränkle 1990, but Tränkle's methods for dating based on supposed literary imitations, with the assumption that minor authors are always derivative from major authors and never the other way around, have been sharply criticized by Luck 1994.71-72. Moreover, even Tränkle (1990.301) could find nothing in the language or metrical technique of 4.7-12 suggesting a date later than Tibullus.

[14] See Wyke 1994.110-28 for this technique in the last book of Propertius.

[15] Prop. 4.3, which shows a woman lamenting the absence of her husband, may even be the principal model for 4.3 in the *Garland*, which adopts Sulpicia's voice to lament Cerinthus' departure for a hunt. Like Arethusa in that poem (Prop. 4.3.65-66), Sulpicia warns of threats facing her beloved (4.3.1-3); she worries about the slightest scratches to his tender limbs (4.3.9-10; cf. Prop. 4.3.23-24). She wishes to go with him, even though the hunt hardly seems like the place for a woman (4.3.11-18), just as Arethusa wished to be part of Lycotas' military camp despite its unseemliness (Prop. 4.3.43-50); interestingly, both passages culminate with an appeal to Venus' authority to justify the extravagant wish. However, both poems conclude by suggesting that the woman's worst fear is her partner's infidelity (4.3.19-22; cf. Prop. 4.3.69-70, cf. 25-26). Prop. 4.3 was not the only poem of Propertius' last book to influence the *Garland*: Prop. 4.2 supplies the figure of Vertumnus to the programmatic 4.2 (lines 13-14), where, as in Propertius, he prefigures the collection's ability to gender-bend and speak in either male or female voice (on the relation of these two poems, see Milnor 2002.270).

[16] Also early are the female impersonations of Theognis 579-82 (a chaste woman) and 861-64 (a prostitute).

paraclausithyron of a locked-out woman),[17] and a whole collection of "Locrian songs" (Athen. 15.697B-C = fr. 853 PMG portrays an adulteress worried about being caught in the act and trying to conceal her lover).

Although acknowledging such mythological, epitaphic, and generic exemples, Holt Parker has recently maintained that one never finds a real living person appropriated as the speaking voice in a lyric. Indeed, he uses this argument to assign poems 4.3 and 4.5 from the *Garland of Sulpicia* to Sulpicia herself, despite their obvious differences from 4.7-12 in length and style and their evident coherence with the other three poems of the *Garland*.[18] That thesis I will address in the Appendix. However, his initial premise is incorrect: *Eclogue* 10 clearly does appropriate the real living person of Cornelius Gallus as a speaking voice. Even though framed within a larger poem, this example disproves the existence of any poetic convention against assuming a contemporary, living persona. Catullus' Juventius was probably a historical person of his time, since the name is well attested as a family of contemporary prominence at both Rome and Verona;[19] although Juventius does not speak directly in Catullus' lyrics, he is certainly an actor whom the poet appropriates into a fictionalized poetic narrative, even as he does Clodia under the thinly veiled pseudonym of Lesbia. Perhaps closer to the literary conceit of the Sulpician epigrams is the manual of sexual positions attributed to the courtesan Philaenis (surely a real name used by real courtesans), but actually written by the sophist Polycrates (see Aeschrion, *AP* 7.345). In light of these cases and the more generic examples of assumed female voice in Propertius, Horace, Ovid, and the *Catalepton*, it is not a giant step for a male poet close to Messalla to write a short series of poems in the assumed persona of a young woman known to Messalla and his friends, particularly if she were in on the joke. The Augustan period was obviously a time of active experimentation with the full range of

[17] Cozzolino (1992.475-78) sees this poem and the Sulpician epigrams as evidence of a common tradition of poetry in the female voice expressing mutual love.

[18] Parker 1994, echoing, apparently without being aware of it, Salanitro 1938.33-34; Doncieux (1891.79-81) and Martinon (1895.xlv-xlvii) had earlier proposed that 4.3 and 4.5 were works begun by Sulpicia, but completed with the assistance of Tibullus. Milnor (2002.268-69) professes scepticism about Parker's thesis: "Given the stylistic and linguistic disparities between the work of 'Sulpicia' and that of the amicus, even those which are written in the voice of the poetess herself, it seems to me clear that we as readers are meant to *think* that they were two separate people."

[19] See Ellis 1889.82; Kroll 1960.45; Lenchantin de Gubernatis1951.49; Fordyce 1961.155.

possibilities inherent in a variety of poetic personae. The 19-year old Greek poetess Erinna, whose work was still widely read at this time, could have provided an appealing inspiration for the particular modalities that the persona of a young, curious, even precocious female could evoke. Of course, M. L. West has argued that "Erinna" was herself a male poet's fictional construct,[20] but this assumption, however attractive as a parallel, is not necessary for my argument.

Having established that it is plausible that a male poet *could* have adopted Sulpicia's persona, why would he have chosen *her*, rather than someone else? The key, I believe, lies in the short elegy 2.2 of Tibullus, a birthday poem addressed to an otherwise unknown Cornutus, that seems to predict happiness in a forthcoming marriage. Why would such a slight occasional poem have been included in Tibullus' second book unless it were in fact celebrating someone or something very important to Messalla and his circle? Although the identification has been treated dismissively by recent critics, I would like to revive the old view of Tibullus' earliest editors that Cornutus was the Cerinthus named in Sulpicia's poems, and that 2.2 as a result must celebrate his impending marriage to Sulpicia.[21] Not only are the two names metrically equivalent, as conventional for pseudonyms in Roman elegy, and not only is there a parallel between the Greek κέρας and the Latin *cornu* as words for "horn,"[22] but it has never been observed, so far as I can determine,

[20] West 1977.116-19.

[21] The earliest printed editions actually printed the name *Cerinthe* rather than *Cornute* in 2.2.9, based on the reading *cherinthe* in some later manuscripts. This reading may derive from an interlinear gloss, perhaps of ancient origin (see Némethy 1905.328-29), identifying that name with Cornutus'; the corruption of the name suggests that the reading may be older than the Renaissance humanists to whom it is usually ascribed. This name continued to be printed as late as the editions of Voss 1811 and Heyne 1817, and was assumed by Gruppe 1838.I,27-28. Arguing for the identification of Cornutus and Cerinthus on other grounds were Ribbeck 1889.II,196, Belling 1897.294-303, Némethy 1905.328-30, Rasi 1913.29-30, and more tentatively Martinon 1895.xliv-xlv and Smith 1913.86-87. Bréguet (1946.35-36) opposed the identification because she considered Sulpicia considerably later than Tibullus. Salanitro (1938.37-39) opposed it on the grounds that Sulpicia's passion for Cerinthus was "too free and sensual to end in matrimony." He also argues that it is difficult to understand why 2.2 would have become separated from the other Sulpicia poems if it were about her, but as I shall argue, this is easily explained by the fact that 2.2 is an actual work of Tibullus, whereas the *Garland* was probably not, and the Sulpicia epigrams, even if the work of Tibullus, are clearly a group in their own right quite separate from Tibullus' elegies, since they ventriloquize another persona.

[22] Of course Cerinthus has a long *ê*, as opposed to the short epsilon of κέρας. But in searching for a metrically (and consonantally) equivalent Greek name with which to cloak Cornutus, a poet will be content with even an approximate word-play. That Cerinthus was an actual Greek name is demonstrated by its presence as a name of

that the sequence of consonants in Cornutus and Cerinthus is identical: C, R, N, T, S.

Even more compelling, however, is the fact that 2.2, despite being the shortest of Tibullus' elegies, is the one most frequently and emphatically echoed both in Sulpicia's poems and especially in the *Garland of Sulpicia.* It is a birthday greeting, and as such inspires not only 4.5 and 4.6, addressed respectively to Cerinthus' and Sulpicia's birthday spirits, but also the two poems about Sulpicia's birthday in her collection, namely 4.8 and 4.9. There is a striking series of verbal echoes as well: 4.5.14-16 echoes the image of conjugal chains (*vincula*) in 2.2.18-19, the birthday spirit's affirmative nod to wishes for fidelity in 4.5.20 and 4.6.13 echoes 2.2.9-10, the dedication of cake and wine in 4.6.14 echoes 2.2.8, with the words *libo* and *mero* in exactly the same metrical positions at the end of each half-line in the pentameter. The initial image of incense burning on the altar in 2.2.3-4 (*urantur pia tura focis ...*), evoking the ritual of prayer and dedication to the birthday Genius, is echoed by the beginning of 4.6 (4.6.1 *sanctos cape turis acervos*), an image expanded later in that poem as Sulpicia is imagined to burn like the incense (4.6.17; cf. 4.5.5-6), in a kind of sympathetic love magic. The ritualized prayer to the birthday spirit, asking for a special wish, is prominent in all three birthday poems (2.2.9-10, 4.5.9-10, 4.6.15-16, 4.6.20),[23] and the bulk of each poem consists in an extended exposition of the wish: significantly, Cornutus' wish in 2.2 is for a happy marriage with children, whereas the wishes of 4.5 and 4.6 are for the continued marital devotion of each partner, as if 4.5 and 4.6 were in some sense renewing the birthday wish of 2.2.

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Greek slaves and freedmen in various inscriptions and papyri: cf. *IG* 3.1306, *P.Oxy.* 2.244, *CIL* 5.3043, 6.39.011, 12.3455, 13.2969. This need not be taken to mean that Sulpicia's lover was literally a slave or freedman, as Gruppe (1838.I,28) and Cartault (1909.81-82) believed (see the counter-arguments of Smith 1913.86, Salanitro 1938.39-40, and Bréguet 1946.34-35), although the use of a name commonly associated with slaves as a pseudonym may play on the *servitium amoris* topos. Boucher (1976.504-6) notes the similarity of this figure to the Cerinthus named in Horace, *Sat.* 1.2.80-82, who is also characterized as a man pursuing a woman of aristocratic background. We are surely not dealing with the same historical individual, but the adoption of this pseudonym in Sulpicia may be a clever literary allusion, which shows the author of these epigrams to be a poet of some sophistication and learning despite the highly mannered naive style. Others note that the name is equivalent to the Greek κήρινθος, "bee bread," possibly a term of endearment like "honeysweet" (see Currie 1983.1754, Hinds 1987.38, and Roessel 1990.243-50).

[23] See Argetsinger 1992.181-83 on the *vota* as an integral part of the ritualized address to a birthday spirit. See also Cesareo 1929 for the birthday poem as a genre.

Moreover, there are some very significant references to 2.2 in the introductory poem of the *Garland*, 4.2. The couplet on the Arab's sweet-smelling herbs in 4.2.17-18 clearly echoes 2.2.3-4, even down to the details of grammatical structure: a jussive subjunctive followed by a relative clause with the Arab as the subject, the verb *metit* for *mittit*, an ablative phrase for the land, and an accusative relative pronoun:

> urantur pia tura focis, urantur odores
> quos tener e terra divite mittit Arabs.

"Let the pious incense burn, let the odors burn which the delicate Arab ships out of his rich land." (2.2.3-4)

> possideatque, metit quidquid bene olentibus arvis
> cultor odoratae dives Arabs segetis.

"Let her possess whatever the rich Arab reaps from his sweet-smelling fields, the cultivator of a fragrant ground." (4.2.17-18)

Similarly, the next couplet, 4.2.19-20, echoes 2.2.15-16 on the gems from India and the Red Sea.[24] This repeated attention to the occasional 2.2 can only be understood on the assumption that it is in fact programmatically connected with Sulpicia and Cerinthus.

If Tibullus used a birthday greeting to Cornutus as the occasion to celebrate his impending marriage to Sulpicia in 2.2, and if it is at least plausible that the Sulpicia poems 4.7-12 were written by someone other than Sulpicia, I would propose that the context and purpose of these poems were in fact the same as those of 2.2, namely the celebration of Sulpicia and Cornutus' marriage. Whereas 2.2 anticipates events from the bridegroom's point of view, 4.7-12 do the same through the novel approach of a miniature elegiac cycle in the voice of the bride herself. Just as 2.2.11-20 gives voice to Cornutus' wishes and inner feelings, as Tibullus imagined them, the Sulpicia poems do so for the other partner to the marriage. The formula *cum digno digna* so prominently placed accross the diaeresis of the last line of the programmatic 4.7 may even echo a conventional expression used in marriage ceremonies: compare *o digno coniuncta viro* from the epithalamium portion of Ausonius' *Cento Nuptialis* (6.70 [Prete]), imitating the same half-line from Vergil, *Ecl.* 8.32, itself a bitter reference to the marriage of Nysa and Mopsus and parodic in tone, as if invoking a traditional expression.

[24] See Gruppe 1838.I,62-63 and Némethy 1905.329-30 for some of these parallels. They draw the same conclusion about the identity of Cerinthus and Cornutus.

If I am right that 2.2 and the Sulpicia poems form a complementary dyad, the author of Sulpicia's 40-line claim to fame may have been none other than the author of 2.2—namely, Tibullus himself, assuming a style, idiom, and persona he judged appropriate to the young woman he knew. This would accord with the evidence of the Suetonian *Vita* that Tibullus composed, in addition to his elegies, short "erotic epistles" (*epistolae quoque eius amatoriae, quamquam breves, omnino subtiles sunt.* "Also his are erotic epistles; although they are short, they are altogether subtle");[25] the programmatic 4.7.7-8 so much as announces that these short poems are to be seen generically as equivalent to epistles that Sulpicia might send Cerinthus, but instead shares with a broader public.[26]

Assuming the voice of a bride or bride-to-be was not unknown in Sappho's epithalamic poetry: witness the laments over lost maidenhood in frr. 107 and 114 V, or the young girl's confession to her mother that she cannot keep her mind on her weaving for thinking about a boy in fr. 102 V. Also prominent, particularly in Roman epithalamic poetry, is the tradition of Fescennine verse: good-natured, but at time ribald teasing of the newlywed couple.[27] One of our best literary examples comes at the end of Catullus' epithalamic poem 61 (explicitly calling itself *Fescennina iocatio* in v. 120), where it is suggested that the bridegroom needs to put aside his pederastic interest in a slave boy (vv. 119-43) and pray that his

[25] Rostagni (1935.36-47) also connected the *epistolae amatoriae* with the Sulpicia poems, but he believed the designation also to include the *Garland of Sulpicia* and 4.13-14; Ciaffi (1944.152-53) went one step further and classified even the Lygdamus poems (3.1-6) as fitting this rubric. But only the Sulpicia epigrams 4.7-12 really pretend to be the communications of one lover to another, such that they could legitimately be called *epistolae*; note their designation as "billets" by French-language critics such as Cartault 1909.83 and Bréguet 1946.27-28. Since I believe that the *Garland* made use of Propertius IV and possibly also Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, I cannot agree that it was Tibullan; see also the extensive stylistic and metrical analysis of these poems by Bréguet 1946.57-280, which although not fully convincing in assigning them to Ovid, makes a strong case for them not being by Tibullus. Tränkle (1990.5-6) regards the reference of the *epistolae amatoriae* to the Sulpicia poems as "not impossible," but thinks it more likely that these took a metrical (or prose) form that would distinguish them from Tibullus' elegies; however, if they refer only to the short Sulpicia epigrams, and not to the *Garland*, that would be enough of a generic distinction to warrant a different title, since epigram and elegy were considered not at all the same genre. See Ross 1969.

[26] So also Gruppe 1838.I,57.

[27] For other references to Fescennine verse, see Seneca, *Med.* 113-14; Pliny, *NH* 15.86; Servius, *ad Aen.* 7.695, and on Fescennine elements in Catullus 61, see the treatments of Williams 1958.16-17 and Fedeli 1983.85-104. This kind of suggestive teasing of the newlywed couple had a precedent in Greek verse, as seen, for instance, in Sappho, frr. 111 and 115 V or the relatively mild Theocr. 18.54-55; for the sense of fr. 111, see the interpretation of Kirk 1963.51-52, bolstered by Lloyd-Jones 1967.168.

children will look like him (vv. 209-18). The same demand that the bridegroom's interest in a slave must be terminated is the point of 4.10 in the Sulpicia cycle.[28] The suggestive obscenity of 4.7.4 is also fully in keeping with what one expects in Fescennine tradition, as is the teasing imputation of the woman's lack of chastity in 4.7.10. That a variety of risqué literary works and their performance could be incorporated into betrothal or wedding parties is demonstrated in the case of Octavian's marriage to Livia, where the prospective bride and groom may have played roles in a naughty masque imitating the infidelities of the gods.[29] Neither this masque nor the Sulpicia epigrams could formally be classified as Fescennine verse, but they both served much the same social function as that traditional ceremony: a kind of initiatory aischrology of the couple undergoing an important transitional ritual, providing comic relief and at the same time desensitizing any reserve or shyness about sexuality on the part of the bride by implying that she is already a very sexualized being. In the case of Catullus 61, this took the form of implying that the bride might become a future adulteress, whereas in these epigrams, it takes the form of pretending to have her announce herself as a liberated, elegiac woman.

If the cycle of six short poems in Sulpicia's persona were meant as a playful epithalamic tribute to the bride and her love for Cornutus, what are we to make of the later *Garland of Sulpicia* (4.2-4.6)? These five poems are, I believe, an anniversary tribute to the now married couple. The programmatic 4.2 so much as announces this context to us in the first line by situating its praise of Sulpicia on the Kalends of March. March 1 was familiar to all Romans as the day of the Matronalia, a combination of Mothers' Day and everyone's wedding anniversary. On this day, husbands prayed for their wives' health and gave them presents.[30] Indeed, this whole collection can be conceived as Cornutus' Matronalia present to Sulpicia, commissioned by him to renew the hopes and sentiments expressed in poetic form at the beginning of their relationship. In 4.4, we see Cerinthus doing exactly what a husband is supposed to do on the Matronalia, namely praying for the health of his wife. It could only be considered endearing if, after 25 or 30 years of marriage,

[28] Fedeli (1983.96-97) demonstrates that the renunciation of past affairs and illicit connections is an epithalamic topos of Greek origin.

[29] This mime is attested by Suetonius, *Aug.* 69-70. See the discussions of Pike 1920.372-73 and especially of Flory 1988.353-57.

[30] For the character of the Matronalia, see Scullard 1981.87.

Cornutus can still be called a *iuvenis* and Sulpicia still a *puella*.[31] Fond were their memories.

That Sulpicia and the poems about her are to be understood in the context of marriage may be confirmed by the work of the "other Sulpicia," a contemporary of Martial. Martial's two epigrams (10.35 and 10.38) praise her as a model of marital fidelity and devotion, and her graphic erotic poetry, of which a single two-line fragment survives, seems entirely embedded in the conjugal context.[32] She is also alluded to later in Ausonius' *Cento Nuptialis* 10.9-10 (Prete) and Sidonius Apollonaris 9.261-62, from an epithalamium.[33] That the only two Roman poetesses we know much about should both be named "Sulpicia" is too much of a coincidence to be accidental. While we cannot exclude the possibility that poetic talent is genetically programmed and therefore hereditary, it could also be that the later Sulpicia appropriated the name as a pseudonym from the earlier Sulpicia, whose poetry seemed to provide a precedent for Latin verse in a feminine persona. The precedent would be all the more compelling if she were also known to be celebrating a love that was conjugal: in this sense, Cerinthus would be an apt model for the later Sulpicia's Calenus.

Interestingly, this Flavian Sulpicia was herself appropriated as the supposed author of a fourth-century satire on Domitian's expulsion of the philosophers, entitled *Sulpiciae Conquestio*.[34] We therefore have at least three poets writing in different periods under this name; indeed, if we regard the poet of the *Garland of Sulpicia* as different from that of the original Sulpicia collection, there were

[31] Tränkle (1990.256-57) is troubled by the references to a still youthful Cerinthus and Sulpicia in the birthday poems (4.5.17-18, 4.6.15-16) and therefore doubts that these could be written years after their marriage, as 4.2 implies. However, Romans must have preferred, even as we do, to maintain the pretense of enduring youth, especially when counting birthdays; that these poems renew the literary conceit of the Sulpicia epigrams, written when they actually were young, is all the more reason to maintain the fiction that they in some sense are still young at heart. And of course if the Ovidian parallels to 4.3 cited in the Appendix below are cases of Ovid imitating the *Garland* rather than the other way around, there is no reason why the *Garland* could not have been written fairly early in the marriage of Sulpicia and Cornutus; Propertius IV was probably published not much later than 16 BCE.

[32] For good reviews of the evidence for this later Sulpicia, see Merriam 1991.303-5, Parker 1992.89-95, and Richlin 1992.125-40. For a detailed discussion of the two Martial poems, see Hallett 1992.99-123.

[33] She is also mentioned in Fulgentius, *Myth.* 1.4 and 1.23, but Parker (1992.92n23) may be right in suggesting that Fulgentius' knowledge of her was derived from Ausonius.

[34] The most recent edition is that of Giordano-Rampioni 1982. See Parker 1992.92n20 for full bibliography.

actually four Sulpicias, since two poems of that collection speak in Sulpicia's persona. That the second, fourth, and probably third Sulpicia felt free to use the name as a pseudonym raises the possibility that they knew the name had already been appropriated even by the first poet who used it. The similarities in the subject matter treated by the first three Sulpicias make it conceivable that this name came to stand not so much for an individual as a certain genre of poetry, as the names of "Theognis," "Hesiod," and "Homer" constructed genres in an earlier time and place. Closer to Sulpicia in time, Propertius adopted the voice of a Cornelia, who was a recently deceased contemporary, but whose matronly virtues surely are meant to recall the most famous Cornelia, the revered mother of the Gracchi (see Gaius' references to her recorded in Plutarch, *Gaius Gracchus* 4.3-4), who already existed as a literary figure in Cicero's time, with a collection of letters attributed to her (Cicero, *Brut.* 211; cf. Quintilian 1.1.6); whether these letters were authentic or a male author's literary construction of an idealized matron is impossible to know. What can be said is that Propertius' poem appeals to a "Cornelia tradition." Although the pose of "Sulpicia" is throughout constructed as a female voice, there is no particular reason for assuming that the work of any of these four Sulpicias was actually authored by a biological female. Nor is there any reason to assume that it could not have been.[35] Like Cornelia, she became a tradition, and like all traditions, she is a composite construction of many authors across the generations.

## Appendix: The Authorship of [Tibullus] 4.3 and 4.5

At least six objections can be made to attributing 4.3 and 4.5 to Sulpicia, as Salanitro and Parker proposed (see n. 18):

(1). Even the most casual observer will see that these poems (24 vv. and 20 vv.) fit in with the other three poems of the *Garland* in length (24 vv., 26 vv., 20 vv.), whereas the six "Sulpician" poems (4.7-12) are four to ten lines in length.

(2). The style of the "Sulpician" poems is compressed, epigrammatic, convoluted, sometimes even ambiguous and obscure (e.g. 4.7.1-2, 4.10.1-2, 4.10.5-6, 4.12.1-2), whereas 4.3 and 4.5, like 4.2, 4.4, and 4.6, are limpid expansions of a theme in a style more typical

[35] For women's education and the evidence for women who may have written poetry or prose, see Hemelrijk 1999, especially 146-209.

of Roman elegy. See Bréguet 1946.43-280, Santirocco 1979.235-37, Hinds 1987.44, Lowe 1988.197-205 for the metrical, lexical, and syntactic distinctness of the two groups. Parker (1994.47-49) attempts in vain to argue that 4.3 and 4.5 are closer in style to 4.7-12 than to the other three *Garland* poems. Neither of them contain any *loci conclamati* comparable to those of 4.7-12.

(3). As Santirocco 1979.235 (cf. Dettmer 1983.1972-73) has shown, the existing "Sulpician" collection possesses a logical order and inner coherence: 4.7 is the preface, 4.8-9 a crisis precipitated by Messalla (going to the country on her birthday), 4.10 a crisis precipitated by Cerinthus (his relationship with a slave girl), 4.11 a crisis precipitated by Sulpicia herself (her illness and suspicions of Cerinthus' indifference), and 4.12 a reconciliation. It is difficult to see how 4.3 and 4.5 would fit if interpolated into this sequence. On the other hand, 4.2-6 do fit together well as a sequence in their own right (cf. Cartault 1909.84-87, Fredericks 1976.775-82, Dettmer 1983.1971-72, Tränkle 1990.255), even mirroring and parallelling the structure of the Sulpicia epigrams: 4.2 is prefatory and programmatic (like 4.7 -- see Milnor 2002.269 for the clothing theme as a response to the nudity proclaimed in 4.7.1-2), 4.3 laments a temporary separation (like 4.8-9), 4.4 shows Sulpicia ill and Cerinthus very concerned (a counterpoint to 4.11, where he is accused of indifference), and the two birthday poems 4.5 and 4.6 show the couple in a state of perfect spiritual union (parallel to the reconciliation of 4.12, but also picking up the birthday theme of 4.8-9). 4.5 and 4.6 are obviously paired as expressions of Sulpicia's and Cerinthus' perspectives; similarly 4.3 and 4.4 show each of them reacting with anxiety to a temporary crisis threatening separation. These structural niceties collapse if 4.3 and 4.5 are pulled out and reassigned to the "Sulpician" poems, as Parker wishes.

(4). Parker (1994.50) has to posit a compiler of the *Corpus Tibullianum* who was artful and self-conscious enough to take it upon himself to rearrange Sulpicia's poems and intercalate two of them with three poems written about her by someone else. But a more typical editorial procedure is to string together intact *libelli* without rearranging them, as in the Catullan collection.[36] The intact sequence of the Lygdamus elegies (3.1-6) suggests that the same procedure was observed here. The *Garland of Meleager* is not a good analogy, since Meleager is himself a poet, re-editing the works of his

[36] See Hubbard 1983 for my earlier treatment of this question. My forthcoming essay "The Catullan *Libelli* Revisited" will consider the matter in greater detail.

predecessors to create his own poetic design, whereas the anonymous editor who brought together the pieces of the *Corpus Tibullianum* does not seem to have had such pretensions, unless we choose to identify the author of 4.2, 4.4, and 4.6 as the editor of the whole corpus.

(5). As Fredericks (1976.770-75) has noted, a literary play with voices is almost programmatically incorporated into the *Garland.* Given the significance of the Matronalia as a day of devotion to wives on the part of their husbands, our initial impression of 4.2 is that it is in fact delivered in the voice of Sulpicia's husband or lover (see Hinds 1987.31). The poem nowhere refers to Cerinthus as a third person, nor is any of the praise inappropriate for a husband or elegiac lover. The first ten lines of 4.4 could also be delivered in Cerinthus' voice; only with 4.4.11 do we see the speaker of this poem to be an objective third party, but the consolatory 4.4.15-22 may be yet another voice, perhaps, as Fredericks proposes, the god Apollo. Given this polyphony, it is surely not difficult for 4.3 and 4.5 to adopt Sulpicia's voice.

(6). The allusive and intertextual complexity of 4.3 and 4.5 is in line with the practice of 4.2, 4.4, and 4.6, whereas the "Sulpician" poems 4.7-12, although perhaps acknowledging some elegiac topoi, feature nothing that resembles such sophisticated *arte allusiva* (see the negative findings of Bréguet 1946.56 and Tränkle 1990.301), with the possible exception of the name Cerinthus itself (see n.22 above); Keith (1997.295-310) posits Dido's voice in *Aeneid* 4 as a general model for Sulpicia's self-fashioning as a desiring female, but specific imitation on the phraseological level does not appear to be part of the picture. 4.3's relation to Prop. 4.3 we have discussed in n.15 above. Its final verse (4.3.24 *et celer in nostros ipse recurre sinus*) clearly echoes Sulpicia's 4.7.3-4 (*illum ... / attulit in nostrum deposuitque sinum*), referring to Cerinthus; the iterative force of the prefix in *recurre* marks 4.3.24 as the later passage recalling a previous motion. Hinds (1987.35-37) has noted significant Ovidian allusions in 4.3, particularly that of the first line (4.3.1 *parce meo iuveni*) to *Metam.* 10.545 (*parce meo, iuvenis, ... meo periclo*), addressed by Venus to Adonis, an evocative mythological parallel to Sulpicia's desire to prevent Cerinthus from going off on a boar hunt; it is conceivable, however, that Ovid may have been the imitator here, putting into Venus' speech to Adonis the beginning of another poem in which a woman tries to restrain a youth from the boar hunt; this would be particularly plausible if, as Radford (1923) and Bréguet (1946) have argued on metrical and stylistic grounds, Ovid is himself the author

of the *Garland*. Relatively unnoticed have been the allusions to Tib. 1.4.48-50, whereby Sulpicia's desire to assist Cerinthus' hunting is compared to a pederastic lover's efforts on behalf of his beloved boy (4.3.7-8 *colles / claudentem* ≈ 1.4.49 *claudere valles*; 4.3.8 *teneras laedere velle manus* ≈ 1.4.48 *insuetas atteruisse manus*; 4.3.12 *retia feram* ≈ 1.4.50 *retia ferre*); for carrying the nets, see also Ovid, *Metam.* 10.171-72, of Apollo and Hyacinthus. The force of these allusions is to characterize Sulpicia's love as active and even masculine in its force. For a list of other citations of both Tibullus and Sulpicia in 4.3 and 4.5, see Doncieux 1891.79-80 and Némethy 1905.334-35. We have already noted this kind of allusive technique in 4.2, 4.4, and 4.6.

After this article was substantially completed, Mathilde Skoie called my attention to Hallett 2002, which outbids Parker in its creation of new feminine poetry by attributing the entire *Garland* to Sulpicia herself. Hallett's thesis is based entirely on a series of allusions to the poetry of Catullus and his possible relative Valerius Aedituus that she perceives in both the *Garland* and the Sulpicia epigrams; she argues that Sulpicia was herself a distant relative of both earlier poets. Unfortunately, these putative "allusions" constitute little more than isolated words that are present in the lexicon of both poets, such as *divus, candidus, dignus, pius, mutuus,* and *studiosus,* or the topos of love as fire. All of these items are commonplace in the *sermo amatorius* of Roman poetry and reveal nothing unique to Catullus or Valerius Aedituus.

THOMAS K. HUBBARD

*University of Texas, Austin*

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