

## Greek Women Authors and Roman Female Authorship in Sulpicia's *Elegidia*

Eight, perhaps nine, elegiac epigrams are all that survive by the Augustan Latin poet Sulpicia ([Tib.] 3.9, 11, 13-18; *AE* 1928, no. 73), the earliest extant female poet of ancient Rome (Parker, Hallett). Yet throughout her small corpus, she shows remarkable sensitivity to Sappho's themes, forms, characters and settings (Tränkle, Merriam). This study explores how Sulpicia might have come to know not only Sappho's poetry but also the rich tradition of Greek women's verse and proposes a suite of Greek female models against whom Sulpicia measures herself in her poems.

I begin by reviewing evidence for the textual and material presence of Greek female authors in ancient Rome. I argue that the efflorescence of Latin amatory poetry across lyric, epigram and elegy in the first-century BCE was sparked by the publication of Meleager's *Garland*, compiled about 100 BCE and very popular with educated Roman readers as well as Greek audiences (Gutzwiller). Meleager included in his *Garland* not only short epigrams but also longer elegies by the most famous poets of the Greek literary tradition, and his inclusion of female authors in the anthology is an important context for Sulpicia's composition of erotic verse. In the preface, Meleager lists the poets whose verses he includes, among them Anyte, Moero, Sappho, Nossis, and Erinna (*AP* 4.1.1–12).

In the mid-50s BCE, moreover, Pompey the Great dedicated an entertainment complex in the heart of Rome that included a temple to Venus, a theatre, and a shaded colonnade surrounding a public park. Pompey's Portico displayed statues of notable Greek female poets (Kuttner, Thorsen). The Augustan Greek epigrammatist Antipater of Thessaloniki celebrates nine of these authors as a canon of Greek female poets by reference to the nine Muses (*AP* 9.26).

Catullus, Propertius, Ovid, and Augustus himself attest to the popularity of the Portico in the early imperial period (Catull. 55.6; Prop. 2.32, 4.8.75; Ov. *Ars* 1.67, 3.387; Aug. *RG* 20). This is the literary and material context which confirms Sulpicia's access to the rich tradition of female-authored verse in first-century BCE Rome.

The focus of the paper is on specific examples of Sulpician allusion to the female classical tradition. I argue that the name of her beloved Cerinthus ([Tib.] 3.9.11; 3.10.15; 3.11.1, 5; 3.14.2; 3.17.1), transliterated into Latin from the Greek word *kêrinthos* ("beebread"), draws on the Greek poet Erinna, whom the Hellenistic epigram tradition (*AP* 7.11–13, 9.190) portrayed as a "bee-maiden" and whose poetry is described as a "honeycomb" (Gutzwiller, Roessel). I then turn to Sulpicia's adaptation of the myth of Venus and Adonis in [Tib.] 3.9, which I associate with two female-authored Adonis-fragments, Sappho fr. 59 and Praxilla's *Hymn to Adonis* (fr. 747 *PMG*), the latter of which both alludes to Sappho's poetry and is in turn alluded to by Nossis (Skinner 1988, 1991; Stehle, Panagiotopoulou). Sulpicia also alludes to Sappho in [Tib.] 3.13, where her successful prayer to Venus *Cytherêa* (3.13.3–5) evokes Sappho's famous prayer to Aphrodite (fr. 1). Finally, I trace the literary implications Sulpicia's application of the adjective *dulcis*, "sweet," to the city ([Tib.] 3.14.3), rather than the countryside, back to the Greek epigrammatists Anyte (*AP* 16.228.2) and Nossis (*AP* 5.170.1–2).

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