

The Signature of Sulpicia: Syntactic & Stylometric Analysis

The eleven Sulpician poems remain a great mystery of Augustan literature, attributed variously to Sulpicia, Tibullus, a combination of Sulpicia and an anonymous *auctor de Sulpicia*, or separate authors entirely (Skoie 2002). This study approaches the disputed authorship in a new way, distinguishing between conscious stylistic differences, which can be imitated, and unconscious stylistic differences, which are difficult to alter and therefore suggestive of a different author.

To study conscious style, this paper examines specific syntactical constructions and phrasings in Tibullus (Books 1-2), Sulpicia, and the *auctor*. The analysis supports the established view (Lowe 1988) that Sulpicia's poems display unusually complex syntax compared to Tibullus. It further identifies several grammatical patterns that are constructed differently in Tibullus, Sulpicia, and the *auctor*.

Meanwhile, to study unconscious hints of authorship, this paper borrows a concept from stylometry: the study of most-common words in texts as a marker of authorship (Kestemont 2016). Analysis of the results from a Python program created for this task suggest that Sulpicia's dominant vocabulary diverged significantly from Tibullus and the *auctor*, while the *auctor*'s vocabulary differed minimally from Tibullus. These findings suggest that the poems traditionally attributed to Sulpicia reflect both conscious and unconscious patterns distinct from Tibullus, furthering the likelihood of female authorship in Roman elegy.

I will create a three-paneled poster for this research. On the left panel, I will contextualize, while the middle panel will be devoted to the methods and findings. On the right panel, I will summarize conclusions and discuss further research.

Abridged Works Referenced

Kestemont, Mike, et al. "Authenticating the Writings of Julius Caesar." *Expert Systems with Applications*, vol. 63, 2016, pp. 86–96.

Lowe, N. J. "Sulpicia's Syntax." *The Classical Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 1, 1988, pp. 193–205.
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Skoie, Mathilde. *Reading Sulpicia: Commentaries, 1475–1990*. Oxford University Press, 2002.