Notice of the Final Oral Examination for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

NOVELLA NICCHITTA

BA (University of Victoria, 2018)

“Suppose it’s Sulpicia: A reading of the Corpus Sulpicianum”

Department of Greek and Roman Studies

Tuesday, January 12, 2021
2:30 P.M.
Conducted Remotely

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Cedric Littlewood, Department of Greek and Roman Studies, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Laurel Bowman, Department of Greek and Roman Studies, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Hélène Cazes, Department of French, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Fraser Hof, Department of Chemistry, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
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.