In poem 3.13 Sulpicia urges those who have no love of their own to tell of her joys (*mea gaudia narret, / dicetur si quis non habuisse sua*, 5–6). Although in the following lines she is slightly more careful, not entrusting anything to tablets (*non ego signatis quicquam mandare tabellis, / . . . velim*, 7–8), many have taken this urge literally: poets and scholars have told Sulpicia’s love from the very first moment—possibly starting already with the so-called Amicus-poet within the *Corpus Tibullianum* itself (poems 3.8–12).¹ In this essay I want to look closer at some of these narratives or, more precisely, at three translations of the poems concerning Sulpicia, and I want to look at them specifically as narratives. My approach is based on the basic premise not only that narrative structures form texts and authors, but also that they form readers and their poetic competence. Narratology and reception theory may be seen as able to meet in the notion of the implied reader,² but lately, the cognitive/contextual turn in narratology has provided further common ground.³ Finally, it may be argued that translations hold a double position both as readings of other texts (part of their reception) and

¹ Hinds (1987a), 46 makes the suggestion that the amicus could be a “reader who picks up and embroiders the poems.”

² Although Darby (2001) argues that the only place a negotiation between textual and contextual worlds can take place is in the concept of the implied author (829), he later on shows how the structuralist-narratologist paradigm could import ideas from reception theorists such as Iser. What is incorporated is, not unsurprisingly, theorizing on reading and the implied reader (837–38). On the interaction between the text’s structure and its reader, see Iser (1980).

³ For an overview of the cognitive turn, see Ibisch (1990) and Fludernik (2005), 48–51. For the contextualization of narratology in the form of ideological criticism, see Darby (2001) on feminist narratology.
texts in their own right, and, therefore, solicit analyses informed by both reception studies and more text-internal approaches. The following analysis is supposed to form an empirical argument for the usefulness of narratological tools when looking at reception. Micaela Janan argues in the case of Catullus that “the text solicits the reader’s desire for narrative closure and completeness.” The poems concerning Sulpicia in the third book of the Corpus Tibullianum (3.8–18)—hereafter called the Sulpician poems—lack an obvious chronology, but by their recurring names and themes they create a desire in the reader for a logical narrative. Accordingly, editions, commentaries and translations of these poems frequently rearrange them in a narrative sequence. However, why stop with the rearrangement of events? The text does not only solicit narrative closure and completeness, it demands a full narrative response pertaining to the narrative voice (who is speaking?), the narrative situation (in particular the question of narratee), and the tense (in particular duration).

The Sulpician poems are narrated from different perspectives (an external narrator, Sulpicia, and perhaps Cerinthus) and have been attributed to several different authors, the most popular idea being that we are dealing with two sets of poems; the so-called Amicus-poems 3.8–12, and Sulpicia’s own poems 3.13–18. Ideas of authorship have already been recognized as crucial to the reception of these poems, e.g., the treatment of the sexually explicit poem 3.13 has depended much upon whether it was written by a male poet or by Sulpicia herself. A male poetic mimesis of a female voice has proved more palatable to scholars than an explicit female. Yet, it is not only a question of who writes, but also who speaks and the narrative situation itself which is important to the reception of these poems. On this text-internal or narrative level, commentaries and translations of the poems show much variation—often indicated in the titles they give the different poems.

5. The Corpus Tibullianum is sometimes divided into three books and sometimes four. In this essay I follow the OCT and stick to the three-book division. In quotations from works which have other numbering systems, e.g., Smith (1913), I will give the three-book division numbers in brackets.
6. See, e.g., the most recent editions of OCT and Loeb. Lately, however, this communis opinio has been contested. Parker (1994) argues that 3.9 and 3.11 might also be by Sulpicia; Holzberg (1998–99) argues that all the poems in the third book are a second-century forgery; Hallett (2002) argues that all of the Sulpician poems, i.e., 3.8–3.18, are by Sulpicia herself, while Hubbard (2004/5) suggests that all of the Sulpician poems might rather be regarded as small presents in the fescennine tradition. The Amicus-poems are also sometimes called “The Garland of Sulpicia.”
7. For an analysis of the reception of poems 3.13–18 see my discussion of commentaries from 1475–1990, Skoie (2002), where I provide more relevant historical context than there is room for here. In this article the scope is broadened to encompass poems 3.8 to 3.12 as well. Furthermore, the main emphasis is on translations rather than commentaries. For a reading of commentaries with particular emphasis on narrativity, see Skoie (2008).
In relation to the morality of the Sulpician poems an important issue has been linked to the narrative situation: is Sulpicia soliloquizing or is she actually addressing someone in poem 3.13? While a soliloquy or diary entry can be viewed as youthful exaggeration or wishful thinking, the idea of an addressee or intradiegetic narratee has seemed to make the poem more morally questionable.\(^8\) Likewise, the timespan or duration is also an important factor in the construction of Sulpicia’s morality. How long did she wait before she gave in? This can be solved on the story-level through the ordering of events—creating a decent timespan and placing the surrender-poem 3.13 at the end.

In the present essay I shall look at three of the earliest translations of poems 3.8–18: James M. D. Grainger, *A Poetical Translation of the Elegies of Tibullus, and the Poems of Sulpicia* (London, 1759), Frederik Høegh-Guldberg, *Tibulls Elegier* (Copenhagen, 1803), and Johann Heinrich Voss, *Albius Tibullus und Lygdamus* (Tübingen, 1810). These three translations show a great narrative variety. The aim of the analysis is to point out how the different narrative elements are important keys to the overall interpretation of these translations, and, in particular, how narrative strategies are crucial when looking at the ways in which the translations deal with morality.

1. The Narrative Urge: Poems 3.8–18 as Fragments of a Love Story

Throughout history the Sulpician poems have been the subject of numerous different interpretations and judgments. The poems’ ambivalent status as poetry, the uncertainties surrounding authorship, and the female intrusion in a male-dominated world of Roman elegy make them perhaps particularly interesting as a showcase for some of the processes involved in the reception of Roman poetry. Due to their transmission in the *Corpus Tibullianum* the Sulpician poems have been duly edited and commented on alongside Tibullus since the *editio princeps* in 1472. Likewise, translations of the Sulpician poems have appeared in translations of Tibullus from the early eighteenth century onwards.\(^9\) Doubt as to their Tibullan authorship started emerging in the eighteenth century, yet it was not until the nineteenth century that the attribution to Sulpicia herself and an interested third party became the norm.\(^10\) Yet, despite debates about authorship and different treatments of

---

\(^8\) Dissen (1835) and Gruppe (1838).

\(^9\) The first translations of single poems appear towards the end of the sixteenth century while the collection as a whole starts getting translated in the early eighteenth century.

\(^10\) The father of the division is Gruppe (1838)—although with one important difference: He
the representational status of the poems (their literary and fictional versus factual and sincere status), there is one clear tendency that runs throughout the reception of the Sulpician poems: it is full of references to reading the poems as some kind of narrative.

The poems were recognized as a somehow connected group already by Scaliger (1577) and have since even been published as a separate entity. However, the poems have not only been seen as a connected group, commentators and translators have compared them to narrative genres, primarily the modern novel. The following paragraph from the introduction to Kirby Flower Smith’s 1913 commentary on the Corpus Tibullianum, although more explicit than usual, is quite representative:

The next eleven elegies (4.2–12 [3.8–18]) . . . are by far the best and most interesting in the entire collection. They tell us the charming story of the two young lovers, Sulpicia the ward and probably the niece of Messalla himself, and the young man whom she calls “Cerinthus.” The elegies in question are our only documents in the case. . . . [T]hey fall into two groups, 4.2–6 [3.8–12] and 4.7–12 [3.13–18], the first by some sympathetic poet and friend, the second by the heroine herself. Each is to a certain extent an independent version of the same story, but the relation of the two is such that both are needed to complete this romantic chapter in the history of Messalla’s own household.

To Smith, the poems are particularly interesting because they tell a “charming story” and the poems are to be regarded as “documents” in the case. Furthermore, the story makes up a “romantic chapter.” It is as if the reader is to think about the poems in terms of a fragmented novel. Indeed, a couple of pages later, Smith describes Sulpicia’s last distich in poem 3.18 as material for at least a chapter in a modern psychological novel. Accordingly, the elegiac lover is turned into the heroine of just such a novel. As mentioned, Smith is not the only one to make such a connection. A century earlier, two of the translators I am going to look at in more detail below, the German translator Johan Heinrich Voss and the Danish translator Frederik Høegh-

attributes poem 3.13 to the Amicus-poems, not to Sulpicia.

11. E.g., Michaelis (1921); Sandre (1922); Heath-Stubbs (2000). It is perhaps worth noticing that the French translation, Sandre (1922), is presented in a numbered luxury version.


13. Smith (1913), 83.

14. More specifically I have argued that an apt parallel is the American girl Daisy Miller, the eponymous heroine of a short story by Henry James. Skoie (2002), 252.
Guldberg, call the cycle a “little novel” (*kleiner Roman/Smaaroman*). Voss argues that Tibullus has written this “little novel” from the real love letters of his friends Sulpicia and Cerinthus. Høegh-Guldberg ends his commentary by claiming that the Sulpician poems constitute “one of the most beautiful little novels Antiquity has left us.”

Yet, the modern novel is not the only narrative form which has acted as an important inspiration for the reading of the Sulpician poems. Throughout the history of their reception the poems have also been called epistles. Thus we easily get a little epistolary novel in verse. Of course, this might be seen as a consequence of giving the poems titles referring to their addressees, but it is quite striking how the most extant labeling of the poems as epistles appeared in Voss’s German translation of the poems just after the heyday of the epistolary novel. The epistolary genre may also seem to offer particularly appropriate grounds for comparison due to the many female heroines and actual female authors. Another related narrative genre is the diary. Kirby Flower Smith suggests that poem 3.13 may be read as a diary entry. The diary is yet another genre conventionally connected to women’s writing—as well as another form of first-person narrative.

The important point is to recognize these pronounced parallels to narrative genres as manifestations of a general narrative urge in the reading of these poems. In the following analysis of translations of the Sulpician poems I shall accordingly treat these new texts as narratives in the Genettian sense, i.e., as narrative signifiers. These new narratives then relate to different stories, that is, the signified or narrative content. The stories are versions of the development of the affair which can be reconstructed from the new narrative, but they are often further clarified in the translator’s notes.

The most obvious consequence of the narrative urge is an attention to the action or development of the affair, and this takes place primarily on the story level. For this I will use the un-Genettian terms *plot* and *emplotment*. By this I want to indicate a dynamic concept pertaining precisely to

---

15. Voss (1810), xxx; Høegh-Guldberg (1803), part II, 188.
16. Høegh-Guldberg (1803), part II, 188.
17. See Heyne (1755) and Voss (1810).
19. Smith (1913), 504.
20. While the translations dealt with here offer the best possible correspondence between the story and the narrative, narrativizing commentaries on Sulpicia may be seen as producing new competing narratives based on the story they extract from the original text; see Skoie (2008).
this causality or logic which works as a driving force in the text and for the reader. The poems as transmitted to us do not offer an obvious plot, neither chronologically nor causally. Poem 3.8, the first poem in the Amicus-cycle, is a homage to Sulpicia on the unlikely elegiac festival of *matronalicia*; 3.9 utters concern for Cerinthus who is on a boar hunt; in poem 3.10 Sulpicia is ill; 3.11 celebrates Cerinthus’ birthday; and 3.12 Sulpicia’s birthday. When moving on to what is usually considered Sulpicia’s own poems, the first poem, 3.13, is about the happy consummation of the love between Sulpicia and her beloved; the next two poems, 3.14 and 3.15, are about a trip to the country and its happy cancellation on the occasion of a birthday and concern a possible separation of the two. Poem 3.16 ironically suggests infidelity from the beloved; in 3.17 Sulpicia is ill; and the final poem, 3.18, is Sulpicia’s apology for having left her beloved the night before in order to hide her passion. Here we have bits and pieces of a love plot, but we lack an obvious narrative sequence apart from 3.14 and 3.15, the proposed trip and its cancellation. There are, however, certain recurring themes and correspondences, such as birthdays and Sulpicia’s illness. In addition to these eleven poems some scholars have wanted to identify Cerinthus with the metrically identical Cornutus mentioned in Tibullus 2.2 and 2.3, thus offering further fragments of the affair.

Most editions and commentaries print the poems in the transmitted order. Yet, they do not abstain from rearranging and emplotting the poems in their commentaries. Arguing that the present arrangement is editorial and based on variety, they construct a new continuous narrative in the commentary. This new narrative is reconstructed from the clues found in the poems. This, as it were, gives us two narratives of the same story—the poems and the commentary. When turning to translations, however, many

21. The attentive reader will have noticed an allusion to Peter Brooks’s (1992) psychoanalytic study *Reading for the Plot* in my subheading. Although not endorsing the full range of his concept of plot, I find his emphasis on the plot as a drive for the reader important. As such, plot is also an important meeting point for theories of reading and theories of narrative. In the following I also use the term “emplotting,” by which I mean the active process of ordering the events in a plot. I find this particularly apt for translations and commentaries as this is a term also used in historiography; cf., e.g., White (1978).

22. A move made in Voss’s translation (1810); see below. The connection has been recently supported in Stevenson (2005), 37–38. Some even print Cerinthus for Cornutus in 2.2 and 2.3; see, e.g., Cyllenus’ 1475 commentary and Gruppe (1838).

23. The only exception I have seen is Gruppe (1838), but one might argue that this is not an edition or a commentary proper, even though it gives a text and structures the argument as a line-by-line commentary (without lemmata). Yet, I have chosen to treat his work as a commentary. In his edition of the text, poem 3.13 is placed as the last of the Amicus-poems, then he prints Tibullus 2.2 before 3.14–18, which he attributes to Sulpicia.

24. For an analysis of the emplotting commentaries, see Skoie (2008).
of these also change the order on the textual or narrative level, thus making a narrative order in textual time as well as in the story, leaving us with only one narrative—the new narrative of the translation.25

A common feature in the emplotting of the Sulpician poems—whether on the text or commentary-level—is the concern not only for narrative closure, but moral closure as well. As the German scholar Otto Friedrich Gruppe notes, the poems contain material for a “histoire scandaleuse.”26 The main problem is the sexually explicit poem 3.13. In this poem Sulpicia rejoices in having “been with” her man and wants people to tell about this—although her own telling is rather convoluted.27 This poem is therefore often regarded as the culmination of the affair.28 It seems more satisfactory to scholars and poets that the sexual intercourse comes at the end and after some time. She yielded, but not at once! Thus most of the editions or translations which change the order of the poems place this at the end. But this is not the only solution or change made to the order.

2. Reading for the Plot I: Grainger 1758

The English translation by the Scottish writer and surgeon James Grainger from 1758 but reprinted well into the twentieth century is typical of an emplotted translation.29 He discusses different theories of authorship in his preface, but ends up printing all the Sulpician poems, i.e., 3.8–18, as well as the unattributed rumor-poem 3.20, as a separate fourth book under the heading “The Poems of Sulpicia.”30 His order of the poems is as follows:

---

25. When also equipped with commentaries, this is part of the same narrative as the text and not a completely different narrative, as in the commentaries that do not change the order.


27. On this, see, e.g., Lowe (1988) and Flaschenriem (1999).

28. A typical example is Currie (1983), 1760: “The arrangement of the pieces is editorial, seemingly based on the usual plan of variety and importance, without regard to chronological sequence. Poem 4.7 [3.13], which introduces the series, in reality marks the culmination of the affair, having ostensibly been written after the consummation of her love (for she is in a very ecstatic mood)” (emphasis added).

29. On general aspects of Grainger’s translation and further references to Grainger’s life, see Gilmore (1999).

30. Grainger concludes his speculation on authorship as follows: “The reader must determine for himself. But if the translator might be permitted to pronounce on the subject, he would say, that if any weight might be laid on difference of style, and especially on thought, the following poems cannot be the work of Tibullus—but whether Martial’s Sulpicia or who else wrote them, is not in his power to determine. But as Sulpicia is the only person to whom the critics attribute them, the translator, not knowing anyone else, who can show a preferable claim, has retained her name on the title page.” (182).
3.8; 3.9; 3.10; 3.11; 3.12; 3.14; 3.15; 3.16; 3.18, 3.20; and—finally—3.13. One of Grainger’s principles of ordering seems to be grouping similar events together. He basically follows the order of the Amicus-poems, but supplies the relevant poems from the Sulpicia-group, i.e., after the illness poem (3.10) he adds what he regards as a corresponding illness poem in the Sulpicia-cycle (3.17). Likewise he makes the birthday poems (3.14 and 15) follow the corresponding Amicus-birthday-poem 3.12 and, finally, moves poem 3.13 to the end.

This gives the following narrative order: First, a presentation of the heroine (3.8), followed by a declaration of love to Cerinthus who is out on a boar hunt (3.9). Then sudden illness involving a further declaration of love from Sulpicia (3.10 and 3.17), followed by Cerinthus’ and Sulpicia’s birthdays (3.11–15)—the birthday in 3.12 is to be held in the country, thus entailing a separation of the lovers, but is fortunately canceled (in Grainger’s version a decision taken by Sulpicia herself). So far, the reader has been presented with an increasing degree of involvement and passionate declarations, but then we are presented with an unfaithful Cerinthus (3.17), followed by a repenting shy Sulpicia (3.18). However, rumor now has it she has been unfaithful too, but this rumor is told to shut up (3.20). The final poem (3.13) also pays attention to rumor, but this time wants to set it right, in Grainger’s words: “Know, with a youth of worth the night I spent, / And cannot, cannot, for my soul repent.” The basic plot is a love story of gradual intensification with obstacles (illness, hiding of love, and unfaithfulness) before a final culmination and happy ending.

Grainger on the one hand does not hide the sexual implications of 3.13, but on the other hand he makes clear that all would not necessarily approve. In his general manner of expanding the Latin in his English version he translates these ten lines of Latin elegiacs into fourteen English iambic pentameter lines as follows:

Tandem venit amor, qualem texisse pudori
quam nudasse alicui sit mihi fama magis.
exorata meis illum Cytherea Camenis
attulit in nostrum depositique sinum.
exsolvit promissa Venus: mea gaudia narret,
dicetur si quis non habuisse sua.
non ego signatis quicquam mandare tabellis,
ne legat id nemo quam meus ante, velim,
sed peccasse iuvat, vultus componere famae
taedet: cum digno digna fuisse ferar. 10

Let other maids, whose eyes less prosperous prove,
Publish my weakness, and condemn my love,
Exult, my heart! At last the Queen of joy,
Won by the music of votary’s strain,
Leads to the couch of bliss herself the boy,
And bids enjoyment thrill in every vein:
Last night entrance’d in ecstasy we lay,
And chid the quick, too quick return of day!
But stop my hand! beware what lose you scrawl,
Lest into curious hands the billett fall.
No—the remembrance charms!—begone, grimace!
Matrons! be yours formality of face.
Know, with a youth of worth, the night I spent,
And cannot, cannot, for my soul repent!

The repetitions and exclamation marks are typical of Grainger’s style. The reader who compares this with the original immediately notices how the sexual intercourse is made more explicit already in verses 5–7. In the Latin the boy is brought into Sulpicia’s sinum and only in the final line do we learn that she has “been with” her man (cum digno digna fuisse). At the same time the outsider-perspective (the unspecified quis non habuisse sua) is not simply telling Sulpicia’s joys, but publishing her weakness and condemning her (vv. 2–3). Likewise he introduces matrons as an opposition to Sulpicia in verse 12. In this way Grainger can recount Sulpicia’s joys while at the same time offering another perspective on it. Quite a neat strategy!

The other strategy is, as pointed out, to place this poem as the final one. The surrender comes after a longish story with several obstacles. And it is sanctioned by “the Queen of joy” who has given in after her “music of votary’s strain” (meis Camenis)—easily taken to be the preceding nine poems (even the same number as the Muses!). Thus we have a happy ending with an awareness of its own immorality.

3. Reading for the Plot II: Høegh-Guldberg (1803)

Although 3.13 as an end is the most usual emplotting of the poems, this is not the only way to arrange the story. The Danish translator Frederik
Høegh-Guldberg even offers his readers an unhappy ending!\textsuperscript{32} Filling in with extensive prefatory comments to each poem, he weaves the poems into a neat entity. This seems to him necessary, not least because he assumes that we lack many poems which the couple wrote to each other in the initial phases of the relationship (158). Like Grainger, Høegh-Guldberg groups all the poems in a separate fourth book and reads them as written by four parties: Sulpicia, Cerinthus, Tibullus, and an anonymous author. Cerinthus and Sulpicia are writing most of the poems in the cycle and Tibullus and the anonymous author are friends of them both.

Høegh-Guldberg’s order of the poems is as follows: 2.2; 3.19; 3.13; 3.9; 3.8; 3.12; 3.17; 3.10; 3.9; 3.14; 3.15; 3.20; 3.16. This is a much more radical change of the transmitted order than Grainger offers. The only feature the two translations share is the linking of the two small birthday poems, 3.14 and 3.15. Høegh-Guldberg’s own explanation for his order is that he wanted to keep the poems by Tibullus together (2.2 and 3.19) and then that he wanted Sulpicia’s and Cerinthus’ poems to make one continuous chain.\textsuperscript{33} Høegh-Guldberg opens the cycle with a birthday poem to Cerinthus (2.2).\textsuperscript{34} Although this is placed first for reasons of authorship, it does make perfect sense as an introduction to the following poems. With this ordering he starts his fourth book with a poem which he reads not only as Tibullus’ congratulation on Cerinthus’ birthday, but also as an expression of Cerinthus’ unarticulated wish for a faithful bride. Yet, the wish for true or faithful love (v. 10) may also be seen as an awareness or a premonition of the opposite alternative, unfaithful love—particularly as Høegh-Guldberg ends the cycle with the poems about unfaithfulness (3.20 and 3.16). Poem 3.20 he reads as Cerinthus’ discrete warning to Sulpicia about rumours of her infidelity.\textsuperscript{35} He then reads 3.16, the very last poem in his version, as an accusation and final dismissal of Cerinthus which he explains as follows in his commentary:

Han har altså sin Afsked, og med vemodig Deeltagelse for begge disse Elskende, der i en sædeligere Tidsalder vilde have været skabte til hinandens

\textsuperscript{32} On Høegh-Guldberg, see Erslew (1962) and Hansen (1892).

\textsuperscript{33} “Desuden har jeg i fjerde Bog søgt samle de Digte, der med Vished ere Tibulls, for sig på eet Sted, og tillige at knytte Sulpicias og Cerinths Digte, saavidt muligt, sammen i een forenet Kjæde” (part II, 7). Høegh-Guldberg also changes the order of the first books of Tibullus. There he explains that he realized that if he printed the poems in the order in which, according to their contents, they were presumably written, he would avoid repetition in his comments (part I, 12–13).

\textsuperscript{34} For 2.2 as moral closure, see Gruppe (1838), 61–62.

\textsuperscript{35} “Cerinthus suspects that his girl might show a greater love/affection for someone else than for him. He wants to warn her of this, but in the least painful way . . .” (Cerinth har sin Pige mistænkt for at hun maaske viser en anden større Kjerlighed end ham. Han vil advare hende derom, men saa lidt stødende mulig . . . ) (Part II, 186).
Lykke, see vi her Enden paa en af de nydeligste Smaeromaner, Oldtiden har efterladt.

So he is dismissed, and with wistful concern for both these lovers, who in a more moral age would have been made for each other’s happiness, we here see the end of one of the most beautiful little novels Antiquity has left us. Part II, p. 188.

In Høegh-Guldberg’s rich Germanizing prose, which is hard to render in English, this is not only the end of the affair, but this sad ending is primarily caused by the low moral standards of the age.36 This low moral standard must be read as a reference to the unfaithfulness referred to precisely in poems 3.19 and 16, thus making the prayer for faithful love in poem 2.2 particularly pertinent—although unsuccessful.

Within this movement from hope of faithful love to infidelity (perhaps on both sides) and fatal disappointment, Høegh-Guldberg orders the events of the story in a chronological sequence. Apart from the second poem in his collection, 3.19, which he thinks is a lover’s sigh from and for Tibullus himself and therefore does not try to fit in with the rest of the poems, the other poems are neatly linked together through his ample introductions, including temporal markers. The first poem by Sulpicia, the explicit 3.13, is introduced as follows:

Længe, længe have Sulpicia og Cerinth elsket hinanden lønligt, og i Digte, der ere tabt for os, tolket Haab og Ønsker. Det første Kys har forenet dem sammen; og den hæftige Romerinde er idel Lue.

For a long, long time Sulpicia and Cerinthus have loved each other in secret and, in poems now lost to us, expressed hopes and wishes. The first kiss has united them and the excited Roman lady is all fire. Part II, p. 158.

Although poem 3.13 is placed as the first of the Sulpician poems, Høegh-Guldberg is eager to emphasize that this poem is not really an expression of the first stage of the affair. The young couple has been in love for a long time—as suggested by the emphatic repetition in the opening, Længe, længe

---

36. He also exploits the opening couplet for what it is worth in explaining a breakup: “Neither the above declaration from Cerinthus, nor the indifference about her doings which she seems to have found lately suits Sulpicia. She wanted him to be more concerned about her every step, that words and glances worried him” (Ikke ovenstaaende Erklæring av Cerinth, ei heller den Ligegyldighed for hvad hun foretager sig, som hun paa senere Tid synes at finde hos ham, høver Sulpicia. Hun vilde: at han var mere bekymret for et hvert av hendes Skridt, at Ord og Blik ængstede ham) (part II, 187).
(for a long, long time). What is more, Høegh-Guldberg’s Sulpicia gives in only after some time. Thus his plotting does not seem so very far away from Grainger’s after all. Furthermore, the morality of Sulpicia is strengthened as Høegh-Guldberg specifies the actual event (the *amor* which has arrived and what happened when Sulpicia was “with her worthy”) as a kiss (“the first kiss has united them”). This is also emphasized twice in his translation as well as in the commentary part of the introduction to this poem.\(^{37}\)

The rest of the narrative goes as follows: Sulpicia greets Cerinthus on his birthday (3.9), Cerinthus greets Sulpicia on the matronalia (3.8), Sulpicia’s birthday is celebrated by an unknown character? (3.6). Then Sulpicia is ill: she declares her love (3.17) and Cerinthus asserts his concern (3.10). Next Sulpicia misses Cerinthus while he is hunting (3.9); here she is boldly sure of his love. Then—after a year has passed—we have the planned trip to the country on Sulpicia’s birthday (3.14) and its cancellation (3.15).\(^{38}\) The last poem before the two unfaithfulness poems is Sulpicia’s passionate apology for having left Cerinthus (3.18).

Both Grainger and Høegh-Guldberg make explicit what other scholars have done implicitly—that is, reading the Sulpician poems as narratives. It is interesting to note how the different orderings of the poems give completely different plots with quite different implications, though in relation to the morality of 3.13 they unite in rescuing Sulpicia through time.

4. **Narrator, Narratee, and Narrative Situation:**

*Voss 1810*

The treatment of the sexually explicit poem 3.13 has depended much upon whether it has been read as a male fantasy of an ecstatic girl or the explicit fantasy of a Roman *puella* herself.\(^{39}\) Yet, it is not only a question of who writes, but also who speaks, that is, the narrative voicing of the poems. Furthermore, the idea of a specific addressee on the fictional level, which I here choose to call narratee, has been found controversial.\(^{40}\) The tradition of

---

\(^{37}\) Translation: verse 1: Ham har jeg kysset og hvilt i hans favn! (Him I have kissed and dwelled in his arms!). Verse 9: Jeg, var Kysset og Synd, dog jubler og leger ei ærbar. (If the kiss was a sin, I rejoice and don’t play honorable). Commentary: Var der end Synd i det Kys, hun havde givet ham . . . (And if there were sin in the kiss she had given him . . .).

\(^{38}\) By not grouping this poem with the other birthday poems Høegh-Guldberg also creates a longer time span.

\(^{39}\) Significantly Gruppe (1838)—the father of the current division into two groups: Amicus and Sulpicia—places 3.13 in the Amicus-group, i.e., as not written by Sulpicia herself.

\(^{40}\) On this kind of intradiegetic narratee, see Genette’s revisit to the term in Genette (1990),
giving ancient poems small headings indicating either speaker or addressee or both contributes to the exposure of the editor’s choices.\textsuperscript{41}

While Grainger does not specify the speakers, the attentive reader may already have noticed several differences from modern editions in Høegh-Guldberg’s translation. Most significantly, perhaps, Høegh-Guldberg gives Cerinthus a voice (3.8; 3.10; 3.20).\textsuperscript{42} For the reading of the poems within the framework of love elegy, this voicing gives a unique situation; not only do we have a female elegiac ego (unusual enough), but we also have two sides of the same story. The beloved answers back! And the beloved comes with signs of his own love (3.10) and suffering (3.20), as well as a change of the elegiac ego Sulpicia into his own beloved object (3.8). Høegh-Guldberg’s near contemporary Johann Heinrich Voss also gives a voice to Cerinthus, but only within the fiction of Tibullus and only in poem 3.8. Unfortunately this voicing and its implications for the understanding of elegy do not seem to have been picked up in the later reception.

Unlike Grainger and Høegh-Guldberg, Johann Heinrich Voss was a professional classicist.\textsuperscript{43} This might perhaps explain his reluctance to change the transmitted order of the poems. His translations are also, in general, much closer to the Latin text than those of Grainger and Høegh-Guldberg. However, he gives the poems his own numbers and offers the reader quite substantial and imaginative notes (\textit{Anmerkungen}) with a great preponderance for narrativizing. So, he introduces Sulpicia’s mother, and he specifies that the meeting Sulpicia left in 3.18 was a dinner (\textit{Nachtessen}) with Sulpicia’s parents, thus turning the story into a bourgeois idyll.\textsuperscript{44} While Voss argues that the Lygdamus-poems (3.1–6) are not the work of Tibullus, he does not doubt Tibullan authorship of the Sulpician poems. His theory of origin is that these poems are the poets’ “paintings from life.” And the life is that

\begin{itemize}
  \item 130–34. The role of the narratee here is perhaps closest to what Gerald Prince calls a “character-receiver.” Chatman (1978), 253.
  \item 41. In the case of the Sulpician poems, already the \textit{editio princeps}—\textit{Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus et Statius} (Venice: Wendelinus de Spira, 1472)—gives these kinds of headings.
  \item 42. He explains the address to Cerinthus in 3.10.15 as Cerinthus hearing Apollo’s voice in the middle of his own prayer.
  \item 43. He was a prolific translator of both Greek and Latin; his translation of the \textit{Odyssey} (1781) was regarded as particularly successful. He also published a text of Tibullus based on his reading of the manuscripts, \textit{Albius Tibullus und Lygdamus nach Handschriften berichtet} (Heidelberg 1811). However, he was also a poet in his own right. His most famous poem was the bourgeois idyll \textit{Luise} (1795). This is a poem in three parts, respectively, revolving around Luise’s eighteenth birthday, her engagement, and her marriage. It might, therefore, be quite appropriate to read the filling in of circumstances such as family dinners and concerned parents in light of this poem and the bourgeois idyll. On Voss, see Sandys (1967).
  \item 44. Thus more like the alternative narrative given in commentaries.
\end{itemize}
of his friends, Cerinthus and Sulpicia. However, he prints them under the separate heading “Tibulls Episteln” and equips each poem with a sender and addressee.

In Voss’s view, the poems follow the couple from their secret but chaste love to their engagement. In his final comment he gives the complete chain of events in what he calls their natural order (natürliche Zeitfolge) (318–19). Here he argues that poem 3.18 is the first poem in the cycle (the most shy), then follow the birthday poems 3.11 and 3.12, then the ironic and angry 3.16, followed by the illness poems 3.17 and 3.9. Poem 3.13 announces that Sulpicia cannot keep her love to herself anymore. Then follow 3.14 and 15 about the planned trip to the country and its cancellation. On a later trip to the country with the parents and Cerinthus she misses him when he is out hunting and writes poem 3.9. Poem 3.8 then is the final poem and this is a present for Sulpicia, who is now, according to Voss, Cerinthus’ bride. The next birthday as newlywed is celebrated in Tibullus 2.2.

In the German debate over Voss’s translation of the Sulpician poems which followed, it was not his emplotting but his labeling of the poems as epistles which caused heated response. I have argued elsewhere that this may be linked to the possible identification with the epistolary novel and the proximity this would give the poems to a genre where women traditionally could have a say.45 However, I think an important additional reason may be seen when looking at this from a narrative perspective. More specifically, it was the envisioning of an addressee for some of these fictional letters which seemed to provoke the commentators—the explicit intradiegetic narratee.

The two German commentators of the 1830s, Ludolph Dissen and Otto Friedrich Gruppe, both polemicize heavily against Voss in their works.46 They argue against the general letter theory.47 To Dissen and Gruppe it is impossible for some of the poems to be letters—even fictional or poetic ones. Although Gruppe recognizes that poems 3.9 and 3.11 are in the voice of Sulpicia, and poem 3.11 even gives a second-person addressee (v. 1), for him they are not letters, but secret wishes spoken to Sulpicia herself only. Likewise, he finds it utterly appalling that poem 3.13 should be a letter, as it leads to putting the most untender and impossible (das Unzarteste und Unmöglichste) language in the mouth of Sulpicia (p. 37). This had already been suggested by Dissen, who in his introduction to 3.13 explained that

45. Skoie (2002), 199.
46. Dissen (1835), 429–59; Gruppe (1838), 29–38. For these commentaries in general, see Skoie (2002), 162–212.
47. For Gruppe this only concerns the poems in the amicus-group as well as 3.13 (which he places in the Amicus-group). Poems 3.14–18 he himself calls small letters (Briefchen).
Sulpicia in this poem is talking to herself (secum loquitur). This is obviously important to him as he particularly pointed out in his preface that this poem is not to be read as a letter.\footnote{Nec carmen VII. pro epistola haberi potest, ubi secum loquitur Sulpicia laetabunda (Nor is poem VII [3.13] to be read as a letter, as a happy Sulpicia talks to herself). Dissen (1835), 427.}

What is at stake here? Why so much fuss? Dissen and Gruppe both want a chaste Sulpicia, but so does Voss. Gruppe, as mentioned above, even argues that she and Cerinthus did get married in the end. Furthermore, since Voss, as well as Dissen and Gruppe, attributes poem 3.13 to Tibullus, we are dealing with a female narrator mediated through a male author. The problem here is thus found on the narrative level. And on this level, the commentators find it hard to swallow that Sulpicia's love is actually told to someone. As long as her boldness is no more than wishful thinking, her chastity can be rescued. Imagining a specific reader within the fiction hearing or reading this makes the situation less easy to get away from. Thus the question is not so much the content, but the telling—through which the titles of Voss' translations are made into a particular narrative situation, namely, that of a letter-writer and receiver. Dissen explains the esse cum—phrase (v. 10) as sexual, but it is really only the exaggeration of a maiden “in the highest state of girlish ardour” (451). The problem is whether this heat of the moment could last so long that she could put it into a letter and Cerinthus be confronted with it. My guess would be that Dissen did not quite think so. Similarly, the much later American commentator Smith argues that 3.13 reads more like a diary entry than a letter. Here, too, the poem is only to be read by Sulpicia herself. Furthermore, to Smith also this poem appears as “ostensibly written just after the consummation of her love, for she is still in a highly exalted mood. She has yet to be assailed by the afterthoughts inevitable in such an affair.”\footnote{Smith (1913), 504.}

Voss, who sticks closely to the Latin in his translation, solves the problem in another way in his commentary. First, he does not interpret the esse cum phrase as any kind of debauchery (Ausschweifung, 301). In fact, he asks his female readers to forgive earlier commentators for doing so (according to Voss they have only done this in order to make the poem sweeter [holdseliger] [301]). Second, he argues that the very fact that this was an open letter without a seal led to marriage. To manage this he needs to fill in quite a few gaps. According to Voss, therefore, Sulpicia's mother was the first reader of 3.13. Precisely this letter convinced Sulpicia's parents of their daughter’s decisiveness and sincerity (300–301) and made them agree to marriage. However, to all but Voss the explicit narrative situation is problematic, something the
harsh criticism directed against him proves. In the light of the convoluted narration of 3.13, the narrator, Sulpicia herself, might not completely have disagreed with this criticism.

5. *Quis mea gaudia narret: Sulpicia and Narrativity*

The different narrative responses to Sulpicia’s urge to the reader in poem 3.13 reflect a narrative desire both in Sulpicia and her readers. Whether on the level of commentary or text, this narrative urge can be seen in the desire to organize the poems in a chronological sequence as well as in the drive toward closure both on the moral and narrative level. Yet, the responses looked at above also reflect the mixed message inherent in Sulpicia’s own rather convoluted poem about the telling of her love, poem 3.13. In the reception of this poem the narrative situation is not clear-cut, nor is it easy or uncontroversial. And, as seen above, the question has often been whether the translators are dealing with a proper narrative situation or whether they are eavesdroppers to Sulpicia’s lonely soliloquy or illegitimate readers of her diary. A clear instance of how the narrative situation is crucial to the reception of an individual elegy and an elegiac corpus.

Whatever the narrative situation and the different plotting of the narrative, someone has told Sulpicia’s joys. A twentieth-century translator wished that her love “might live through our pleasure long after the last of the Sulpicii has given the last funerary offering to the ancestors.” And so it has. This pleasure is, I would argue, very much a narrative pleasure. Regarding these as narratives, and using narratological tools may therefore enable us to get a better grasp of important aspects of Sulpicia’s reception.

---

50. “... Und so mag denn, lange nachdem der letzte Sulpicier den Ahnen das letzte Totenopfer gespendet, zu unserer Lust ihre Liebe dauern.” Michaelis (1921), 13.