

Proposal for the 13th Conference of the FIEC (Federation Internationale des Associations d'Études Classiques)

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Preferred Panel: Recent Discoveries (#17)

Title of the paper

AE 1928.73 (Epitaph of Petale Sulpicia) and Ovid, *Tristia* 3.7: Gender, Class and Roman Women's Poetry

Outline of the content, maximum 300 words

Our paper will focus on AE 1928,73, an eight-line funerary inscription in elegiac couplets. Dated to the late twenties BCE on linguistic and metrical grounds, it commemorates Petale Sulpicia, a *lectrix*, “female slave who read aloud.” In 1929, a few years after it was first discovered, in the course of excavations in the center of present-day Rome, Jerome Carcopino proposed the Augustan elegist Sulpicia as its author, and indeed as Petale's mistress. The inscription, however, failed to attract scholarly notice for the next seventy-five years, until Jane Stevenson, who also argues for Sulpician authorship, accorded it close attention in her 2005 book, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender and Authority from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*.

Stevenson examined intertextual relationships between the inscription and several of the elegies attributed to Sulpicia. Most notable is [Tibullus] 3. 16, which also features clever word play involving the name Sulpicia. Recent studies by Hallett and Fabre-Serris have explored the inscription's affinities with *A.P.* 7,12 (which pays tribute to the Greek poet Erinna) and with Propertius 4.7 (in which Petale is the name of Cynthia's aged, and mistreated, slavewoman).

In this paper we will look at significant verbal and thematic connections with Ovid, *Tristia* 3.7, written after Ovid's exile in 8 CE to one “Perilla”, a young female poet who is often identified as his stepdaughter. Both the lowly born Petale and the privileged Perilla, for example, are said to have benefited from the blessings of nature (*natura*), art (*ars*), beauty (*forma*) and talent (*ingenium*). We will maintain that the shared literary interests of these two women, who represent strikingly different social backgrounds, may help to explain their similar characterizations; we will contend, too, that Ovid may also be evoking Sulpicia's own words here, as he frequently does elsewhere.