DEATH AND EMOTION: DECEASED DOGS IN GRAECO-ROMAN ANTIQUITY

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Die Furcht vor dem Verlust eines geliebten Tieres ist keine moderne Erfindung. (Wischermann 2014: 113)

The owning of my first dog made me into a conscious sentient person, fiercely possessive, anxiously watchful, and woke in me that long ache of pity for animals, and for all inarticulate beings, which nothing has ever stilled. How I loved that first "Foxy" of mine, how I cherished and yearned over and understood him! And how quickly he relegated all dolls and other inanimate toys to the region of my everlasting indifference! (Edith Wharton, *A Backward Glance. An Autobiography*, New York 1998: 4)

This article examines death narratives about dogs, an animal species which had a special significance for the Greeks and Romans. The analysis starts with one particularly famous animal: Odysseus' dog Argus in Homer's *Odyssey*, a case that may be seen as the archetype of ancient descriptions of an animal's death. This constitutes the basis for the discussion of several other texts: (1) a short passage from Theophrastus' *Characters* on the death of a Maltese dog (*Char.* 21.9), (2) the epitaph for the Maltese dog Taurus (*Anth. Pal.* 7.211), (3) the tombstone for the dog Aeolis (*AE* 1994.0348), (4) the epitaph for the Gallic dog Margarita (*CIL* 6.29896), and (5) the tombstone for the Gallic dog Myia (*CIL* 13.488). The various different death narratives investigated here not only reveal the animals' characteristics and the meaning that they had for their owners, but also shed some interesting light on the owners themselves, in particular on their social status.

Keywords: animal death, epitaphs and funerary texts, dogs, Graeco-Roman antiquity

1. INTRODUCTION

In the ancient world, death was an omnipresent phenomenon.[1] Not only was the mortality of children a great deal higher than nowadays, but the general life expectancy was also much lower, particularly among the lower echelons of society whose members often had to earn a living through hard physical work – sometimes even as slaves who counted as 'objects' among most Greeks and Romans, not as humans. Despite its ubiquity, it is nonetheless appropriate to describe death in the ancient world as a borderline situation. This is not only obvious from numerous death narratives in different literary genres such as ancient epic, tragedy and historiography, but also from countless inscriptions on ancient tombs. At one end of the broad spectrum of inscriptional testimonies, there are very short and unpretentious statements which barely go beyond the names, the professional or social background and sometimes the age of the dead. However, there are also some more elaborate inscriptions (often in verse) which express the need of the surviving family members to add a more personal note to the commemoration of the deceased and thus accentuate their special characteristics.[2]

In addition to death narratives and epitaphs for humans, there is abundant evidence of how the Greeks and the Romans dealt with the death of animals, especially those with whom they had developed a special relationship – either as pets or companions. These documents frequently portray animals as *individuals*, not just as general or 'prototypical' representatives of certain species. Ancient epitaphs on deceased animals usually pay attention to their outward appearance, their character and the particular circumstances of their lives; this also entails that they often have names, which is a relatively rare phenomenon in the ancient world.

Animal epitaphs from the Graeco-Roman world are dedicated to various species. Apart from horses, dogs and birds, there are even funerary texts for pigs, goats, dolphins, cicadas, crickets and others.[3] For reasons of space, I will concentrate on death narratives regarding dogs, an animal species which had a special (if somewhat ambivalent) significance for the Greeks and Romans.[4] I will begin with one particularly famous animal: Odysseus' dog Argus in Homer's *Odyssey*, a case that may be seen as the archetype of ancient descriptions of an animal's death. I will then move on to five other examples: (1) a

[1] See the comprehensive bibliography in Fögen (2015: 48–54). – This is an enlarged and revised version of the paper that I gave at the "3rd Days of Animal Studies", held at the University of Split, Croatia (27–30 October 2021). I am grateful to the organisers, in particular Josip Gu ć, for giving me the opportunity to present my thoughts at this conference, and I would like thank the audience for their questions and comments during the ensuing discussion.

[2] For details, see e.g. Hunter (2022), Esteve-Forriol (1962), Courtney (1995: passim), Wolff (2000) and Fögen (2018: 131–137), with further literature.

[3] See particularly Herrlinger (1930) as well as the shorter overviews in Bodson (2000) and Stevanato (2016). Specifically on dogs, see Garulli (2014), Eliseeva and Andreeva (2021), Autengruber-Thüry (2021: 266–282) and Eliseeva and Andreeva (2023).

[4] For bibliographic references, see Fögen (2017b: 454–455, 461–462).

short passage from Theophrastus' *Characters* on the death of a Maltese dog (*Char.* 21.9), (2) the epitaph for the Maltese dog Taurus (*Anth. Pal.* 7.211), (3) the tombstone for the dog Aeolis (*AE* 1994.0348), (4) the epitaph for the Gallic dog Margarita (*CIL* 6.29896), and (5) the tombstone for the Gallic dog Myia (*CIL* 13.488).

2. THE DOG ARGUS IN HOMER'S *ODYSSEY*

One of the best-known and perhaps most touching scenes in Homer's *Odyssey* is the description of the death of Odysseus' dog Argus after his master's return to the island of Ithaca.[5] However, despite its moving character, it is a very short episode of no more than thirty-eight lines within Book 17. The text mentions that Odysseus had raised the animal, but because of his participation in the Trojan War he did not have the opportunity to use him as a hunting dog, as would have been expected under normal circumstances (*Od.* 17.292–295). Due to his master's absence, Argus is utterly neglected and very weak; nonetheless he recognises Odysseus disguised as a beggar to avoid an immediate confrontation with the suitors who have established themselves at his court. However, the dog's infirmity does not permit him to move towards the hero, who identifies his animal and asks the swineherd Eumaeus why he lies in a pile of dung and is in such bad shape (*Od.* 17.296–304). Eumaeus replies that the dog's state is the result of his master's absence who, as he believes, has died abroad; otherwise, his beauty, strength and speed would be admirable (*Od.* 17.312–323). The character and superior qualities of the dog (outlined in *Od.* 17.313–317) match those of his master: he used to have great speed (ταχυτῆτα), strength (ἀλκήν) and intelligence (καὶ ἴχνεσι γὰρ περιῄδη) – virtues that Odysseus himself demonstrated in a variety of situations. The animal's name, derived from the adjective ἀργός, seems to refer to both the animal's beauty and speed.[6]

The episode concludes with the dog's death: there is a reference to his age of twenty years, but nothing is said of Odysseus' reaction to the loss of his animal. However, it must be added that his disguise would prevent any expression of grief, as it would have immediately betrayed his identity. Nonetheless, the passage makes it sufficiently clear that the hero is indeed touched by his dog's decrepitude and that he hides his tears from

[5] For a fuller treatment of this episode, see Fögen (2017a: 93–98), with detailed references to secondary literature.

[6] On the dog's name, see Mentz (1933: 112): "Natürlich aus ἀργός ‚hell, schimmernd, glänzend, schnell', mit Zurückziehung des Akzentes, wie bei Eigennamen häufig. Ob bei dem HN. die Bedeutung des hellen Glanzes oder der Schnelligkeit vorwiegt, ist nicht leicht zu entscheiden. […] Ich möchte […] behaupten, daß Homer gerade die Doppelbedeutung von ἀργός bei der Wahl des Namens in Auge gehabt hat. Betont doch Odysseus bei der Frage nach dem Namen, der er natürlich kennt, ausdrücklich, des Hundes schönes Aussehen […] und fragt, ob er ἐπὶ εἴδεϊ τῷδε auch ταχύς gewesen sei." See also Jeschonnek (1885: 13–15) and Lilja (1976: 26–28, 33).

Eumaeus (*Od.* 17.304–305).[7] Be that as it may, this expression of feelings should not lead to the assumption that the animal is a lapdog or pet. Homer's verses leave no doubt about the fact that Argus belongs to the category of hunting dogs which were primarily used for practical purposes, and as such, he must have represented a status symbol for his owner – at least when he was still in fine fettle.[8] This certainly does not debar their owners from developing a certain emotional attachment to them, but their central function was defined by the utilitarian concerns of the humans to whom they belonged.

Although the impressive skills and the noble nature of the dog Argus are clearly accentuated in the Homeric scene, the text does not describe Argus' appearance and is limited to a very general classification of the animal as a hunting dog. Instead, the episode fulfils several other narrative functions. Above all, it serves to characterise both the protagonist of the epic poem and his loyal servant Eumaeus, whose praise of the dog's qualities has been compared to a 'funerary' lamentation.[9] Additionally, Odysseus' encounter with Argus is conceived of as a miniature tragedy which appeals to the reader's emotions and even incorporates an established element of ancient drama, the recognition scene (ἀναγνώρισις).[10]

It is certainly easy to contend that Odysseus' dog Argus is a purely fictional animal which is part of a mythical story. While it would be futile to discard such an argument, it may be worth remembering that, unlike many other creatures of the *Odyssey*, Argus is portrayed as a genuine and authentic ('real') dog; his portrayal had a basis in reality and is thus compelling for the reader.[11] That he must have enjoyed a considerable renown in antiquity

[7] See Dumont (2001: 94): "La scène des retrouvailles entre Ulysse et le vieil Argos […] est un chef d'œuvre de profondeur psychologique." See also Most (1991: 145–146): "Die ganze Szene ist mit größter Kunst auf die Erzielung eines Pathos angelegt – äußeres Zeichen dafür ist Odysseus' Träne, die das Ereignis wortlos aber beredt kommentiert und sicherlich eine ähnliche Reaktion beim Zuhörer programmieren soll." As Franco (2003: 48) has pointed out, one of the reasons why Odysseus is moved to tears is that Argus is the first to recognise him: "[…] prima e unica creatura dell'isola a riconoscere l'eroe nonostante il suo travestimento e i lunghi anni di assenza, Argo riesce a commuovere Odisseo fino alle lacrime."

[8] Scrutinising the Argus scene and other passages in Homer, Schneider (2000: 28) concludes that the dog was "ein aristokratisches Statussymbol in der homerischen Gesellschaft […], das den erwachsenen Mann von seinem ersten Auftreten vor seinen Standesgenossen bis ins hohe Alter begleitet." He adds that a similar verdict can be applied to the later literary sources such as the elegies of Solon and Theognis as well as the visual evidence offered by vases of the sixth century B.C. (Schneider 2000: 29) and the sepulchral *stelai* of the archaic period (Schneider 2000: esp. 29–36). But see Kitchell (2004: 177–179).

[9] See Dumont (2001: 95–96): "Eumée […] fait son éloge, chantant ses qualités et sa malchance, comme une lamentation funèbre, durant ses derniers instants."

[10] On recognition in Homer's *Odyssey*, see also Moreau (1997: 61–63), who emphasises the distinctive features of ἀναγνώρισις in the Argus scene: "Pour reconnaître son maître, Argos n'a besoin ni des révélations d'Ulysse, ni de preuves matérielles, ni de recours à la ruse: il lui suffit de son instinct et de son amour indéfectible pour son maître" (Moreau 1997: 62). Further Meijer (2009: 9): "Niemand heeft het er nog over dat alleen de stokoude hond zijn meester na zo lange tijd direct herkende, terwijl zelfs zijn naaste verwanten geen idee hadden wie de bedelaar was. Het tekent de intelligentie en de trouw van de hond." Köhnken (2003: 393) emphasises that the Argus scene is "die einzige ἀναγνώρισις in der Odyssee, in der sich beide Partner sofort und gleichzeitig erkennen: Argos den Odysseus und Odysseus den Argos."

[11] Korhonen and Ruonakoski (2017: 59) speak of "a short CV of a dog" and add that "Argos can be felt, as if a bodily presence."

can be deduced from the fact that he appeared on one of the so-called Campana reliefs and on some sarcophagus reliefs.

3. TWO MALTESE DOGS AND THE DOG AEOLIS

In Graeco-Roman antiquity dogs were frequently commemorated in the form of written texts which had the function of epitaphs. This diagnosis applies especially to the period ranging from the Hellenistic age (third/second centuries B.C.) to late antiquity (fourth/fifth centuries A.D.). Together with horses, dogs belong to the species for which we have extensive burial evidence from across numerous archaeological sites throughout the ancient world.[12] There are multiple reasons behind such burials, e.g. companionship, sacrifice, protection, service, identity or status marking, among other explanations; however, it is clear from the textual evidence and to some extent from the iconography that humans often had special bonds with dogs and horses.

As in the case of inscriptions for deceased humans, epitaphs on deceased animals vary in their content, length and elaborateness. In certain instances, merely the name and origin of the animal are indicated, as is suggested by a passage from Theophrastus' *Characters* which describes the behaviour of the man of petty ambition (μικροφιλότιμος)[13] after the death of his dog (*Char.* 21.9; my translation):

> καὶ κυναρίου δὲ Μελιταίου τελευτήσαντος αὐτῷ μνῆμα ποιῆσαι καὶ στηλίδιον στήσας ἐπιγράψαι "† Κλάδος † Μελιταῖος".
>
> When his Maltese dog dies, he builds it a monument and inscribes on a plaque "Klados of Malta".

While the textual transmission of the dog's actual name is problematic,[14] several things in this passage are sufficiently clear: The deceased animal is commemorated by a tombstone specifically erected for him, and this tombstone indicates both his name and his

[12] See especially Day (1984), who writes: "The practice of dog burial in Greece seems to have sprung up on the Mycenaean mainland, probably in the LH IIIA:1 period, but possibly as early as LH II […]. How the custom originated is unclear, but it does not seem to have been imported from outside the Greek world. Once begun, it spread widely throughout Greece and into Crete" (Day 1984: 31). For further references, see Garulli (2014: 56 n. 80).

[13] See Diggle (2004: 405): "Φιλοτιμία, 'love of honour', 'ambition', is an ambivalent concept: an attitude or activity which may be creditable or discreditable, selfish or public-spirited. […] Theophrastus wrote a work entitled Περὶ φιλοτιμίας (D.L. 5.46, Cic. *Att.* 2.3.4; Fortenbaugh, *Quellen* 110). μικροφιλότιμος/-τιμία are attested only here. […] The Μικροφιλότιμος is ambitious to impress others, and supposes that others are as impressed by the same trivialities as he is himself."

[14] See Diggle (2004: 411–412), who argues that "Κλάδος is not the name of the dog" because its meaning ('branch', 'shoot' or 'twig', esp. of a tree) would be unsuitable for such an animal. The text seems to be corrupt, as signalled by the *cruces desperationis* in the above quotation. For that reason, one can only speculate on the dog's name. But see Jeschonnek (1885: 29): "κλάδος est turio. Nomen igitur ad canis florentem aetatem pertinere videtur, ut Ἥβα, Θάλλων, Ἀνθεύς."

origin or breed. Maltese dogs were among the most expensive in the ancient world and thus had the function of status symbols;[15] wealthy owners who were keen to draw attention to their affluence could easily afford to erect such monuments to honour their costly and exclusive companions. It is obvious that Theophrastus' *Characters* is a work that does not refer to *real* individuals but types, and it may even be read as a satirical text; however, the kind of people described here are, of course, based to some extent on the real world. This implies that Theophrastus' reference to the Maltese dog did have parallels outside the literary sphere.

Apart from short prose texts, we have some actual epitaphs on deceased dogs such as the following poem by the epigrammatist Tymnes who seems to belong to the third or second century B.C. (*Anth. Pal.* 7.211; my translation):[16]

> Τῇδε τὸν ἐκ Μελίτης ἀργὸν κύνα φησὶν ὁ πέτρος
> ἴσχειν, Εὐμήλου πιστότατον φύλακα.
> Ταῦρόν μιν καλέεσκον, ὅτ᾽ ἦν ἔτι· νῦν δὲ τὸ κείνου
> φθέγμα σιωπηραὶ νυκτὸς ἔχουσιν ὁδοί.
>
> The stone says that it holds here the white dog from Malta, Eumelus' most faithful guardian. They called him "Bull", while he was still alive; but now the silent paths of night hold his voice.

This is another example of a Maltese dog. In this case, several pieces of information are provided: apart from his breed (ἐκ Μελίτης), his outward appearance is thematised, or rather the colour of his fur (ἀργὸν).[17] Also indicated are the name of the owner (Εὐμήλου),[18] the dog's responsibility and character (πιστότατον φύλακα), and finally his own name (Ταῦρόν).[19] The final sentence contains a reference to the "silent paths of night" as a metaphor for death, which is combined with an allusion to the dog's inability to bark (τὸ

[15] On Maltese dogs, see Orth (1910: 13), Diggle (2004: 409–410), Bystrický (2015: 21–24), Autengruber-Thüry (2021: 10–18, 41–46), Whiting (2022: 20–24) and Busuttil (1969), who writes: "It was a well-proportioned, flat, long-haired dog with a bushy tail and a sharp nose of the type of the Spitz or Pomerian. We are also informed that it barked in a squeaky voice. These Melitaean toy dogs were very popular in the Greek-speaking world. They were the favourite dogs not only of court-ladies but also of men" (1969: 205). See further Busuttil (1969: 206): "The oldest representation of a Melitaean dog is on an amphora of about 500 B.C. found at Vulci. It shows a young man going for a walk with his pet dog before him. Near the dog there is the word Μελιταῖε. These dogs appear frequently on vases, gravestones, statues, gems, and on coins." See also the following website on Melitaean dogs by Carla Hurt (2013): https://foundinantiquity.com/2013/11/15/the-melitan-miniature-dog/.

[16] Tymnes is the author of altogether seven epigrams contained in the *Anthologia Palatina*. Apart from the above poem, he composed *Anth. Pal.* 6.151, 7.199 (on a deceased bird), 7.433, 7.477, 7.729 and 16.237. For a scholarly commentary on these poems, see Gow and Page (1965: 553–557).

[17] The adjective ἀργός can also mean 'fast' or 'swift', and it has often been translated as such; see Méndez Dosuna (2007: 268), Lilja (1976: 113) and, more generally, n. 6 (above). The question is whether speed is a quality that would really be singled out for a guard dog; it is certainly highly desirable for a hunting dog.

[18] Literally, this name means 'rich in sheep' and is thus very fitting for the owner of a guard dog.

[19] On the name Ταῦρος, see Jeschonnek (1885: 26): "Appellatur 'ἐκ Μελίτης ἀργὸς κύων', catellus igitur est. Itaque nomen non ad magnitudinem vel robur spectat, sed aut ad bovis figuram, aut fortasse ironice dictum est." Similarly Mentz (1933: 420), who adds: "Oder sollte er [sc. the dog's name] sich auf besonders regen Fortpflanzungstrieb beziehen? In diesem Falle wäre er ein Gegenstück zu dem lat. HN. *Castus* […]."

κείνου φθέγμα), a typical quality of a dependable guard dog.[20] The contrast between the times before and after the dog's death is appropriately highlighted through the use of past and present tenses; the imperfect verbs καλέεσκον and ἦν (v. 3) stand in opposition to ἔχουσιν (v. 4), further enhanced by the temporal adverb νῦν and the adversative particle δὲ (v. 3). The tombstone (ὁ πέτρος), mentioned in the very first line, is presented as "speaking" about the animal lying underneath. Τῇδε, placed right at the beginning of the epigram, has a deictic function. These two words encircle the dog (τὸν ἐκ Μελίτης ἀργὸν κύνα) and thus mirror the text directly (φησὶν … ἴσχειν). Although this is a rather short text, the poet skilfully manages to condense a lot of information into this elegant epitaph. It probably does not convey the most emotional expression of grief, but nonetheless shows appropriate reverence towards the cherished deceased animal.

Another example of such short poetic funerary inscriptions is the following distich from Praeneste, written on a tombstone that may be dated to the second century A.D. (*AE* 1994.0348; my translation):[21]

> *Aeolidis tumulum festivae cerne catellae,*
> *quam dolui inmodice raptam mihi praepete fato.*
>
> Behold the tomb of Aeolis, the cheerful little dog,
> whose loss to fleeting fate pained me beyond measure.

The speaker of these two hexametric lines, presumably the dog's owner, directly addresses passers-by who are looking at the tombstone and indicates his emotional state.[22] The attribute *festivus* sums up the character of the bitch Aeolis; the phrase *raptam praepete fato* seemingly refers to her premature and unexpected death – a motif often found in ancient epitaphs.[23] The two verses are both metrically elegant and stylistically refined. The distich is spearheaded by the dog's name and concluded by the reason for her death;[24] it consists of a main clause in the first line, formulated as a command through the use of the imperative *cerne* ('look', 'behold'), and followed by a relative clause which establishes a connection between the deceased animal and the mourning speaker. It can be read as

See also Méndez Dosuna (2007: 268–273), whose suggestion that the dog's name is in fact Ἄργος and that ταῦρόν (to be spelled with a minuscule) refers to its 'roaring sound' or 'howling' is not fully convincing.

[20] The structure is similar to the last two lines of *Anth. Pal.* 7.199 on a deceased bird: σὰ δ᾽ ἤθεα καὶ τὸ σὸν ἠδὺ | πνεῦμα σιωπηραὶ νυκτὸς ἔχουσιν ὁδοί. However, instead of the single word φθέγμα in *Anth. Pal.* 7.211, there is a combination of ἤθεα and πνεῦμα in this poem. Also, the bird is addressed in the second person singular, whereas the dog 'Bull' is referred to in the third person.

[21] See illustrations no. 1 and 2 in the appendix. For a more detailed discussion, see Granino Cecere (1994).

[22] Theoretically, this speaker could be either male or female. There is nothing in this distich that would indicate the speaker's gender; the verb *dolui* and the pronoun *mihi* do not allow for a proper determination.

[23] On the motif of the ἄωρος θάνατος or *mors immatura*, see Ter Vrugt-Lentz (1960).

[24] On the name 'Aeolis', see Granino Cecere (1994: 421 n. 66): "Il nome Aeolis, molto raro anche nell'onomastica personale (vd. H. Solin, Die griechischen Personennamen, Berlin-New York 1982, 566), sembra avere una valenza etnica. Tra gli animali, ed i cani in particolare, l'uso di nomi di carattere etnico era certo diffuso, proprio perché alcune razze apprezzate provenivano da determinate regioni geografiche. Ma nulla sappiamo di una particolare razza proveniente dall'Eolide in Asia Minore." See also Autengruber-Thüry (2021: 110–111).

an appeal to everybody looking at the tombstone to feel sympathy not only for the dog, but also for the speaker and his grief. How deeply the speaker of these verses is affected can be gathered from the sound effects of the second half of line 2 (*raptam mihi praepete fato*): With its dominance of plosives (/p/ and /t/), combined with the repetition of the liquid consonant /r/, it enhances the tragedy of the dog's premature death.

What makes this inscription distinctive is the depiction of an animal on the forefront of the tombstone (right above the text) and the illustration of a jug on the left-hand side. The animal is likely to be a dog, as one might expect from the text of the inscription, but the head of the figure as well as certain other parts of it are somewhat mutilated. Right next to the animal, there is a tripod with at least two small objects on it; perhaps they represent food for the dog, but this is difficult to determine with absolute certainty.

4. THE GALLIC DOG MARGARITA

While the inscription for the dog Aeolis takes the perspective of her human owner, there are also texts on tombstones where the deceased speaks in the first person; this is a phenomenon that can also be observed in inscriptions for deceased humans. One particularly remarkable case is the marble epitaph plaque of the Gallic dog Margarita ('Pearl'), dating back to the second century A.D. and now kept in the British Museum London (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 6.29896 [= *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* 1175, ed. Bücheler]; my translation):[25]

Gallia me genuit, nomen mihi divitis undae
concha dedit, formae nominis aptus honor.
docta per incertas audax discurrere silvas
collibus hirsutas atque agitare feras.
non gravibus vinclis unquam consueta teneri
verbera nec niveo corpore saeva pati.
molli namque sinu domini dominaeque iacebam
et noram in strato lassa cubare toro.
nec plus quam licuit muto canis ore loquebar,
nulli latratus pertimuere meos.
sed iam fata subii partu iactata sinistro
quam nunc sub parvo marmore terra tegit.
Margarita

Gaul brought me forth, and a shell of the rich sea gave me my name, a suitable honour for my beauty. I was taught to run fearlessly through obscure forests and to hunt shaggy wild animals in the mountains. I was never used to being held by heavy chains or to tolerate cruel blows with my white body. For I lay on the soft lap of my master and of

[25] See also illustration no. 3 in the appendix.

> my mistress, and when tired, I was familiar with lying down on the spread bed. And I, the dog, did not speak more with my dumb ('speechless') mouth than was allowed.[26] No one became scared of my barking. But now I have died, tormented by a harmful childbirth; the earth now covers me underneath a small marble stone. – Pearl

With its twelve lines and its elegiac form (dactylic hexameter + pentameter), this is an elaborate example of a tombstone for a female dog. The poem neatly summarises the animal's life, narrated from her own perspective. The short verse biography comprises references to the dog's origin[27] and her name (alluded to in the first two lines and mentioned explicitly at the end in the form of a signature),[28] it briefly describes her outward appearance and her behaviour, it classifies the animal as a trained hunting dog who enjoyed a very free and privileged life at the house of her master and mistress, and it also explains the cause of her death. Goguey (2003: 66) therefore rightly speaks of a genuine funerary praise in a reduced form ("un véritable éloge funèbre en réduction").

Particularly striking are the references to established literary models: The introductory sentence *Gallia me genuit* evokes Vergil's funerary epitaph *Mantua me genuit*,[29] while other lines are reminiscent of passages from elegiac poetry of the Augustan period.[30]

[26] This line is problematic. If one decides to keep the original *et* at the beginning of v. 9, then the meaning may be that the dog communicated in a lively fashion through facial expressions. But it is perhaps better to follow Frings (1998: 94) who replaces *et* with *nec* and translates the sentence as follows: "Nicht mehr als erlaubt sprach ich, die Hündin, mit meinem Mund, dem keine Sprache gegeben war". She explains her decision as follows (Frings 1998: 94 n. 21): "Da Margarita in dem Epigramm ausschließlich positive Eigenschaften zugeschrieben werden, kann der Sinn von V. 9 nur sein, daß sie ihren Besitzern n i c h t durch übermäßiges Bellen lästig wurde; *et* ist als Influenzfehler (s. V. 8) zu erklären. Ein ähnliches Lob findet sich auch auf anderen Grabepigrammen für Hunde: CE 1174,1 (auf einen Karrenhund): *raeda[r]um custos numquam latravit inepte*; CE 1512,5f. (auf einen Schoßhund): *latrares modo, si quis adcubaret | rivalis dominae, licentiosa*; *muto ore loqui* verstehe ich als Umschreibung von *latrare*, die von einer Redensart abgeleitet zu sein scheint. Aus Columella (7,12,1) wissen wir nämlich, daß man den Hund als *mutus custos* (Wächter ohne Fähigkeit zu artikuliertem Ausdruck) bezeichnete."

[27] As one can gather from other sources, Gallic dogs seem to have enjoyed special popularity among the Romans. A passage in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* points to their use as hunting dogs (*Met.* 1.533–534: *ut canis in vacuo leporem cum Gallicus arvo | vidit, et hic praedam pedibus petit, ille salutem*), while one of Martial's *Apophoreta* speaks for their popularity as pets (14.198 on the *catella Gallicana*: *Delicias parvae si vis audire catellae, | narranti brevis est pagina tota mihi*).

[28] The reason for the circumscription of the name in the first two lines is that *Margarita* cannot be accommodated in the metre. The canine name *Margarita* is also attested in Petronius' *Satyrica* (*Sat.* 64.6–10). There it is attached to the *catellam nigram atque indecenter pinguem* that belongs to Croesus, Trimalchio's favourite boy, who is himself very unattractive.

[29] For the whole passage, see Suetonius, *Vita Verg.* 36: *Ossa eius Neapolim translata sunt tumuloque condita qui est via Puteolana intra lapidem secundum, in quo distichon fecit tale: 'Mantua me genuit, Calabri rapuere, tenet nunc | Parthenope; cecini pascua rura duces.'* ("His ashes were taken to Naples and laid to rest on the Via Puteolana less than two miles from the city, in a tomb for which he himself composed this couplet: 'Mantua gave me the light, Calabria slew me; now holds me Parthenope. I have sung shepherds, the country, and wars.'")

[30] Line 4 (*collibus hirsutas atque agitare feras*) has been compared to Propertius, *Carm.* 1.1.12 (*rursus in hirsutas ibat et ille feras*), v. 6 (*verbera nec niveo corpore saeva pati*) to Lygdamus, *Carm.* 3.4.66 (*saevus amor docuit verbera posse pati*), v. 8 (*et noram in strato lassa cubare toro*) to Ovid, *Ars am.* 2.370 (*et timet in vacuo sola cubare toro*), and v. 12 (*quam nunc sub parvo marmore terra tegit*) to Ovid, *Medic.* 8 (*nigra sub imposito marmore terra latet*). On the literary quality of the poem, see also Frings (1998: 93–94): "Der Verfasser des Margarita-Epigramms war sicher kein Dichter vom Range eines Catull oder Ovid. Aber seine

These learned allusions underscore the value that Margarita must have had for her owners who commissioned the inscription on her tombstone and the fact that they wanted to commemorate her in a distinctive and extraordinary way. It is not only the first-person perspective that contributes to her anthropomorphisation, but also the reference to her close contact with her owners and to her unobtrusive communicative skills. She is clearly portrayed as a cherished member of the family whose death is deeply regretted. Specifically, the language and style of the two final verses are rather sublime and would normally be employed in higher literary genres such as tragedy or epic. The lofty tone is used to enhance the tragedy of the animal's demise.[31]

5. THE GALLIC DOG MYIA

Another example of a tombstone for a deceased dog is the case of Myia ('Fly'). It was found in the area of Aquitania, home of the Ausci, during the construction of the railway from Agen to Auch in July 1865 and dates back to the second century A.D. (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 13.488 [= *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* 1512, ed. Bücheler]; my translation):[32]

Quam dulcis fuit ista, quam benigna,
quae cum viveret, in sinu iacebat,
somni conscia semper et cubilis.
o factum male, Myia, quod peristi!
latrares modo, si quis adcubaret
rivalis dominae, licentiosa.
o factum male, Myia, quod peristi!
altum iam tenet insciam sepulcrum,
nec sevire potes nec insilire,
nec blandis mihi morsibus renides.

How sweet she was, how friendly, who, while she lived, used to lie in my lap, always partaking of sleep and of the bed (sc. of her owner). Myia, it is very unfortunate that you have perished! You would bark only if some naughty rival would lie down by your mistress.[33] Myia, it is very unfortunate that you have perished! The deep tomb already holds you, being unaware, and you can neither be fierce nor jump up, nor do you cheerfully smile upon me with alluring bites.

Verse zeigen doch eine gewisse Kunstfertigkeit und Belesenheit in lateinischer Poesie, insbesondere in der Liebeselegie."

[31] For a more detailed analysis of this text, see Stevanato (2016: 46–48) and Fögen (2018: 141–143).

[32] On the discovery of the marble plaque, see Mommsen (1866), who takes the orthography of *sevire* (v. 9) as evidence for its date. See also illustration no. 4 in the appendix.

[33] The word *licentiosa* may be understood as an adjective that is still part of the conditional clause, further defining *rivalis* as an attribute. But it could also be taken as a predicative adjective to be connected with the main clause *latrares modo*; in this case, it would refer to the unrestrained, but still exceptional barking of the dog. Kompatscher Gufler has decided for the second option: "Würdest du doch nur ausgelassen bellen, wenn irgendein Rivale beim Frauchen läge!" (Kompatscher Gufler, Römer and Schreiner 2014: 28).

With its ten lines, the length of this text is appropriate for a tombstone, as in the case of the slightly longer epitaph for Margarita. However, it is written in hendecasyllables, not in elegiac distichs. Furthermore, unlike in the Margarita poem, the speaker in this text is not the dog, but presumably her owner who is likely to be identical with the *domina* mentioned in v. 6.

The first line, formulated as an exclamation full of regret, highlights two of the animal's characteristic features: her sweetness and friendliness. These qualities are to some extent referred to again in the final line where the jolly nature of the dog is illustrated through a phonetic pattern that seems to mirror her character; there is an undeniable predominance of /i/ and /s/ sounds (*nec bland**i**s* *m**i**h**i* *mor**s**ib**u**s* *ren**i**de**s***).[34] The close relationship with her owner is emphasised throughout the poem. The painful loss of the dog is accentuated in the identical fourth and seventh verse (*o factum male, Myia, quod peristi!*), which not only add emphasis and reveal the direct emotional involvement of the speaker, but also structure the text in a very specific way: While the first three lines refer to the past (see esp. the two verbs *fuit* in the perfect tense and *iacebat* in the imperfect tense), the final three describe the present situation (see the present tense verbs *tenet*, *potes* and *renides*). There is also a noticeable change of perspective in the poem: In the first three lines, which function as an introduction, the dog is referred to in the third person. However, from the fourth line onwards, she is directly addressed through the use of the second person singular (see the verbs *peristi*, *latrares*, *potes* and *renides*). The pronoun *ista* in the very first line has a deictic function and points to the dog who is buried there.

In the middle of the poem (v. 5–6),[35] another remarkable quality of the dog becomes apparent: she did not annoy anyone by constant barking, but only yapped when another animal (presumably another dog) tried to snuggle up to her owner.[36] In such cases, her vocal interference was justified and could be interpreted a sign of her loyalty and devotion to her *domina*; at the same time, it was an attempt to scare off the 'rival' and to ascertain her special status in the household. A comparison with a passage in the Margarita poem (*CIL* 6.29896.9–10: *nec plus quam licuit muto canis ore loquebar,* | *nulli latratus pertimuere meos*) shows that barking was apparently perceived as an unpleasant habit of dogs kept in the household and that the restraint of an animal in that regard was seen as a virtue worth being underscored.[37]

[34] See also v. 3: ***s**omn**i** con**s**c**i**a **s**emper et cubil**i****s**.* /i/ sounds similarly abound in the first two lines of the poem, presumably to evoke a blissful and harmonious atmosphere.

[35] Herrlinger (1930: 46) calls these two verses "Symmetrieachse".

[36] Courtney (1995: 409) interprets *rivalis* as "another dog". Walters (1976: 358) assumes that this word refers to a paramour of the dog's female owner: "The poet displays a certain satisfaction that it is now impossible for *Myia* to harrass any of her mistress' lovers." He ultimately argues that the speaker of the poem is "*the poet himself*. Far from lamenting Myia's passing away, he is undoubtedly pleased to be rid of this pest who had interrupted his love-making" (Walters 1976: 359). Such a reading would give the poem a rather different character; one may doubt that such information, tinged with irony or even sarcasm, was appropriate enough to appear on a marble epitaph.

[37] See Frings (1998: 94 n. 21), quoted in n. 26 (above).

The relatively unusual name *Myia* is mentioned twice, but the reason underlying her moniker is not explained or even alluded to in the epitaph. Presumably, it refers to her small size or to her vibrant energy, but it could also be vindicated as a form of humour on the part of the owners as name-givers.[38] Less likely perhaps is the explanation that the dog was called 'Fly' because of her obtrusiveness and bad behaviour.[39] Although it is true that flies were commonly viewed as pesky and irritating,[40] this does not really apply to Myia who is described as *dulcis* and *benigna* in the opening verse; it is only in the final two lines where one may identify references to less desirable forms of comportment, in particular in the verbs *sevire* ('to be fierce') and *insilire* ('to jump up'),[41] but even such a wording does not turn her into a Cerberus. Also, for a dog who was seen as a genuine nuisance, the owner would not have had a tombstone erected.

The epitaph reveals nothing about Myia's outward appearance; it also remains unclear what type of dog she represented. Moreover, there is nothing in the text that would explicitly suggest her being a former hunting dog, although one might be inclined to interpret the verb *sevire* in the penultimate line as a hint at such a career; fierceness, after all, is an important quality in a hunting dog. For the most part, her life seems to have been limited to the domestic sphere where she spent a lot of time sleeping, especially in the company of her *domina*. Apparently, her owner had other dogs as well, but the poem suggests that she enjoyed a privileged rank among them. Given its tone and content, this is a document that exhibits the heartfelt grief of a devastated dog owner who wanted to share her emotions with others through the erection of an appropriate tombstone, being the visible symbol of a happy and fulfilled time spent together.

However, beyond its importance as a document of human-animal relationships in the ancient world, one needs to note the intertextual dimension of the epitaph on Myia. As was already observed by Mommsen (1866), the poem has some similarities to Catullus' two poems on the deceased sparrow (*Carm.* 2 and 3) and is thus part of the literary tradition of dirges. A detailed comparison of the texts was offered by Walters almost fifty years ago (Walters 1976), so there is no need to rehearse his meticulous analysis. However, one may question whether the poem about Myia is really pervaded by irony, as Walters believed. He even went so far as to speak of "the author's uncharitable attitude toward the little dog" (Walters 1976: 358). Those who are prepared to share such views are obliged to explain

[38] See Mentz (1933: 192, 440–442), who speaks of a typical "Schmeichelname" and provides some modern parallels. See also Eliseeva and Andreeva (2023: 342): "The name Myia […] could probably sound humorous and endearing at the same time."

[39] Keller (1913: 447) speaks of Myia as a "verzogenes und wohl auch zudringliches Schoßhündchen […]."

[40] See e.g. Phaedrus, *Fab.* 3.6, esp. 3.6.8: *quapropter aufer frivolam insolentiam*; further *Fab.* 4.25 and 5.3, esp. 5.3.8–10: *sed te, contempti generis animal improbum,* | *quae delectaris bibere humanum sanguinem,* | *optem necare vel maiore incommodo.* See also Mentz (1933: 192), Davies and Kathirithamby (1986: 151–153, 155), Beavis (1988: 222–224) and Kitchell (2014: 69–70), further Fögen (2022a: 92, 102, 104, 105, 106) and Fögen (2022b: 551, 553, 555).

[41] Although the final line (*nec blandis mihi morsibus renides*) refers to bites, they are described as tender and playful. Hence, the sentence is on the whole clearly positive.

why the animal's owner has taken the trouble to have an epicedion composed. Simply to draw attention to an obnoxious animal or even to ridicule it? Given that the production of such a poem and its engraving into stone were not cheap, this would have been a rather eccentric and costly joke.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Ancient Greek and Roman narratives on deceased dogs, whether real or fictional, are an excellent opportunity to accentuate the animals' characteristics and thus commemorate them for future generations. Especially when the texts refer to real dogs, they can be seen as an expression of their owners' gratitude for the interaction that they had with the animals during their lifetimes. The bereavement was a special situation which constituted a decisive and final point of their companionship. It offered humans an opportunity to reflect on what the deceased animals meant to them. In some cases, this resulted in concise miniature biographies which were sufficiently differentiated to present the deceased creatures as genuine individuals, though perhaps to a varying degree. There are also instances where the emotional involvement expressed in the inscriptions for animals closely resembles the praise of deceased humans; consequently, the boundaries between animals and humans are sometimes blurred.

At the same time, the death narratives discussed here are not limited to portrayals of animals. Either explicitly or implicitly, they can also reveal information about their owners and even let them appear in a positive light. Immortalisation through the medium of inscriptions can thus fulfil two functions at the same time: it bestows fame (*gloria*) on animals as well as humans. In certain instances, one may argue that the animal's death narrative would be incomplete without the human. It illustrates the significance of their interactions and their mutual dependency, and it highlights the character and behaviour of both, especially in the case of Odysseus' dog Argus. But there are also instances such as the Gallic dog Margarita in which the dead animal plays a more prominent role and the human owners almost recede into the background.

Among the few species in Graeco-Roman antiquity which are endowed with a personal name are dogs and horses. Such names not only contribute to an individualisation of a certain animal, but sometimes also result in various degrees of anthropomorphisation.[42] The more detailed ancient death narratives on animals are, the more pronounced seems to be the desire to portray their distinctiveness and uniqueness. To some extent, this aspiration is further heightened by the use of names, as in the case of the evidence examined here.

[42] See e.g. Bergien (2015: 188), though her study deals with modern perceptions of animal names.

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Abbreviations

AE: *Année Épigraphique*
Anth. Pal.: *Anthologia Palatina*
Ars amat.: *Ars amatoria*
Att.: *Epistulae ad Atticum*
Carm.: *Carmina*
Char.: *Characters* (Χαρακτῆρες)
Cic.: Cicero
CIL: *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*
CLE: *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* (ed. Franz Bücheler)
D.L.: Diogenes Laertius
Fab.: *Fabulae*
Medic.: *Medicamina faciei femineae*
n.: note
Od.: *Odyssey* (Ὀδύσσεια)
v.: verse
Vita Verg.: *Vita Vergilii*

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Ill. 1: Front of the tombstone of the dog Aeolis, *AE* 1994.0348 (Praeneste, second century A.D.)
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Ill. 2: Front and left part of the tombstone of the dog Aeolis, *AE* 1994.0348 (Praeneste, second century A.D.)
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Ill. 3: Tombstone of the Gallic dog Margarita, *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 6.29896 (= *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* 1175, ed. Bücheler) (second century A.D., British Museum London)
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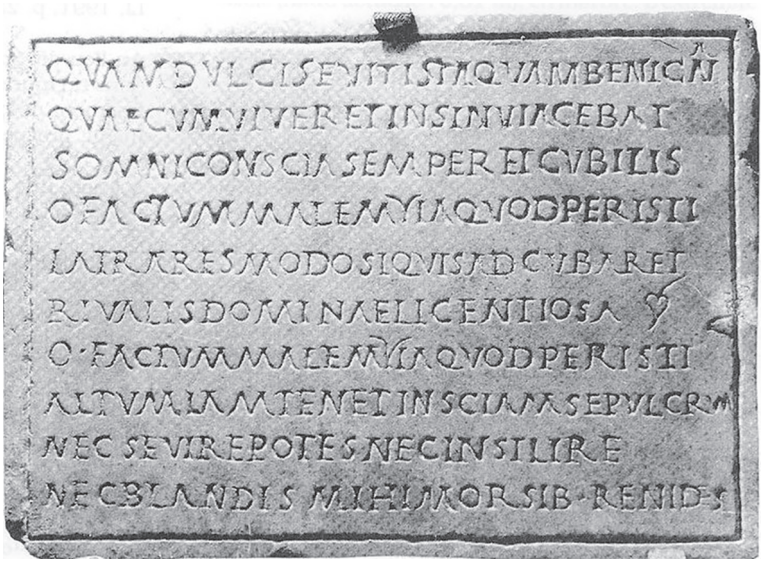

Ill. 4: Tombstone of the dog Myia, *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 13.488 (= *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* 1512, ed. Bücheler) (second century A.D., Musée des Jacobins, Auch)
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SMRT I OSJEĆAJI: UMRLI PSI U GRČKOJ I RIMSKOJ ANTICI

Ovaj se članak bavi narativima o smrti psa, životinje koja je imala posebnu važnost za Grke i Rimljane. Analiza počinje s jednim naročito poznatim psom: Odisejevim Argom u Homerovoj *Odiseji*, koji se može sagledati kao arhetip antičkih opisa smrti životinja. Na tom temelju raspravlja se o nekoliko drugih tekstova: (1) o kratkom odlomku iz Teofrastovih *Karaktera* o smrti malteškog psa (*Char.* 21.9), (2) o epitafu za malteškog psa Taurusa (*Anth. Pal.* 7.211), nadgrobnom spomeniku za psa Aeolisa (*AE* 1994.0348), (4) epitafu za galskog psa Margaritu (*CIL* 6.29896), te (5) nadgrobnom spomeniku za galskog psa Myiu (*CIL* 13.488). Raznoliki i različiti narativi o smrti koje istražujemo ne ukazuju samo na karakteristike tih životinja i njihovu važnost za njihove vlasnike (skrbnike) nego i daju uvid u same vlasnike, a posebice njihov društveni status.

Ključne riječi: smrt životinje, epitafi i pogrebni tekstovi, psi, grčka i rimska antika