

## Homer, *Odyssey* 17.290-327: Argos the Dog, Part 1

ἀγ/ lead	φερειν/ ask	ἀπο/μοργ/ wipe away
ἀγινε/ lead	ἔσ/ be	μῦθο/ ὁ statement, speech
ἀγορευ/ speak	ἔχ/ (σεχ/) have, hold	ἀπο/να/ D use
ἀγρότερο/ wild	ἡμίονο/ ἢ or ὁ mule (from	νέο/ young
αἶγ/ ἢ or ὁ goat	ἡμισυ/ half and ὄνο/	νοε/ perceive
ἄλις in abundance	donkey)	νόσφι away, aloof
ἀλλήλο/ each other	θρεφ/ raise, bring up	οἶχ/ D depart
ἄμφο/ both	θυρά/ ἢ door	ἀπο/οἶχ/ D depart
φάνακτ/ ὁ warlord, king	φιδ/ see	οὔ(α)τ/ τό ear
ἀνέρ/ ὁ man	ἱρό/ holy	οὐρά/ ἢ tail
ἀπόθεστο/ despised (from	καββαλ/ drop down (from	πάροιθε before
ἀπο/ away and θε/ pray)	κατα/ down and βαλ/	πάρος before
ἄσσον nearer	throw)	πολλό/ much
ἄφαρ quickly	κει/ D lie down	πρόκ/ ἢ deer
βοό/ ἢ or ὁ cow, bull, ox	κεφαλά/ ἢ head	προπάροιθε before
δάκρυ/ τό tear	κορπιδ/ spread manure	ῥεῖα easily
δρώ/ ὁ slave	κόπρο/ ἢ excrement	σα/ wag
δυνα/ D able	κύ(ο)ν/ ἢ or ὁ dog	ταλασίφρον/ with an
ἐγγύς near	κυνοραιστά/ ὁ tick	enduring heart
ἐλθ/ come, go	λαγωό/ ὁ rabbit	τέμενο/ ὁ plot of land
ἐνίπλειο/ full (from ἐν/ in	λαθ/ escape notice	χερ/ pour, heap, stew
and πλε/ full)	μέγαλ/ big, large	

ὦς οἱ μὲν τοιαῦτα πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀγόρευον· 290  
 ἂν δὲ κύων κεφαλὴν τε καὶ οὔατα κείμενος ἔσχεν,  
 Ἄργος, Ὀδυσσῆος ταλασίφρονος, ὃν ῥά ποτ' αὐτὸς  
 θρέψε μὲν, οὐδ' ἀπόνητο, πάρος δ' εἰς Ἴλιον ἱρὴν  
 ὄχετο. τὸν δὲ πάροιθεν ἀγίνεσκον νέοι ἄνδρες  
 αἶγας ἐπ' ἀγροτέρας ἠδὲ πρόκας ἠδὲ λαγωούς· 295  
 δὴ τότε κεῖτ' ἀπόθεστος ἀποιχομένοιο ἄνακτος  
 ἐν πολλῇ κόπρῳ, ἣ οἱ προπάροιθε θυράων  
 ἡμιόνων τε βοῶν τε ἄλις κέχυτ', ὄφρ' ἂν ἄγοιεν  
 δμῶες Ὀδυσσῆος τέμενος μέγα κοπρίσσοντες·  
 ἔνθα κύων κεῖτ' Ἄργος ἐνίπλειος κυνοραιστέων. 300  
 δὴ τότε γ', ὡς ἐνόησεν Ὀδυσσέα ἐγγυς ἐόντα,  
 οὐρῆ μὲν ῥ' ὄ γ' ἔσηγε καὶ οὔατα κάββαλεν ἄμφω,  
 ἄσσον δ' οὐκέτ' ἔπειτα δυνήσατο οἷο ἄνακτος  
 ἐλθέμεν· αὐτὰρ ὁ νόσφιν ἰδὼν ἀπομόρξατο δάκρυ,  
 ῥεῖα λαθὼν Εὐμαιον, ἄφαρ δ' ἐρεεῖνετο μύθῳ· 305

## Homer, *Odyssey* 17.290-327: Argos the Dog, Part 2

ἀγλαΐα/ ἡ vanity, show  
φάνακτ/ ὁ warlord, king  
ἄνερ/ ὁ man  
ἀτάρ but  
αὐτως in the same way  
γεν/ D become, be  
δέμασ/ τό body, build,  
frame  
εἶδес/ τό appearance, beauty  
(from ριδ/)

ἔνεκεν because of  
ἔσ/ be  
ἔχ/ (σεχ/) have, hold; be  
θε/ run  
φιδ/ see (know in the  
perfect)  
καλό/ beautiful, noble  
κει/ D lie down  
κομε/ take care of  
κόπρο/ ἡ excrement

κύ(ο)ν/ ἡ or ὁ dog  
μάλα very  
οἶό/ τε ἔσ/ be able  
σάφα clearly  
ταχύ/ fast  
τραπεζεύ/ ὁ a dog who is  
fed from the table

“Εὔμαι’, ἦ μάλα θαῦμα κύων ὄδε κεῖτ’ ἐνὶ κόπρῳ.  
καλὸς μὲν δέμας ἐστίν, ἀτὰρ τόδε γ’ οὐ σάφα οἶδα,  
ἦ δὴ καὶ ταχύς ἔσκε θέειν ἐπὶ εἶδει τῷδε,  
ἦ αὐτως οἶοί τε τραπεζῆης κύνες ἀνδρῶν  
γίνοντ’, ἀγλαΐης δ’ ἔνεκεν κομέουσιν ἄνακτες.” 310



A Molossian dog in the British Museum

## Homer, *Odyssey* 17.290-327: Argos the Dog, Part 3

ἀπο/αἶνυ/ take away	ἐθελ/ want	κακότητ/ ἡ distress, misery
ἀγαυό/ noble	εἰκοστό/ twentieth	κι/ go
ἀκηδέσ/ careless	εἰσ/ἔλθ/ go into, enter	κνώδαλο/ τό wild animal
ἀλκά/ ἡ strength	ἐλ/ take, choose	κομε/ take care of
ἄλλοθι in another place	ἐναῖσιμο/ good (from ἐν/ in and αἴσα/ destiny)	ἐπι/κρατε/ rule over
αἶψα quickly	ἐνιαυτό/ ὁ year	κύ(ο)ν/ ἡ or ὁ dog
ἀπο/ἀμειβ/ answer (from ἀπο/ away and ἀμειβ/ change)	φεπ/ say	λαβ/ take
φάνακτ/ ὁ warlord, king	φεργαδ/ D do, work	λίην very much
ἀνέρ/ ὁ man	φεργο/ τό act, deed, work	κατα/λιπ/ leave behind
ἀρετά/ ἡ virtue	ἐσ/ be	μέλαν/ dark
αὐτίκα straightaway	εὐρύοπα/ ὁ far-sounding	μέγαρο/ τό palace
βα/ go	ἐχ/ (σεχ/ ) have, hold; be	μνηστήρ/ ὁ suitor
βαθύ/ deep	ἦμαρ/ τό day	μοίρα/ ἡ fate
βένθεσ/ τό depth	ἦμισυ/ half	ναιετα/ inhabit, be situated
γυναῖκ/ ἡ woman	θαν/ die	οἶόν like
δέμασ/ τό body, build, frame	θάνατο/ ὁ death	ὀλ/ D perish, be destroyed
δι/ chase, pursue, hunt	θεα/ D see, behold	πάτρα/ ἡ fatherland
δόμο/ ὁ house	φιδ/ see	συνώτα/ ὁ swineherd
δούλιο/ of a slave	περι/φιδ/ know well (in the perfect)	ταχύτητ/ ἡ speed, quickness
δρώ/ ὁ slave	ιθύ/ straight	τῆλε far away
	ἴχνεσ/ τό track, footstep	ὔλα/ ἡ forest, woods
		προσ/φα/ speak to
		φυγ/ flee

τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφησ', Εὐμῆαιε συβῶτα·  
 “καὶ λίην ἀνδρός γε κύων ὄδε τῆλε θανόντος  
 εἰ τοιόσδ' εἶη ἡμὲν δέμας ἠδὲ καὶ ἔργα,  
 οἶόν μιν Τροίηνδε κιῶν κατέλειπεν Ὀδυσσεύς,  
 αἰψὰ κε θηήσαιο ἰδὼν ταχυτήτα καὶ ἀλκὴν. 315  
 οὐ μὲν γάρ τι φύγεσκε βαθείης βένθεσιν ὕλης  
 κνώδαλον, ὅττι δίοιτο· καὶ ἴχνεσι γὰρ περιήδη.  
 νῦν δ' ἔχεται κακότητι, ἄναξ δέ οἱ ἄλλοθι πάτρης  
 ὤλετο, τὸν δὲ γυναῖκες ἀκηδέες οὐ κομέουσι.  
 δμῶες δ', εὖτ' ἂν μηκέτ' ἐπικρατέωσιν ἄνακτες, 320  
 οὐκέτ' ἔπειτ' ἐθέλουσιν ἐναῖσιμα ἐργάζεσθαι·  
 ἦμισυ γάρ τ' ἀρετῆς ἀποαίνυται εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς  
 ἀνέρος, εὖτ' ἂν μιν κατὰ δούλιον ἦμαρ ἔλησιν.”  
 ὣς εἰπὼν εἰσηῆθε δόμους ἐν ναιετάοντας,  
 βῆ δ' ἰθὺς μεγάροιο μετὰ μνηστήρας ἀγαυούς. 325  
 Ἄργον δ' αὖ κατὰ μοῖρ' ἔλαβεν μέλανος θανάτοιο,  
 αὐτίκ' ἰδόντ' Ὀδυσῆα ἐεικοστῶ ἐνιαυτῶ.

## Argos's Afterlife

This episode has received a good deal of attention from readers of the *Odyssey*. In 1709 Alexander Pope wrote the following poem to Argos:

When wise Ulysses, from his native coast  
Long kept by wars, and long by tempests toss'd,  
Arrived at last, poor, old, disguised, alone,  
To all his friends, and ev'n his Queen unknown,  
Changed as he was, with age, and toils, and cares,  
Furrow'd his rev'rend face, and white his hairs,  
In his own palace forc'd to ask his bread,  
Scorn'd by those slaves his former bounty fed,  
Forgot of all his own domestic crew,  
The faithful Dog alone his rightful master knew!

Unfed, unhous'd, neglected, on the clay  
Like an old servant now cashier'd, he lay;  
Touch'd with resentment of ungrateful man,  
And longing to behold his ancient lord again.  
Him when he saw he rose, and crawl'd to meet,  
('Twas all he could) and fawn'd and kiss'd his feet,  
Seiz'd with dumb joy; then falling by his side,  
Own'd his returning lord, look'd up, and died!

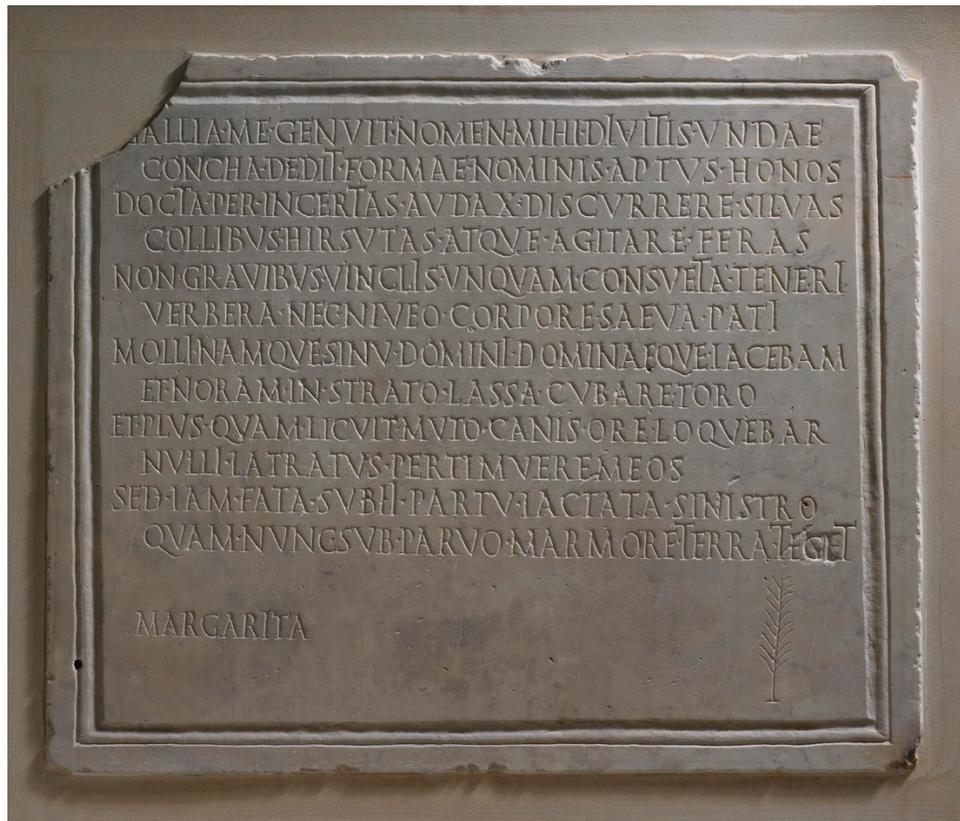
Other readers have been less impressed with Odysseus' reunification with Argos. For instance, in 1897 Samuel Butler wrote (*The Authoress of the Odyssey*, p. 151):

The whole scene between Ulysses and Argus is perhaps the most disappointing in the "Odyssey." If the dog was too old or feeble to come to Ulysses, Ulysses should have gone up to him and hugged him—fleas or no fleas; and Argus should not have been allowed to die till this had been put in evidence. True, Ulysses does wipe away one tear, but he should have broken utterly down—and then to ask Eumæus whether Argus was any use, or whether he was only a show dog—this will not do even as acting. The scene is well conceived but badly executed; it betrays the harder side of the writer's nature, and has little of the pathos which Homer would have infused into it.

More to the point, in an aside while discussing the Greeks' interest in horses, in 1903 John Ruskin wrote (*Modern Painters*, vol.5, p. 258):

They [the Greeks] seem, by the way, hardly to have done justice to the dog. My pleasure in the entire *Odyssey* is diminished because Ulysses gives not a word of kindness or of regret to Argus.

At least one Roman family honored their dog correctly with a funereal epitaph in dactylic hexameter (*CIL* VI 29896 = *CLE* 1175). The dog's name, Margarita, means "pearl":



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*Gallia me genuit, nomen mihi divitis undae  
 concha dedit, formae nominis aptus honos.  
 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.  
 et plus quam licuit muto canis ore loquebar,  
 nulli latratus pertimere meos.  
 sed iam fata subii partu iactata sinistro  
 quam nunc sub parvo marmore terra tegit.*

*Margarita.*

Gaul gave birth to me, a shell of the rich sea gave me my name. The honor of that name is fitting for my beauty. I was taught to roam through unexplored woods courageously and chase shaggy beasts in the hills, unused ever to be restrained by heavy chains or endure cruel lashes on my snow-white body. Instead I used to lie in my owners' soft lap, and I was an expert at lying on the bestrewn blanket when tired. And I could speak more than was normal with the wordless mouth of a dog, and no one feared my barking. But now I have met my fate, fallen while giving birth inauspiciously. Now the earth covers me under this small gravestone of marble. Margarita.

For more, see the [Epitaph of Margarita](#) at the British Museum.

The following modern works of literature were inspired by Argos:

von Arnim, Elizabeth. 1936. *All the Dogs in My Life*. Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

Grenier, R. 2002. *The Difficulty of Being a Dog*. Trans. Alice Kaplan. University of Chicago Press.

Hardy, R. K. 2016. *Argos: The Story of Odysseus as Told by His Loyal Dog*. HarperCollins.

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Dogs in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, Italy