Ono-Mastiffs: Names, Identity, and Virtuosity in Ovid's "Dogalog" of Actaeon's Hounds

This paper explores use of significant naming (*Redendenamen*) in Ovid's catalog of Actaeon's hounds at *Metamorphoses* 3.206-235. While catalogs are a common poetic form in ancient literature, they often go underappreciated by modern readers due to their density and the challenge of engaging with long lists of unfamiliar names. As Christiane Reitz has diplomatically put it, catalogs "are not amongst the most enjoyable parts of ancient epic" (1999, 360). Be that as it may, this paper argues that Ovid's catalog of Actaeon's hounds is far more than a list to be slogged through–it serves as a masterful passage that plays with audience expectations, emphasizes the theme of identity, and primes readers for the stories to come.

The analysis begins by examining the names in epic catalogs and the conventions of Greek naming, building on the work of Stratis Kyriakidis and Nikoletta Kanavou, respectively. It then zooms in on the predominantly-Greek names of Actaeon's hounds. The paper demonstrates that, contrary to most catalogs, Ovid's "dogalog" is both densely composed and full of individuating information, communicated through significant naming and relating to the dogs' appearance, behavior, and ability.

Furthermore, the paper explores the specific onomastic strategies employed by Ovid to give these hounds significant names, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between Ovid's names and other names of Greek and Roman dogs found in the literary and epigraphic records. It argues that Ovid's naming choices encourage readers to see the individuality of each dog within the pack.

Finally, the paper argues that Ovid deploys this strategy of individuation within a larger body to highlight the theme of identity: Actaeon's own identity becomes blurred when he is

transformed into a stag and tries to communicate with his hounds, emphasizing the importance of names and recognition. It offers that doing so in a dense catalog–a songform generally unsuited to individuation–aligns with Ovid's tendencies to display virtuosity specifically by outdoing his predecessors in imagination within their own milieus, as, for example, when dances between the mythological raindrops in the *Heroides*.

In conclusion, this paper demonstrates how Ovid's use of significant naming in the catalog of Actaeon's hounds adds depth to the tale at hand, engages the reader's critical reading skills in a ludic way, and contributes to the overarching theme of identity in *Metamorphoses*, particularly in book 3.

Bibliography

Kanavou, Nikoletta. *Aristophanes' Comedy of Names: A Study of Speaking Names in Aristophanes*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2011.

Kanavou, Nikoletta. *The Names of Homeric Heroes: Problems and Interpretations*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017.

Kyriakidis, Stratis. *Catalogues of Proper Names in Latin Epic Poetry: Lucretius, Virgil, Ovid*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007.

Kyriakidis, Stratis, Frédérique Biville, Francis Cairns, Niklas Holzberg, Andreas Michalopoulos, Helen Peraki-Kyriakidou, Emma Stafford, Javier Uría, and Daniel Vallat. "FROM THE METAMORPHOSES to THE FASTI:." In *What's in a Name?: The Significance of Proper Names in Classical Latin Literature*, by Joan Booth and Robert Maltby, 101-19. N.p.: Classical Press of Wales, 2006. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvvn9pr.10.

Reitz, Christiane. "Zur Funktion des Kataloge in Ovids Metamorphosen." In *Ovid, Werk Und Wirkung: Festgabe Für Michael Von Albrecht Zum 65. Geburtstag*, by Werner Schubert and Michael von Albrecht, 359-72. Frankfurt am Main [etc.]: Peter Lang, 1999.