

A Learned Dog: Roman Elegy and the Epitaph for Margarita

A. Margarita's Epitaph (CIL 6.29896)

Gallia me genuit, nomen mihi divitis undae
concha dedit, formae nominis aptus honos.

docta per incertas audax discurrere silvas
collibus hirsutas atque agitare feras,

5 non gravibus vinclis umquam consueta teneri
verbera nec niveo corpore saeva pati.

molli namque sinu domini dominaeque iacebam
et noram in strato lassa cubare toro

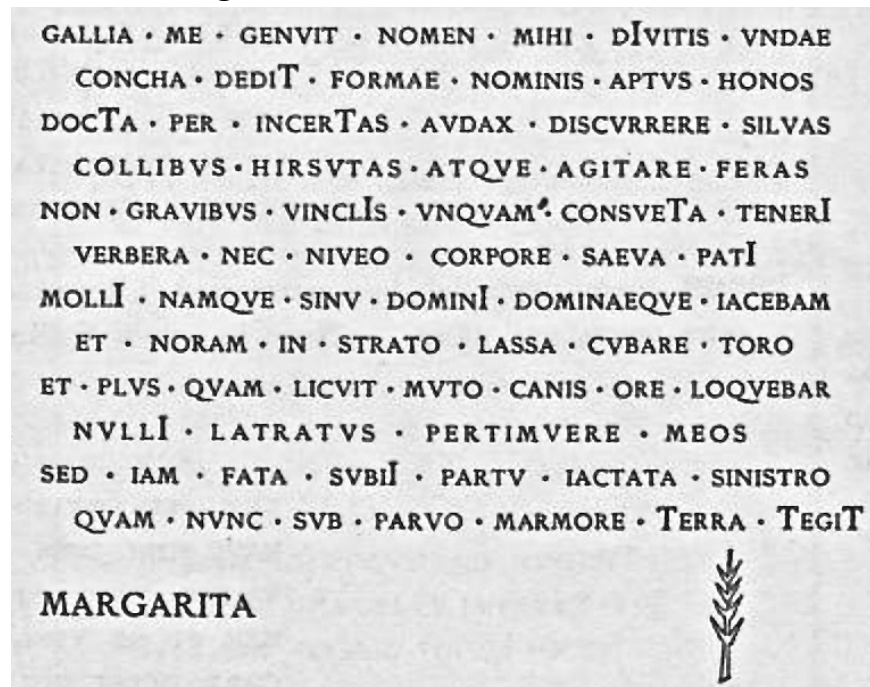
et plus quam licuit muto canis ore loquebar:

10 nulli latratus pertimere meos.

sed iam fata subii partu iactata sinistro,
quam nunc sub parvo marmore terra tegit.¹

Gaul gave me birth, the oyster of the rich sea gave me my name, my precious name matched my prettiness. I was expert in racing boldly through trackless forests and in chasing shaggy wild beasts on the hills, I was never accustomed to being restrained by an oppressive lead nor to enduring cruel blows on my snow-white body. For I used to lie in the loving laps of my owners, husband and wife, and I had worked out how to lie on the made-up bed when I was tired, and with my dumb canine mouth I used to say more than nature permitted; nobody ever feared my barking. But now, distressed by complications in giving birth, I have undergone my destiny; the earth covers me beneath a miniature marble tomb.²

B. Line drawing from CIL 6.29896



¹ CIL 6.29896 was found in July of 1726 in Rome near the Porta Pinciana in the area of the Villa Borghese.

² Translation by E. Courtney, 1995.

C. Similarities in wording: *molli... sinu... dominae*

CIL 6.29896.7: molli namque sinu domini dominaeque iacebam

Tibullus 1.8.29-30: munera ne poscas: det munera canus amator,
ut foveat molli frigida membra sinu.

Ovid *Her.* 13.78: inque pios dominae posse redire sinus

Ovid *Trist.* 4.8.11: inque sinu dominae carisque sodalibus inque

D. Chasing *hirsutas feras*

CIL 6.29896.4: collibus hirsutas atque agitare feras

- U U - - - / - U U - U U -

Propertius 1.1.12: rursus in hirsutas ibat et ille feras

- U U - - - / - U U - U U -

E. Margarita's *niveo corpore*

CIL 6.29896.6: verbera nec niveo corpore saeva pati

- U U - U U - / - U U - U U -

Lygdamus 3.4.30: et color in niveo corpore purpureus

- U U - U U - / - U U - U U -

Ovid *Am.* 3.2.42: sordide de niveo corpore pulvis abi!

- U U - U U - / - U U - U U -

F. Margarita and Helen in the *Ars Amatoria*

CIL 6.29896.8: et noram in strato lassa cubare toro

Ovid *Ars* 2.370: et timet in vacuo sola cubare toro

G. *Servitium amoris*

CIL 6.29896.5-6: non gravibus vinclis umquam consueta teneri
verbera nec niveo corpore saeva pati.

Tibullus 1.6.37: non saeva recuso / verbera, detrecto non ego vincla pedum

Ovid *Her.* 20.77: utque solent famuli, cum verbera saeva verentur

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